



Bureau of Justice Assistance Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership Program (BVP)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

1. What is the BVP program?

The Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) Program, created by the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act of 1998, is a unique U.S. Department of Justice initiative administered by the [Office of Justice Programs \(OJP\)](#), [Bureau of Justice Assistance \(BJA\)](#) that is designed to provide a critical resource to state and local law enforcement.

The purpose of the BVP Program is to reimburse states, counties, federally recognized tribes, cities, and local jurisdictions up to 50 percent of the cost of body armor vests purchased for law enforcement officers. A BVP fact sheet with further information can be found at: <https://bj.a.ojp.gov/doc/bvp-fact-sheet.pdf>.

2. What is the Assistance Listing number for the BVP Program?

The Assistance Listing number for the BVP Program is [16.607](#).

3. What additional information and resources are available?

Additional BVP information and resources can be found at: <https://www.ojp.gov/program/bulletproof-vest-partnership/program-resources> and <https://www.ojp.gov/program/bulletproof-vest-partnership/body-armor-resources>.

4. Is a list of prior BVP recipients available online?

Yes. BVP award information, statistics, and other information can be found at

ELIGIBILITY AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

5. Who is eligible to apply for BVP funds?

States, units of local government, and federally recognized Indian tribes, i.e., jurisdictions, that employ eligible law enforcement officers are eligible to apply for BVP funds.

For the purposes of the BVP program, "state" means each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands; "unit of local government" means a county, municipality, town, township, village, parish, borough, or other unit of general government below the state level.

6. How is "Law Enforcement Officer" defined?

"Law Enforcement Officer" is defined as any officer, agent, or employee of a state, unit of local government, or an Indian tribe authorized by law or by a government agency to engage in or supervise the prevention, detection, or investigation of any violation of criminal law, or authorized by law to supervise sentenced criminal offenders. This includes full-, part-time, and auxiliary personnel, whether paid or volunteer.

Below is a list of general job categories determined to be eligible for this program. Police officers

- Sheriff deputies
- Adult and juvenile jail, detention center, and correctional institution officers
- Judicial officers
- Prosecutorial officers
- Transit authority police officers
- Harbor/port authority police officers
- Fire marshals
- Arson investigators
- State police officers
- County college, city college, and university police
- Park and conservation police officers
- Traffic and code enforcement officers
- Liquor control/authority investigators
- Adult and juvenile probation officers
- Parole officers
- Police chaplains

This is not an all-inclusive list. Job categories not listed may be eligible. Please contact the BVP Help Desk for assistance with eligibility determinations at 1-877-758-3787 or vests@usdoj.gov.

The following categories are generally considered outside the scope of the BVP statute and are ineligible.

- Federal employees

- K-9 dogs
- Private college/university police officers
- Emergency medical personnel
- Fire and rescue personnel
- Private correctional officers or private police officers under contract with a local, state, or tribal government to provide related services*.

*If officers, agents, or employees engaged in private police or correctional work are being paid by an eligible jurisdiction and rely on that jurisdiction to provide for their personal equipment needs, they may be eligible to receive funds. However, the police/correctional officers or their corporate employers may not apply directly.

7. Can I participate as a jurisdiction?

States, units of local government, and federally recognized Indian tribes, i.e., jurisdictions, that employ eligible law enforcement officers are eligible to apply for BVP funds.

The jurisdiction's chief executive is required to complete the online registration and to provide general oversight and approval of key transactions between the BVP program and the participating law enforcement agencies.

8. Who is considered the Chief Executive Officer?

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the highest ranking elected or appointed official of the jurisdiction (e.g., city mayor; city, town or village manager; state governor; county executive; chairman of the governing board; chairman of the county commissioners; Tribal chief; or Tribal governor). In some localities, the highest-ranking law enforcement officer may also be considered the jurisdiction's CEO (e.g., the State of Louisiana).

9. Are law enforcement agencies (LEAs) eligible to apply for BVP funding?

Yes, if the LEA is a state, unit of local government, or federally recognized Indian tribe and employs eligible law enforcement personnel. The agency director/designee acts as the program liaison between agency personnel and the jurisdiction's chief executive. However, only the chief executive (or designee) of the jurisdictions can formally submit a completed application. State or local law enforcement agencies are permitted to be recipients of BVP funds, the jurisdiction itself must be the applicant.

