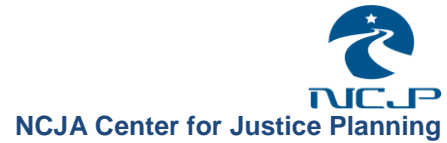


Request for Applications (RFA)

***The National Criminal Justice Reform Project's (NCJRP)
Technical Assistance Opportunity***

- Purpose:** To assist up to five states in advancing criminal justice reform through a comprehensive strategic planning process and adoption of criminal justice programs that are data-driven and evidence-based.
- Opportunities Provided:** Selected state teams will: 1) benefit from ongoing technical assistance from the NCJRP project team, 2) empower an Executive Policy Advisory Committee, supported by one or more Working Groups, to manage the strategic planning and reform process, 3) undergo a strategic planning process, 4) identify, select, implement, and evaluate evidence-based programs, policies, and practices to support criminal justice reform, 5) develop recommendations, an evaluation plan, and a statewide plan for reform that addresses the state's priorities, and 6) assess the effectiveness of the strategic planning process as well as the overall reform effort.¹
- Optional Informational Call:** **November 14, 2016 3:00 p.m. ET**, Dial-in: 1 (855)-240-2575; Passcode 35793845#
- RFA Responses Due:** **December 5, 2016 11:59 p.m. ET**
- Selection Announcement:** **Week of December 19, 2016**
- Project Period:** **January 2017 – January 2018**
- NGA Contact:** Lauren Dedon, Policy Analyst, Homeland Security & Public Safety Division, NGA Center for Best Practices
ldedon@nga.org, 202-624-5375
- NCJP Contact:** Tammy Woodhams, Senior Staff Associate, NCJA Center for Justice Planning
twoodhams@ncja.org, 202-903-3316

¹ The NCJRP is currently funded through January 2018. Technical assistance for further implementation and evaluation beyond January 2018 is conditional upon the receipt of additional funding. It is our goal that future funding for technical assistance extends into 2019.



PURPOSE

Through this long-term technical assistance opportunity, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and National Criminal Justice Association Center for Justice Planning (NCJP) will assist five states in advancing system-wide criminal justice reform through the development of a sustainable, comprehensive strategic planning process and adoption of criminal justice programs that are data-driven and evidence-based.

BACKGROUND

Numerous states are implementing criminal justice reform, with emphasis on reducing recidivism and diverting low-level offenders from prison. However, reforms have failed to take hold in some states due to shifting leadership priorities, an inability to sustain momentum, and lack of sufficient “buy-in” at the programmatic level. To have a lasting impact, executive branch staff need to be unified in their vision and operate from a data-driven, comprehensive strategic plan, with sufficient support and resources available to incorporate data and evidence into their decision-making.

A governor’s commitment to reforming the state’s criminal justice system creates the mandate necessary for transformational change. Further, efforts must bolster the state administering agency’s (SAA) capacity for using data to establish policy priorities and promote wider adoption of evidence-based programming.

NGA Center and NCJP staff will provide technical assistance and support for sustainable system-wide criminal justice reform through the National Criminal Justice Reform Project (NCJRP), which is funded by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation.

In October 2016, NCJRP staff hosted a two-day summit that examined challenges with implementing justice reforms and the important role that strategic planning must play in initiating and sustaining system-wide reform. Teams from twenty states attended the summit, led by the governor’s criminal justice policy advisor (CJPA) and SAA director. Other team members included correctional directors, public safety officials, legislators, members of the judicial branch, data experts, or other criminal justice policy or programmatic staff. These teams strengthened relationships and built capacity to embed a sustainable strategic planning process within the state’s executive branch. Further, state teams discussed the state of criminal justice reform in their communities, the concepts and principles of statewide comprehensive strategic planning, evidence-based policy and practices in key areas of reform, implementation fidelity, and requirements for sustainability.

