



BJA Fact Sheet

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BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE • OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

DENISE E. O'DONNELL, DIRECTOR

Bulletproof Vest Partnership Initiative

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Program Overview

Enacted in 1998 by the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act (Public Law 105-181) and reauthorized by the Bulletproof Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-517), the Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) Program is a U.S. Department of Justice initiative designed to provide critical resources to state, local, and tribal jurisdictions for the sole purpose of purchasing bullet-resistant body armor for sworn law enforcement officers. Administered by the Office of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) since 1999, BVP has awarded \$430 million to over 13,000 jurisdictions throughout the nation to assist them in purchasing more than 1.2 million bulletproof vests.¹

Through the BVP Program, states, units of local government, and tribal governments are reimbursed for up to 50 percent of the cost of each unit of eligible body armor purchased for law enforcement officers.² Under current legislation, jurisdictions with fewer than 100,000 residents receive priority funding, up to 50 percent of the amount they request. Any remaining funds are distributed on a pro rata basis to jurisdictions with more than 100,000 residents. In order to qualify for this reimbursement, body armor must comply with the most current National Institute of Justice (NIJ) body armor standards, as of the date the body armor was ordered. Information pertaining to the current NIJ standards is available online at the following web page: www.ojp.gov/nij/topics/technology/body-armor.

The period for submitting applications for BVP funds normally begins during the first quarter of the calendar year.

¹ Office of Justice Programs, retrieved March 3, 2017 from www.ojp.gov/bvpbasi.

² The term *law enforcement officer* refers to any officer, agent, or employee of a state, unit of local government, or federally recognized Indian tribe authorized by law or by a government agency to prevent, detect, or investigate any violation of criminal law, or to supervise criminal offenders. This encompasses full-time, part-time, and auxiliary personnel, whether paid or volunteer, and includes police officers, sheriffs' deputies, correctional officers, parole and probation officers, and pre-trial services officers.

³ National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center, retrieved July 29, 2013 from www.justnet.org/body_armor/index.html.

⁴ IACP/DuPont™ Kevlar® Survivors' Club®, retrieved July 29, 2013 from www2.dupont.com/Kevlar/en_US/uses_apps/protection_vests/survivors_club.html.

⁵ Office of Justice Programs, retrieved July 29, 2013 from www.ojp.gov/bvpbasi.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

For 30 years, bullet-resistant body armor has protected law enforcement officers from ballistic and non-ballistic incidents.³ As recorded by the IACP/DuPont™ Kevlar® Survivors' Club®, more than 3,000 officers have survived potentially fatal and/or disabling injuries because they were wearing body armor.⁴ Based on data collected and recorded by Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) staff, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, protective vests were directly attributable to saving the lives of at least 33 law enforcement and corrections officers in 20 different states—an increase of 13.7 percent over FY 2011.⁵

As a partner with law enforcement agencies across the United States, BJA

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KEY POINTS

- The Bulletproof Vest Partnership initiative provides critical resources to state, local, and tribal jurisdictions for the sole purpose of purchasing body armor for sworn law enforcement officers.
- BVP reimburses jurisdictions for up to 50 percent of the cost of each unit of eligible body armor purchased for law enforcement officers.
- All purchased body armor must comply with the most current National Institute of Justice's body armor standards, available at www.ojp.gov/nij/topics/technology/body-armor.
- Applications for BVP funds must be submitted during the annual open application period.

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MESSAGE (cont.)

takes the issue of officer safety very seriously. The consistent wearing of body armor is similar to the use of seatbelts and should be given the same priority by every jurisdiction. *Body armor, like seatbelts, saves lives.* Beginning in FY 2011, in order to receive BVP funds, every law enforcement agency must have a written mandatory body armor wear policy. A focus on safety should be maintained at all levels within the organization and be reinforced through supervision, training, and policy. We all must strive to reduce preventable injuries and deaths.

We at BJA are honored to administer this program as a way to serve our public safety officers and keep them safe, just as they protect each of us every day.

KEY POINTS (cont.)

- Beginning in FY 2009, during the payment request process, jurisdictions may request, based on financial hardship, a waiver of the 50 percent match requirement. Jurisdictions that request the waiver must cite the nature of the financial hardship and maintain documentation pertaining to the hardship.
- To receive BVP funds, every law enforcement agency **must** implement A written mandatory body armor wear policy. *A mandatory wear concepts and issues paper* and a *model policy* are available by contacting the BVP Customer Support Center at vests@usdoj.gov or toll free at 1-877-758-3787. Only jurisdictions or law enforcement agencies eligible for the BVP Program may receive the *model policy* and *issues paper*.
- The BVP Reauthorization Act of 2015 included language that states that BVP grantees should provide armor vests to law enforcement officers, including vests uniquely fitted to individual female law enforcement officers. A certification has been added to the 2017 application stating the jurisdictions and law enforcement agencies are aware of and will comply with this requirement.

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Application and Funding Process

The entire application-through-payment process for the BVP Program is managed via the online BVP system. To participate in BVP, state, local, and tribal jurisdictions must follow five steps:

1. **Register as a Jurisdiction:** Jurisdictions that have never participated in BVP can register at any time throughout the year by contacting BVP Customer Support at 1-877-758-3787 or via e-mail at vests@usdoj.gov. Only jurisdictions are eligible to receive funding through the BVP Program. If an eligible jurisdiction (states, some counties, and larger local municipalities) has more than one law enforcement agency (LEA), each LEA should register in the BVP system and create its own application, and the aggregate application will be submitted by the jurisdiction on behalf of all of its LEAs. Once registered with the BVP Program, jurisdictions are responsible for regularly updating their own critical information.
2. **Register and Associate a UserID:** BVP users must register for a new BVP account/user ID and associate it with an existing agency before agency details can be viewed. Users can register for the BVP Program at the following web site: <https://grants.ojp.usdoj.gov/bvp/login/userRegistration.jsp>.
3. **Submit Application:** For information on how to apply for funding, please e-mail vests@usdoj.gov. When submitting an application, jurisdictions must make sure to identify the total number, type, and projected cost of vests for all eligible, Participating law enforcement officers. Applications may be submitted only during the annual, 6-week open application period.

Funding decisions are made within 3 months after the application period closes. Applicants are notified via e-mail regarding approved funding levels. Unlike other payment programs, funds are not disbursed until the vests are received and the jurisdiction submits a request for payment through the BVP system.
4. **Purchase Vests:** BVP funds may only be used to purchase vests that meet the current NIJ bullet- and stab-resistant body armor standards. Lists of vest models that meet the current NIJ standards are available at the following web pages: www.justnet.org/body_armor/index.html.

Special Note: BVP funds can be used to purchase only one vest per officer during the jurisdiction's stated replacement cycle. BVP funds may be used toward the purchase of tactical-level vests, but if a tactical-level vest is purchased for an officer, it must be the officer's primary vest; a regular-duty vest cannot be purchased for the same officer, during the same replacement cycle, using BVP funds.
5. **Submit Receipt Information:** Once vests are received, jurisdictions can submit a request for payment through the BVP system at www.ojp.gov/bvpbasi. Recipients have up to 2 years from the date of the award to submit payment requests. Once the payment request is submitted, BJA reviews the request for accuracy and processes payments on a monthly schedule.

CONTACT US

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