10. Can law enforcement officers apply directly as individuals?

No. Individual law enforcement officers may not register or apply as individuals. Eligible law enforcement officers must work through their employing agency.

11. Must a state agency connect its application with that of other state agencies (e.g., state police), or can each state agency apply separately?

Each participating state agency registers and completes their portion of the state's application through their own law enforcement agency BVP application, which is then approved at the state level.

12. I am a county executive, and within my county there are several smaller towns and villages. Do I coordinate the body armor vest needs and the application process for all jurisdictions within my county's boundaries?

No. Multiple jurisdictions are not permitted to combine their body armor vest needs into one application. This program regards each jurisdiction as unique and discrete. Your county application will only include county-level agencies; the state-level application will only include state-level agencies; a town application will only include town-level agencies.

13. Are officers currently in training eligible?

Yes. This program does not make a distinction between new hires and trained or certified law enforcement officers, if the officers in question meet the definition of a law enforcement officer when the BVP-funded body armor vests are purchased. The only relevant restriction applies to positions that are authorized or funded but unfilled. Jurisdictions are not permitted to include anticipated body armor vest needs for authorized but unfilled positions in their application.

14. Can jurisdictions apply more than once in a program year?

No. Jurisdictions are permitted to apply only once per program year. Jurisdictions may apply for additional body armor vests during subsequent program years, even though prior year body armor vest orders or payments are still pending.

15. What link is there between use of Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) funds for body armor, and eligibility for the BVP program?

Pursuant to the BVP statute, receipt of JAG funding by a unit of local government may impact its eligibility for funding under the BVP Program in the same fiscal year, unless it is a qualifying unit of local government with fewer than 100,000 residents.

16. What are the requirements for body armor vests purchased using BVP funds?

Body armor vests purchased with BVP funds must have been tested through the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) [Compliance Testing Program \(CTP\)](#) and found to comply with the most current NIJ body armor standards, appear on the [NIJ Compliant Products List](#) as of the date the body armor was ordered, be uniquely fitted, and be made in the United States. In addition, applicants must have a written mandatory wear policy for uniformed patrol officers in place at the time of application.

17. Do NIJ compliant body armor vests contain a certification mark?

Although the NIJ CTP maintains a list of compliant products for practitioners to reference, additional reliance has been placed on a specific statement of compliance that manufacturers apply to compliant products. Controlling the false application and imitation of the NIJ statement of compliance has proven to be difficult. Fortunately, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) allows product certification bodies—similar to the NIJ CTP—to register certification marks. The “NIJ Mark” is a trademark that is only authorized by the NIJ CTP to appear on the labels of armor panels and plates that both meet the requirements of the NIJ CTP and that are listed on the [Compliant Products List](#). This is a quick, visual way for manufacturers to indicate that their armor is NIJ certified, and for the end user to check whether their armor is listed by NIJ. The NIJ Mark is only

available to manufacturers who actively participate in the NIJ CTP and may only be placed on armor that is certified and listed by NIJ. As of November 12, 2019, the NIJ Mark is registered with the USPTO under Registration Number 5,906,126. More information can be found here: <https://citec.org/compliance-testing-program/national-institute-of-justice-mark/>.

18. What is NIJ's process for testing body armor?

More information on NIJ's body armor testing process and requirements can be found at <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/equipment-and-technology/body-armor>. Specifically, an overview of compliance testing can be found at <https://nij.ojp.gov/body-armor-compliance-testing>.

19. What is the definition of "uniquely fitted" body armor vests?

In the BVP Program, "uniquely fitted" means protective (ballistic or stab-resistant) body armor vests that conform to the individual wearer in order to provide the best possible fit and coverage through a combination of 1) correctly sized panels and carrier, determined through appropriate measurement, and 2) properly adjusted straps, harnesses, fasteners, flaps, or other adjustable features. The requirement that body armor be "uniquely fitted" does not necessarily require body armor that is individually manufactured based on the measurements of an individual wearer. In support of the Office of Justice Programs' efforts to improve officer safety, the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) International has made available the Standard Practice for Body Armor Wearer Measurement and Fitting of Armor (Active Standard ASTM E3003) available at no cost. The Personal Armor Fit Assessment checklist is excerpted from ASTM E3003 ([The Personal Armor Fit Assessment Checklist](#)).