Following the summit, up to five states will be selected to receive technical assistance and support from the NCJRP project team to embed a strategic planning process and adopt criminal justice programs in one or more of the five NCJRP areas of policy and practice, including:

- Reforming pretrial release and bail;
- Improving the reentry process and reducing offender recidivism;
- Addressing mental health and substance use disorders in justice-involved populations;
- Safely reducing prison and/or jail populations; and
- Implementing evidence-based practices, including improving access to data, and strengthening information sharing practices, adopting performance metrics and integrating evaluation.

DESCRIPTION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The NCJRP is designed to assist five states in developing and implementing strategic action plans for addressing criminal justice policy challenges. Participating states will receive guidance and technical assistance from NCJRP staff. There are no sub-grants associated with this technical assistance opportunity. States will be expected to demonstrate their commitment to in-kind contributions necessary to carry out and sustain the planning process and reform initiative (e.g. identifying state liaison project staff, ability to collect and analyze criminal justice data, meeting expenses for the Advisory Committee and Working Groups, embedding project evaluation into multi-agency activities, etc.). The strategies and policies developed by participating states are intended to serve as a catalyst for best practices and potential implementation in all states.

States participating in the NCJRP are eligible to receive ongoing technical assistance from the project team and a national faculty of experts throughout the project period. Assistance may include research support, facilitated calls with other states and subject matter experts, information dissemination through webinars or other virtual meetings, and additional in-state NCJRP staff visits.

Examples of technical assistance that states can expect, include:

- Providing guidance for developing and implementing a strategic planning process within the executive branch;
- Supporting the state leadership teams to identify and engage critical stakeholders through the Advisory Committee and Working Group process;
- Facilitating the development and coordination of in-state meetings (such as Advisory Committee and Working Group(s), subcommittee working groups, or between the state leadership team and stakeholders);
- Supporting Working Group(s) to conduct an analysis of existing state policies that may inhibit or help advance the state's policy agenda;
- Prioritizing areas of policy and practice for immediate reform action;
- Aiding the development, advancement, and implementation of policy recommendations;
- Reviewing initiative proposals, policies, regulations, legislation, evaluation plans, and/or executive orders;
- Surveying and guiding selection of evidence-based programs and practices and ensuring implementation fidelity;
- Facilitating communication between participating states and national experts; and
- Supporting evaluation of state policy initiatives.

State Leadership, Advisory Committee, and Working Group(s). Each participating state will assemble a core team co-led by the CJPA and SAA Director. The team leads will be expected to guide and help implement the strategic planning process and reform effort.

The NCJRP will utilize (at least) two bodies to inform and sustain reform efforts: an Advisory Committee and one or more Working Groups. These may be created as a part of the project, or may be built off already existing commissions, committees, or task forces within the state.

The Advisory Committee will set the vision, high-level goals, and authorize the development and implementation of a reform roadmap for the Working Group(s). As designated by the Governor, the Advisory Committee will provide membership opportunities to the CJPA, SAA Director, cabinet secretaries, lawmakers, and other criminal justice principal policymakers.

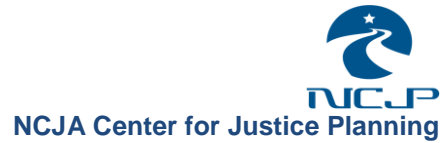
The Working Group(s) will be co-chaired by the CJPA and SAA Director. The functions of each Working Group should be determined by the Advisory Committee, and membership should be based on expertise and/or policy or program implementation authority.

Selected states will:

- Identify the CJPA and SAA Director as co-team project leads for their state;
- Ensure establishment of an Advisory Committee that engages appropriate stakeholders and is charged with guiding the strategic planning process and the overall reform effort, with the expectation that it will continue the strategic planning process and implementation upon completion of the NCJRP;
- Convene in-state Advisory Committee and Working Group meetings, supported and attended by NCJRP staff as appropriate;
- Ensure that the CJPA and SAA Director co-lead Working Group(s), establish processes, and convene regular meetings of the Working Group(s) and the Advisory Committee;
- Develop and implement a strategic planning process;
- Commit to regular NCJRP and executive branch briefings for the governor on the project and its pursuit of critical criminal justice reforms;
- Identify state liaison staffer(s) for communications with NCJRP;
- Commit to in-kind contributions for convening Advisory Committee and Working Group meetings (e.g. identifying state liaison project staff, ability to analyze criminal justice data, meeting expenses for Advisory Committee and Working Groups, embedding project evaluation into multi-agency activities);
- Identify and plan to implement practices based on the best evidence;
- Work with NCJRP staff to develop a gap analysis, including analyzing data, information gathering, and ability to achieve desired outcomes;
- Develop recommendations and a state-wide plan (i.e. roadmap) for reform that addresses the state's reform priorities;
- Assign staff to complete project tasks, including data collection, research, and evaluation;
- Ensure that state Working Group(s) provide a framework for how the state will address evaluation of project goals and embed evaluation throughout the project; and
- Participate in regular conference calls and project activities.