In addition, a certification section is included in the BVP application stating that the applicants are aware of and will comply with this requirement.

20. What must the required written mandatory wear policy consist of, and when must the mandatory wear policy be in effect?

There are no specific requirements regarding the nature of the mandatory wear policy, other than that it must specify when mandatory wear is required for uniformed officers on duty. The written mandatory wear policy must be in effect when the jurisdiction submits its application for BVP funds. Each submitting government official will need to electronically certify during the application process that there is a written mandatory wear policy for all uniformed law enforcement officers. The policy will need to be submitted as part of the BVP application and said policy will be subject to random review and verification. In order to meet the requirement of the BVP program, the mandatory wear policy must bear the date that the policy was enacted and be signed by the CEO or the authorized representative of the requesting agency/jurisdiction. For more information, see the Mandatory Wear FAQs at: <https://www.ojp.gov/bvp/mandatory-wear-faqs>.

21. Are sample mandatory wear policies available?

Yes. Law enforcement agency administrators and jurisdiction CEOs can obtain a copy of the Body Armor Model Policy and Issues Paper (developed by the International

Association of Chiefs of Police) by contacting the BVP Help Desk at 1-877-758-3787 or by email at vests@usdoj.gov.

22. Do SWAT or tactical body armor vests qualify under BVP?

BVP funds can be used for tactical-level body armor vests, including threat level IV body armor vests, but only one body armor vest may be purchased with these funds per officer in a replacement cycle. If the agency purchases a tactical-level body armor vest for an officer, it must be the officer's primary body armor vest; the jurisdiction cannot use BVP funds to purchase a regular-duty body armor vest for the same officer during the same replacement cycle.

23. Can jurisdictions use BVP funds to replace the trauma plates for existing body armor vests?

No. Using BVP funds to purchase trauma plates for existing body armor vests is not permitted. The program does permit the use of federal funds to offset up to 50 percent of the total vest cost, which includes the cost of the body armor vest, body armor vest carriers, attachments, inserts, trauma plates, and covers considered integral or essential for the armor's proper care, use, and wearability, including shipping, handling, fitting charges, and applicable taxes. However, this total cost assumes that a body armor vest is being purchased, along with the attachments and inserts.

24. Are stab resistance body armor vests eligible for funding?

Yes. Please see the latest NIJ stab compliant body armor vest list here: [NIJ Compliant Products List](#).

25. Can used body armor vests be purchased with BVP funds?

No. BVP funds may not be used to purchase used body armor vests, regardless of the age of the body armor vest or the agency selling it, since the conditions in which the used armor was stored and the conditions to which it was exposed cannot be verified.

26. Are other types of ballistic resistant equipment such as K9 body armor, ballistic shields, and ballistic helmets eligible for reimbursement through BVP?

No. Only ballistic and stab body armor appearing on the NIJ [Compliant Products List](#) is eligible for reimbursement under BVP.

HOW TO APPLY

27. Where do I apply?

BJA accepts applications through the online BVP system located at <https://vests.bja.ojp.gov/bvp/login/externalAccess.jsp>. The BVP system is an independent application system and is only used for the BVP Program.

28. Who must complete and submit the BVP application?

The Chief Executive Officer of the jurisdiction must complete and submit the BVP application.

29. How do I obtain access to the BVP system?

The first step to obtain access to the BVP system is onboarding to OJP's Digital Identity and Access Management Directory (DIAMD), which replaced the former BVP access control system in January 2023. DIAMD is a modern single-sign-on gateway service with multi-factor authentication. If you are an OJP grant program applicant or recipient, you may already have an account registration with DIAMD, and your BVP user account will be added to the OJP systems you access through DIAMD. If you do not already have an account with DIAMD, your BVP account will be migrated to DIAMD, and you will need to complete a registration profile process in order to activate your new BVP/DIAMD account.

Existing BVP users received an email on January 9, 2023, from the DIAMD system containing instructions and an active link to the DIAMD registration/profile page in order to complete the activation of their DIAMD account. The link within the email message is strictly personal to the user as the account holder. The link expires 120 hours, or five days, after email delivery. If the user does not complete the DIAMD registration within the noted 120-hour period, the link will expire, and the user must then contact the BVP ServiceDesk by phone at 1-877-758-3787 or email at vests@usdoj.gov in order to have the link reset.