Advisory Committee and Working Group Meetings. NCJRP staff will attend and help facilitate in-state meetings to assist states with developing their strategic planning process, recommendations for criminal justice reform, implementation of such reforms, and plans for evaluating their reform efforts.

Networking Opportunities. One of the benefits of participating in this technical assistance opportunity is that a state is part of a large “class” of states addressing similar policy challenges. To support the sharing of best practices, the NCJRP will host regular conference calls and seek other opportunities to share lessons learned. This may include featuring state innovations in issue briefs, convening lessons learned briefings at national conferences and in webcasts, and, as appropriate, including peers in other states’ convenings.



Expected Technical Assistance Outcomes. The CJPA and SAA Director are expected to fully participate in all planned meetings and activities. By the end of 2017, at a minimum, state teams will have developed strategic plans (i.e. roadmaps) to enact criminal justice reforms in one or more of five areas of policy and practice, including:

- Reforming pretrial release and bail;
- Improving the reentry process and reducing offender recidivism;
- Addressing mental health and substance use disorders in justice-involved populations;
- Safely reducing prison and/or jail populations; and
- Implementing evidence-based practices, including improving access to data, and strengthening information sharing practices, adopting performance metrics and integrating evaluation.

Selection Process. Up to five states will be competitively selected to participate in the NCJRP. This RFA has two selection rounds. The first round will result in the selection of up to three states to participate in the project. First round selections will be announced the week of December 19th.

To accommodate new governors and administrations, a second RFA will be released in January/February 2017 resulting in the selection of two additional states for the project. States not selected in the first round will receive automatic consideration for the second round selection and will not have to resubmit an application. States selected in the second round will receive notification in March/April 2017. The second round is designed to allow states with newly elected governors to apply and be considered.

TIMELINE

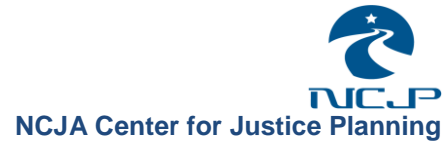
The following represents a tentative timeline for the RFA and technical assistance support:

November 14, 2016 3:00 p.m. ET	Optional RFA informational call
December 5, 2016 11:59 p.m. ET	State applications due
Week of December 19, 2016	Round one of state selection announcement (up to 3 states)
January/February 2017 (TBD)	Initial in-state kick-off meetings to begin strategic planning process for 3 states
January/February 2017 (TBD)	RFA round two
March/April 2017 (TBD)	Round two of state selection announcement (up to 2 additional states)
January 2017 – January 2018	Remote and on-site technical assistance provided
Ongoing	Monthly conference calls with NCJRP staff and in-state visits, as needed

Required Activities for Selected States. This technical assistance opportunity will require substantial preparation from state teams before the first kick-off meeting, active team participation throughout the technical assistance process, and a strong commitment to implementing recommendations and strategic action plans. In addition, participating state teams are required to:

- **Convene and participate in meetings of the Advisory Committee and Working Group(s), as well as monthly conference calls.** Following state selection, NCJRP will host a conference call with participating states to orient them to the technical assistance

- opportunity and outline next steps, including pre-work and meetings, available technical assistance from NCJRP staff, and plan for upcoming site visits. Conference calls will be held with all state teams on a monthly basis throughout the project period.
- **Assist with the development of state needs assessment and gap analysis.** The NCJRP project team will help states develop and complete a gap analysis and needs assessment. The gap analysis and needs assessment will provide state teams with a better understanding of the challenges related to sustaining their reforms and will serve as a baseline for evaluating outcomes of the policy changes and the strategic planning process itself.
 - **Implement a sustainable strategic planning process.** The NCJRP project team will support the Advisory Committee and Working Group(s) in developing a sustainable strategic planning process that provides an environmental scan, identifies a consensus vision statement, establishes high-level goals, and authorizes a roadmap for the Working Group to pursue the state's reform objectives.
 - **Identify areas of criminal justice policy and practice for reform, develop recommendations, and plan to implement reform objectives.** Through the strategic planning and reform process, the Working Group(s) will work with stakeholders to develop and implement recommendations that address one or more of the following areas:
 - Reforming pretrial release and bail;
 - Improving the reentry process and reducing offender recidivism;
 - Addressing mental health and substance use disorders in justice-involved populations;
 - Safely reducing prison and/or jail populations; and
 - Implementing evidence-based practices, including improving access to data, and strengthening information sharing practices, adopting performance metrics and integrating evaluation.
 - **Develop evaluation plan based on logic model.** With assistance from NCJRP staff, each state will be responsible for developing a logic model and evaluating their strategic planning process and overall reform effort. A logic model is a theoretical framework for understanding how activities and resources will lead to desired results. Further, states will develop an evaluation plan based on the logic model at the outset of their work. The evaluation plan should identify the output and outcome measures that will be used to assess performance, how these measures will be collected and analyzed, and reference relevant agencies tasked with contributing to the evaluation effort.
 - **Collaborate with the NCJRP team to achieve and communicate deliverables.** The NCJRP will also pursue an independent evaluation designed to assess the process and impact of technical assistance efforts. States that participate in the NCJRP must agree to collaborate with NCJRP staff in support of this external evaluation effort.



REQUIRED PROPOSAL CONTENT AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed based on the criteria below.

The total narrative—excluding the cover page, governor’s letter, and letters of support—should not exceed ten (10) single-spaced pages with standard one-inch margins and 11-point font.

- **Cover Sheet (Required)**
Please include the name of the state and co-team leaders (CJPA and SAA Director) and state liaison or project staffer (should that person be different than the CJPA and SAA Director). Please also include contact information for the team leaders, liaison staffer, and an administrative contact, including title, mailing address, telephone, and email. The cover sheet does not count against the ten-page limit.
- **Letter from the Governor (Required)**
The letter must describe the state’s interest in and expected outcomes related to the technical assistance opportunity. It should identify the specific 1-2 reform areas (of the five that are the focus of the NCJRP) in which states wish to make system-wide improvements. The letter should include the name, titles, and contact information of the governor’s CJPA and SAA Director, who will serve as co-leaders of the state team. (If the CJPA and SAA Director are the same individual, please note the name, title, and contact information of a co-lead.) The team leaders will serve as the main points of contact for the project. Applications without a letter from the governor will not be considered. The letter from the governor does not count against the ten-page limit.
- **Description of the Problem (suggested 1 – 2 pages) (20 points)**
In this section, please provide a brief overview of the state’s criminal justice problems, weaknesses, or limitations that justify the state’s identified targeted reform efforts.
- **Challenges to Implementing Criminal Justice Reform (suggested 1 – 2 pages) (25 points)**
The technical assistance opportunity aims to assist states by addressing reforms in one or more of the following priority areas:
 - Reforming pretrial release and bail;
 - Improving the reentry process and reducing offender recidivism;
 - Addressing mental health and substance use disorders in justice-involved populations;
 - Safely reducing prison and/or jail populations; and
 - Implementing evidence-based practices, including improving access to data, and strengthening information sharing practices, adopting performance metrics and integrating evaluation.