Please see the BVP login page for details:

<https://vests.bja.ojp.gov/bvp/login/externalAccess.jsp>. Detailed instructions can be found at <https://justicegrants.usdoj.gov/noindex/general-entity-user-experience.pdf>.

The second step to obtain access to the BVP system is to create a BVP User Profile and associate the BVP User Profile with an agency. Detailed instructions can be found at <https://www.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh241/files/media/document/BVPUserAgencyRegistrationGuide.pdf>.

30. How do I reset my password?

If your account becomes locked and you need to reset your password, complete the following steps:

Step 1: [Unlock your account](#)

Step 2: [Reset your forgotten password](#)

You may call or email the BVP Help Desk at 1-877-758-3787 or vests@usdoj.gov for assistance. If an email is sent, please include your name and the name of your jurisdiction in the correspondence. Every effort will be made to respond to your request within 24 business hours of your call or email.

31. When does the BVP Program typically open for applications?

The BVP application period generally opens in April of each year. However, this date is subject to change. Please check the [BVP website](#) for updates on the application notice each year.

32. What is the application deadline?

Program deadlines are prominently displayed on the BVP homepage. They are designed to allow all interested jurisdictions an opportunity to complete and submit their applications. Jurisdictions will be notified once funding decisions have been made.

33. What type of documentation do we need for the application?

Applicants will be asked to report the total number of full and part-time officers, the agency's body armor vest replacement cycle, and the total amount of previously awarded BVP funds obligated at the time the application is completed.

34. Does the Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) need to fill out an application?

Smaller jurisdictions with one law enforcement agency should only register and apply as the jurisdiction. If a jurisdiction has multiple law enforcement agencies eligible for BVP funds, each LEA should register and apply for funds as an LEA under the jurisdiction.

35. How do we apply as a jurisdiction?

Step by step, detailed instructions are provided in the Jurisdiction Handbook, activated by following the steps for 'How Do I Participate as a Jurisdiction' accessible from the [BVP homepage](#) (see the [BVP resources page](#) for step-by-step instructions on submitting an application: <https://www.ojp.gov/program/bullectproof-vest-partnership/program-resources#hf3a1a>).

36. Can individual law enforcement agencies register if the jurisdiction has not yet registered?

No. Law enforcement agencies that are not considered jurisdictions must be part of the jurisdiction application, but you will be able to register and complete your portion of the application beforehand. The jurisdiction's application cannot be processed until the chief executive registers and submits the completed application electronically to BJA.

37. Is there a match requirement?

Yes. The federal portion of the costs for body armor vests purchased under the BVP Program may not exceed 50 percent.

38. Can jurisdictions request a waiver of the 50 percent match requirement for body armor vests purchased with BVP funds?

Yes. Jurisdictions with BVP award funds may request a financial or natural disaster hardship waiver during the payment request process and receive up to 100 percent of the cost of each body armor vest submitted for reimbursement. Jurisdictions requesting a waiver of the 50 percent match requirement may not use BVP funds toward the purchase of any body armor vest with a total unit cost greater than \$1,200, excluding taxes, shipping, and handling fees (if any), to maximize funding for all eligible jurisdictions. All standard BVP body armor vest requirements apply to the eligible body armor vest types.

Additionally, jurisdictions requesting a waiver must meet criteria of financial or natural disaster hardship and must cite the source of that hardship during the waiver request process. Jurisdictions must keep documentation substantiating the hardship for four years, and such documentation is subject to audit. Finally, all applicant jurisdictions requesting a hardship waiver of the 50 percent match are required to certify that the jurisdiction's Chief Executive Officer formally accepts the request for the waiver and confirms the waiver justification provided. The certification must list the highest elected

official from the requesting jurisdiction to be approved. Detailed instructions on the process for requesting a waiver and the documentation required can be found at: <https://www.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh241/files/media/document/BVPReceiptsandPaymentRequestsUserGuide.pdf>.

39. Can we use JAG formula funds along with BVP funds to cover the costs of body armor vests?

JAG funds may not be used to pay for that portion of the body armor vest (50 percent) that is not covered by BVP funds. JAG funds may be used to purchase body armor vests for an agency but may not be used as the 50 percent match for BVP purposes.

40. Our jurisdiction received less than 50 percent funding for last fiscal year's application. Can we re-apply for additional funds to increase this share in the current fiscal year application?

No. Recipients are not permitted to apply for current fiscal year funds to increase the application amount if a previous application was less than 50% funded.

41. Do smaller jurisdictions receive priority under BVP?

Yes. By statute, funds are first allocated to qualifying units of local government with fewer than 100,000 residents. Any remaining funds are then awarded to other qualifying applicants.

42. How are funds distributed to other qualifying applicants if funds are available after providing funds to smaller jurisdictions?

If remaining funds are available after providing funds to qualifying units of local government with fewer than 100,000 residents, BJA awards the remaining funds at an equal percentage to eligible states, units of local government, and federally recognized Indian tribes that have a violent crime rate at or above the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Uniform Crime Reporting Program national average.

ACCESS TO FUNDS

43. When will funding be available?

Funds will be available approximately three to four months after the application deadline. BJA will notify successful applicants via email when the award is made and the funds are available.

44. Is an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) required to receive funds?

Yes. Jurisdictions not registered with SAM are strongly encouraged to access the SAM website at <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/> as soon as possible in order to obtain information on and complete the online SAM registration process. Applicants should ensure that current bank routing and bank account information is included in the SAM.gov profile, as the banking information in the SAM at the time of application will be used to transfer reimbursement funds to your jurisdiction. For more information about renewing and updating your existing SAM registration, or registering in SAM as a new entity, please visit <https://sam.gov/content/help>. The SAM Helpdesk can be reached at (866) 606-8220.

45. How much funding will our jurisdiction receive?

BJA cannot provide information about anticipated funding levels. Given the dynamic nature of available funding and program participation, jurisdictions should complete applications based upon their current body armor vest needs for all eligible law enforcement officers.

46. Can we expect additional funding in the same federal fiscal year?

No. All funding decisions are made after the close of the application period, and all available program funds are committed.

47. How long will it take to receive funding?

Funds will be available approximately three to four months after the application deadline. BJA will notify successful applicants via email when the award is made and the funds are available.

48. How soon must we purchase body armor vests to avoid expiration of funds?

Recipients have approximately two years from the time the awards are released in the BVP system to request reimbursement. BVP awards are typically released by September 30 of the applicable fiscal year, and the expiration date for the funds is provided in the award notification.

49. Once awarded, what is the process for receiving reimbursement for the body armor vests?

The reimbursement process may only be completed through the online BVP system. The chief executive or authorized designee, who must be an employee of the jurisdiction, must complete section 4.1 Manage Receipts, and then proceed to complete and submit section 5.1 Request Payment. Once the two sections have been completed, payment will be processed and transferred to the designated ACH account in SAM.gov that each applicant provided to BJA during the registration process. Payment will be made in approximately five to six weeks following successful submission and CEO certification of the payment request. Only the jurisdiction can request payment. Law enforcement agencies (LEA) will only be able to report receipt of body armor vests (by completing section 3.1). Once this is completed, the jurisdiction will then need to request payment on behalf of the LEA. Please note that during the Request Payment process, jurisdictions are required to identify the fund source or award from which the payment will be deducted. Step-by-step instructions for submitting payment requests can be found at:

<https://www.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh241/files/media/document/BVPRceiptsandPaymentRequestsUserGuide.pdf>.

50. What responsibilities will the CEO have regarding the control and disbursement of funds?

Only the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a jurisdiction or an authorized designee, who is an employee of the jurisdiction, may request funds from OJP on behalf of the participating law enforcement agencies. Payments may be requested only after body armor vests have been purchased and delivered. The CEO or their authorized designee

is responsible for ensuring that no law enforcement agency within their jurisdiction requests or receives BVP payments that exceed 50 percent of the cost of each body armor vest purchased.

51. What is Total Vest Cost?

The Total Vest Cost includes the cost of the body armor vest, body armor vest carriers, attachments, inserts, and covers considered integral or essential for its proper care, use, and wearability, including shipping, handling, fitting charges, and applicable taxes. Essentially, the total invoiced price, after all vendor and prompt payment discounts have been deducted, is what BJA uses to determine total cost. Information about the invoiced purchase price and related costs will be reported to BJA when payment is requested.