Please note the types of challenges that the state expects in its potential area(s) of interest. For example, states should note challenges associated with criminal justice data in its’ policy reform areas of interest and whether/how the state will either incorporate its State Statistical Analysis Center or contract with outside consultants to ensure that reforms are data-driven. In addition, applicants should describe past and

ongoing challenges to sustaining strategic planning, including through political transitions. Applicants should also address how the state is positioned to overcome the challenges in the area(s) in which they are applying.

- **Expected Outcomes for Participation in the Technical Assistance Opportunity (suggested 2 – 3 pages) (25 points)**

Please describe how the state will benefit by participating in the technical assistance opportunity and the range of assistance the state hopes to receive. In addition, states should demonstrate how they are poised to make significant progress in addressing criminal justice reform. Applicants should consider the following: by the end of the technical assistance opportunity, what does the state expect to accomplish (e.g. legislative changes, executive orders, regulatory reforms, etc.)? How will the technical assistance opportunity help the state accomplish and sustain those outcomes?

Applicants should include a tentative work plan with proposed dates and activities that support proposed project outcomes. Please be sure to include: 1) how the state will initiate a strategic planning process through the state's Advisory Committee, including vision setting and high-level goals; 2) how the Working Group(s) will develop and vet recommendations for a statewide plan (i.e. roadmap) for reform; 3) how the Working Group(s) will plan to implement, measure, and evaluate recommendations; 4) how the SAA solicitation and grant awarding to nonprofit service providers will further achieve the state's reform initiatives; and 5) how the state will assist NCJRP staff with project evaluation and assessment of agency ownership of that process.

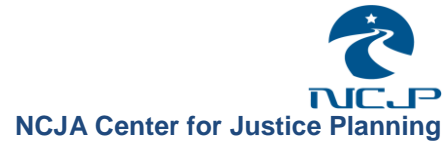
- **Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives (suggested 1 page) (10 points)**

Briefly describe how participation in the technical assistance opportunity will complement current state efforts to address criminal justice reform. For example, please note state liaison staffers for other initiatives and how the state will ensure coordination with this project. Further, please describe the policy focus of other initiatives and how these align with the NCJRP.

- **Team Leadership and Membership (suggested 1 – 2 pages) (20 points)**

Each state must identify team co-leads comprised of the CJPA and SAA Director. In your application, briefly discuss the composition of the Advisory Committee and Working Group(s) and the roles that each member will play in addressing the challenges described above. States will be evaluated based on their proposed vehicles for reform (e.g. existing or new commissions, working groups, etc.), leadership and membership of such vehicles, and the ability of those vehicles to influence state policy and practice. States will also be asked to create or utilize Working Group(s) led by the SAA Director and CJPA to carry out reform initiatives.

Although each state's team will reflect that particular state's priorities and needs, examples of state team members include senior-level advisors such as the governor's CJPA, SAA Director, Public Safety Commissioner, Correctional Agency Director, Parole Board Chair, senior-most mental health or substance use official, chief informational officer for criminal justice, director of the Office of Management and Budget, senior law enforcement officials, prosecutors, public defenders, civil society



stakeholders, programmatic staff, crime victim, and tribal government representatives, or others with responsibilities related to managing the state's criminal justice systems.

Please provide each potential Advisory Committee and/or Working Group team member's name, title, work address, phone, and e-mail address. This section does not count toward the ten-page limit. Letters of commitment from potential members and/or outside stakeholders are welcomed but not required and will not count against the ten-page limit.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

All applications must be received by **11:59 p.m. ET on December 5, 2016**. Applications must be submitted by the governor's office. Please combine all application materials into a single PDF document and email to Lauren Dedon at NGA (ldedon@nga.org). Following submission, applicants will receive a confirmation email from the NGA Center verifying receipt of your application.

All questions should be directed to Lauren Dedon at ldedon@nga.org or Tammy Woodhams at twoodhams@ncja.org.

SELECTION INFORMATION

The NCJRP Project Team, made up of staff from The NGA Center and NCJP, will make the selection decision based on information provided during the summit process and materials submitted for the Request for Application. All states will be notified of the selection decision no later than the week of December 19, 2016.

This request for application (RFA) is not binding on the NGA Center or NCJA, nor does it constitute a contractual offer.