52. What is the unit price of a body armor vest?

The unit price can include the cost of an extra body armor vest carrier, attachments, inserts, and covers considered integral or essential for the vest's proper care, use, and wearability. Shipping and handling fees, fitting charges, and applicable taxes can also be included in the unit price.

53. Can we purchase body armor vests that we did not include in our application?

Yes. BJA recognizes that law enforcement agency operational and equipment needs may change. Consequently, participating agencies are not required to purchase the exact number, type or model of body armor vests contained in the approved application. Body armor vests may be purchased at any threat level, make or model, from any distributor or manufacturer, as long as the body armor vests have been tested and found to comply with the applicable NIJ body armor standards, appear on the NIJ [Compliant Products List](#), are uniquely fitted, and are made in the United States. The original application cannot be changed; any changes in actual purchases are reflected in the online Receipt of Vests in the online payment request. All payments are made after eligible body armor vests have been ordered and received.

54. Are supplanting restrictions applicable to the BVP Program?

No. Supplanting is not prohibited under the BVP Program.

55. How will the BVP Program work with our jurisdiction's policy of procuring products from the lowest bidder?

Procurement policies are outside the scope of BVP. The online body armor vest application contains information about each agency's body armor vest needs, but agencies do not order body armor vests through this program. The actual purchase is handled through the agency's normal procurement process independent of the BVP Program. Purchasing from the lowest bidder and other requirements that may comprise agency procurement policy must be followed, documented, and maintained for future audit purposes.

56. I'm a correctional officer, and I'm more interested in a body armor vest that provides stab/puncture protection instead of ballistic protection. What assistance can you provide?

In September 2000, NIJ released [NIJ Standard 0115.00, Stab Resistance of Personal](#)

[Body Armor](#), which classifies armor into two protection classes: spike (puncture-resistant) and edged blade. For each protection class, there are three protection levels against which the armor can be tested. The NIJ CTP includes armor tested in accordance with this standard, and models found to be in compliance are certified by NIJ, and then listed on the [NIJ Compliant Products List](#). For more information on stab protection, please see: <https://www.policearmor.org/Addressing-Real-World-Stab-Slash-Threats.html>.

57. When funding approval is made that accounts for less than 50 percent of the requested funds in a jurisdiction's application, who will determine how much each individual LEA within a jurisdiction receives?

The CEO of the jurisdiction, or their authorized designee, who is an employee of the jurisdiction, is responsible for ensuring the equitable distribution of funds to each LEA listed on each annual BVP approved application. The award amount made available to each LEA should be equal to the percentage of total funds that each LEA requested on the application. For instance, if an LEA's application equaled 10 percent of the total amount proposed on the application, that LEA should receive 10 percent of the actual award amount.

58. Can we link to the BVP website on our own homepage?

Yes. Agencies and organizations may link to the [BVP website](#).

59. Can we use the BJA or BVP logo?

The BJA and BVP logo cannot be used unless prior approval is granted by BJA. Prior-approval requests can be submitting a request to BJA using the online form at <https://bja.ojp.gov/library/communications-guidance#contact-us>. Additional information, including the available logos, can be found at: <https://bja.ojp.gov/library/communications-guidance/logos>.

60. Can we use the NIJ Mark?

No. The NIJ Mark is only available to manufacturers who actively participate in the NIJ CTP and may only be placed on armor that is certified and listed by NIJ.

61. Will our jurisdiction be subject to audits or inspections if we purchase body armor vests using BVP funds?

Yes. BVP payments and transactions are subject to audits and reviews by the General Accounting Office, Department of Justice's Office of the Inspector General, and applicable state/local auditors. Jurisdictions must follow their own procurement policies and procedures, including maintenance of reliable and accurate accounting systems, record keeping, and systems of internal control. Recipients of federal funds are expected to retain documentation supporting all BVP transactions for at least three years after the closure of audit reports related to such funding. If any litigation, claim, negotiation, audit, or other action involving records has been started before the expiration of the three-year period, the records must be retained until completion of the action and resolution of all related issues, or until the end of the regular three-year period, whichever is later.

BODY ARMOR VEST INFORMATION

62. Which manufacturer makes the best body armor?

Neither BJA, NIJ, nor the NIJ CTP endorse any particular manufacturer or model of armor. NIJ standards for body armor and the NIJ CTP ensure that models of armor offered for sale to law enforcement and corrections personnel meet minimum performance requirements. NIJ publishes and continuously updates its [Compliant Products List](#), which includes models that have been tested and comply with the applicable NIJ standards.

63. Can jurisdictions utilize vendor promotional offerings//incentives offerings when purchasing body armor vests using BVP funds?

Yes. BJA does not interfere with legitimate, free market practices and processes that occur between body armor vest vendors and law enforcement consumers. BJA does not anticipate any oversight, review, or approval of discounts or incentives resulting from negotiations for body armor vest purchases. However, the terms and conditions of the procurement must comply with the jurisdiction's procurement laws and regulations. Further, BJA will not endorse any manufacturer over another nor will it provide information about a jurisdiction's financial transactions, purchasing terms and conditions, or vendor incentives and promotions.

64. How do I choose the right body armor?

NIJ's [Selection and Application Guide to Ballistic-Resistant Body Armor](#) contains important information to assist agencies and individual officers in selecting, purchasing, and caring for body armor. Body armor that is eligible to purchase using BVP funds must be selected from NIJ's [Compliant Products List](#).

65. How do I dispose of my old body armor vest?

Check with your department to determine whether there is a policy regarding the disposal of used body armor. If not, there are several organizations that accept donations of used body armor vests for distribution to law enforcement agencies in the U.S. You may also wish to consult your local Fraternal Order of Police. If you are not comfortable donating your used armor to another agency, you may also contact the manufacturer of your body armor vest to determine if they will dispose of your used body armor.

66. How does stab and puncture resistant body armor work?

Stab and puncture resistant body armor helps to prevent fatal/harmful injury caused by a severe cut and/or tear by a sharp object such as a knife. Stab and puncture resistant armors are made from a variety of materials. The most commonly used materials are made from extremely strong fibers, which can be either woven or laminated together. Other materials used are metals and composites. As the threat impacts the armor, the materials either deflect the threat, or due to their very high level of cut and/or tear resistance, they 'stretch' and the impact forces are dissipated over a larger area of the armor.

67. Is ballistic-resistant armor also stab/puncture resistant (or vice versa)?

The materials technology that makes body armor ballistically resistant does not necessarily make it stab or puncture resistant (and vice versa). The International Association of Chiefs of Police /DuPont KEVLAR Survivors' Club has documented several incidents over the years where ballistic resistant armor has provided some protection against attacks from a variety of sharp edged and other weapons.

68. What types of ballistic resistant materials are used to make body armor?

Flexible body armor vests that resist handgun threats can be made from a number of different types of woven or non-woven high-performance materials. Materials frequently found in such flexible body armor include aramids and ultrahigh molecular weight polyethylenes. Hard armor plates that resist rifle threats can be made from a number of materials, including steels, ceramics, polyethylenes, aramids, and other composite materials.

69. How long does body armor last?

There are several factors that can influence the service life of body armor. NIJ has sponsored research which indicates that age is not the only factor in determining the service life of armor. Other factors to consider include how regularly the armor was worn; how it was cared for; whether the armor fits the wearer properly; and the overall condition of the armor. BJA encourages departments to have a routine inspection program for body armor, just as they would for weapons, vehicles, and other types of issued equipment. NIJ's [Selection and Application Guide to Ballistic-Resistant Body Armor](#) contains a sample form which can be used as a checklist when inspecting armor.

70. What is the best way to care for body armor?

Follow the manufacturer's care instructions provided with your body armor vest or refer to the instructions on the armor labels. Failure to follow these instructions may damage the ballistic performance capabilities of the body armor vest. NIJ's [Selection and Application Guide to Ballistic-Resistant Body Armor](#) offers general guidelines on how to properly care for body armor vests.

71. How do I know if my body armor fits correctly?

How a body armor fits is very important and the BVP requires that armor purchased through the program be uniquely fitted. Officers should be measured so that the armor selected fits their torso well through a combination of correctly sized panels and carriers and adjustments that can be made on the carrier (via straps, velcro, etc.) The NIJ CTP offers guidelines on how to determine proper fit of body armor here:

<https://www.policearmor.org/basics/selection-fit.html>. In addition, more specific information on fit for female officers is provided here: <https://www.policearmor.org/basics/female-fit.html>.

For both male and female models of body armor vests, the NIJ CTP recommends that an agency arrange to have their officers try on a variety of models from different manufacturers on the NIJ [Compliant Products List](#). This will assist in selecting the model that provides the best combination of comfort, fit, and protection capability, as well as information concerning accessories and features. Be sure to ask the manufacturer's

representative about ongoing customer support, and what steps they will take to properly measure and fit the body armor vests, as well as adjustments once the armor has been delivered. Ask the representative for references from other agencies that have purchased their armor and contact other agencies in your area who have recently purchased armor to learn about their experiences.

72. Is there a difference between male and female models of armor?

Yes, many armor panels are designed specifically for female officers. In addition, some manufacturers also offer armor carriers designed for female officers. Generally speaking, the difference between male and female models is that for female body armor, most manufacturers cut and stitch the material to create bust cups. Therefore, the NIJ Standard views male and female body armor vests as separate models, even though they may be made of the same type and sequence of layers of ballistic materials. When a female body armor model is tested, the laboratory is instructed to locate the seam that is created by folding and/or stitching the material to make the bust cup, and to place one of the shots on that seam. This is done to ensure that the weakest point of the body armor vest (typically a seam) provides the minimum level of ballistic protection required by the standard.

There are many different types and styles of female body armor vests, as well as different ways of fitting body armor vests in order to accommodate the various sizes and shapes needed for female officers. Some manufacturers have developed methods which 'mold' the bust cups into the material, negating the need for cutting and stitching to create a bust cup. Other manufacturers simply alter the outside dimensions of the panel (*i.e.*, enlarging the arm hole openings) to accommodate certain types of builds and body types.

In summary, when selecting a female body armor vest, NIJ recommends that an agency look at and have their officers try on a variety of models from different manufacturers, which have been tested and found to comply with the NIJ Standard for Personal Body Armor. This will assist in selecting the model that provides the best combination of comfort, fit, and protection capability, as well as accessories and features.

OTHER OFFICER SAFETY RESOURCES

73. Does BJA offer any other resources for officer safety and wellness?

Yes. BJA provides Law Enforcement Officer Safety and Wellness programs and resources such as [BJA's Officer Robert Wilson III Preventing Violence Against Law Enforcement Officers and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability \(VALOR\) Initiative](#), which provides a comprehensive set of programs that deliver no-cost officer safety, wellness, resilience training, resources, and technical assistance to law enforcement throughout the country. VALOR brings together the latest research and practices to address current and emerging officer safety and wellness issues/threats. Please see the VALOR Initiative Overview-Booklet for a detailed synopsis of this important initiative: <https://bj.a.ojp.gov/doc/VALOR-Initiative-Overview-Booklet.pdf>.

In addition, BJA launched a proactive initiative to create collections of critical and impactful resources designed to address the most crucial and current challenges officers are facing. These include:

- Mitigating the impact of stress on officers and their families.
- Preventing suicide among law enforcement officers.
- Increasing officer safety by defusing difficult situations.
- Promoting public confidence in policing and, in doing so, honoring those who serve.

74. Do other DOJ components offer officer safety and wellness resources?

Yes. The DOJ Office of the Associate Attorney General has a dedicated website that includes articles, podcasts, infographics, trainings, webinars, and other publications produced in recent years dealing with all aspects of law enforcement officer and family wellness, including information on a variety of topics such as financial literacy, substance use disorders, and preventing or recovering from the suicide death of a colleague, among others. See: <https://www.justice.gov/asg/officer-safety-and-wellness-resources>.

75. Are there any officer safety and wellness programs designed specifically for corrections officers?

Yes. BJA will soon launch a Corrections Officer and Staff Safety and Wellness Center (“The Center”). The Center will develop and offer training and technical assistance to improve institutional and community corrections officer and staff safety and wellness and will build upon the knowledge base of what works to continually improve the safety and wellness of officers and staff. The Center will serve as a repository of corrections policies, protocols, trainings, and innovations that work to improve corrections officer and staff safety, wellness, resilience, and retention. In addition, it will identify, prioritize, develop, and deliver trainings to improve safety, wellness, resilience, and retention. In addition, since suicide by corrections officers occurs at a rate much higher than that of the general population, The Center will also consider and address suicide awareness and prevention. The Center may also work with corrections officers (institutional and community) to test new strategies, policies, and protocols.