



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs

Bureau of Justice Statistics

Washington, DC 20531

MEMORANDUM

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THROUGH: Kevin M. Scott, PhD
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FROM: Matt Durose
Statistician, Law Enforcement Statistics Unit
Bureau of Justice Statistics

DATE: August 6, 2024

SUBJECT: BJS request for Generic Clearance to conduct verification of reporting units for the 2024 Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories (CPFFCL) under the generic clearance agreement OMB Number 1121-0339

Introduction

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is planning to conduct the 2024 Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories (CPFFCL, OMB Control Number 1121-0269) in 2025. The CPFFCL, which was first conducted in 2002, provides national statistics on the personnel, budgets, workloads, backlogs, and quality assurance practices of crime laboratories. The goal of the 2024 CPFFCL is 1) to continue to collect data on the forensic services provided by federal, state, and local crime labs across the nation to report on the current state of the field and assess trends, and 2) introduce new questions that provide a more complete picture of the operations and resources of crime laboratories.

In preparation for the 2024 CPFFCL, BJS is seeking OMB generic clearance to verify and update the frame using email and telephone outreach to confirm or collect contact information for the laboratory frame.

Current Request

This generic clearance is to request approval to conduct frame verification in preparation for the 2024 Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories (CPFFCL) under the BJS generic clearance agreement (OMB Number 1121-0339). BJS plans to submit a separate OMB clearance application under OMB Number 1121-0269 for the collection of the 2024 CPFFCL data.

Under this clearance request, BJS and its data collection agent, RTI International, propose to conduct outreach to update and supplement the existing roster of forensic crime laboratories maintained by BJS. Through this outreach, the project team aims to verify or update the following:

- Agency name, phone number, email and mailing address
- Contact information of the agency head: name, title, work phone number, email, and mailing address
- Contact information of the agency's designated respondent for the CPFFCL: name, title, work phone number, email, and mailing address

The universe of the CPFFCL includes forensic crime laboratories solely operated by government funds or whose parent organization is a government agency that have one or more full-time scientists whose principal function is examining physical evidence in criminal matters and providing reports and testimony to courts of law regarding such evidence. The original frame of eligible laboratories was developed for the 2002 CPFFCL using the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors (ASCLD) membership list. The frame from the most recent CPFFCL in 2020 and the current ASCLD membership list will be the starting point for the 2024 CPFFCL frame. The 2020 CPFFCL included 326 standalone laboratories and multi-laboratory systems, totaling 423 individual federal, state, and local publicly funded forensic crime laboratories.¹

The 2024 CPFFCL frame will also be updated using several other collections:

¹ An example of a multi-laboratory system is a state laboratory system that includes a main laboratory and three regional labs.

- the current BJS Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies (CSLLEA) (OMB #1121-0346, expires on 8/31/2025) data that captures which state and local law enforcement agencies perform forensic functions,
- the current roster of federal agencies in the BJS Census of Federal Law Enforcement Officers (CFLEO) frame, and
- the DEA National Forensic Laboratory Information Management System (NFLIS) (OMB #1117-0034, expires on 5/31/2025) to update existing information about drug laboratories eligible for the CPFFCL.

These datasets will be merged with the 2024 CPFFCL frame to ensure coverage, identify any new or missing eligible laboratories, remove any duplicate entries, and update any contact information in preparation for our verification effort. It is anticipated that through these comparisons BJS will identify approximately 30 new individual laboratories to add to the frame, increasing the total from 423 in the 2020 CPFFCL to 453 in the 2024 CPFFCL.

Among the 453 individual laboratories that are part of a multi-laboratory system, BJS expects that in most situations the main laboratory will be able to verify the contact information and eligibility for each lab in its system, reducing the overall number of respondents to 350. Therefore, BJS requests clearance from OMB to collect or confirm contact information and eligibility among approximately 350 respondents from the 453 standalone and multi-laboratory systems. BJS plans to conduct a combined email and telephone outreach process from November 2024 to February of 2025.

Appendix A provides the templates to be used during the 2024 CPFFCL verification outreach and the list of the proposed 13 verification questions, which include skip patterns. The online verification form will be located at the CPFFCL data collection site, an example of which has been provided in Appendix A (**Appendix A-1**). As summarized in **Table 1**, RTI will send an email invitation to the 350 respondents with login credentials to complete the verification online. The email will provide an overview of the CPFFCL and invite them to log into the portal and verify their contact information and eligibility (**Appendix A-2**). The email will indicate that RTI will call the laboratory in two weeks to verify their contact information by telephone if they opt not to verify their information on the website or fail to do so in the designated timeframe. Based on previous CPFFCL verification efforts and given how technologically proficient this population is, BJS anticipates that at least half of the 350 respondents will complete the verification process through the initial email and no additional follow up will be needed by phone. If the respondent has not verified their information approximately one week after initial outreach, one reminder email will be sent to reiterate the messaging (**Appendix A-3**).

Table 1: 2024 CPFCL Verification Outreach Schedule

Approximate Dates	Contact	Attachment	Description	Est. # Contacted
November 2024	Verification request email	A-2	Request complete verification form online	350
November-December 2024	Reminder Email 1	A-3	Reminder to complete verification online	175
December 2024-February 2025	Verification calls	A-4	Call script to agencies with bounced email and nonresponsive agencies to update POC	175

The telephone verification will involve RTI calling the laboratories that did not confirm their contact information online or when an email address is not valid and the invitation is undelivered. These calls will confirm information currently on record with respect to the laboratory’s official name, address, and the name and contact information for the laboratory director or other point of contact (**Appendix A-4**). Both the online and telephone verification efforts will also help identify a point of contact (and that person’s contact information) best suited to answer the 2024 CPFCL survey.

Burden Hours for the Frame Verification Outreach

Table 2 provides a summary of the burden estimate for this effort. BJS anticipates at least half (or approximately 175) of the 350 respondents will respond to the email invitation to confirm their contact information using the online portal with no follow-up contact needed by phone. It is estimated that the outreach via email will require an average of 5 minutes per respondent.

About half of respondents are expected to require additional outreach by phone for an approximately 10 minutes. The telephone outreach may require about 5 minutes to identify an appropriate person to assist with the verification and another 5 minutes for the respondent to answer the questions by phone.

Table 2. Burden Estimate for the Frame Verification Outreach

Category of Respondent & Activity	Number of Respondents	Participation Time (minutes)	Total Burden (hours)
Federal/State/Local Governments: Laboratory director email outreach	175	5	15
Federal/State/Local Governments: Laboratory director telephone outreach	175	10	29
Total	350		44

Costs to the Federal Government

The estimated annual cost to the Federal government is \$27,000 for the RTI portion of the work and an estimated \$28,000 for the GS-14 project manager’s work, resulting in a total estimated cost of \$55,000.

Timeline

Milestone	Start Date	End Date
Obtain OMB generic clearance	August 2024	October 2024
CPFFCL Verification Outreach	November 2024	February 2025
Compile and verify data	December 2024	February 2025
Provide frame data to BJS	February 2025	March 2025

Data Security and Confidentiality

BJS is authorized to conduct this data collection under 34 U.S.C. § 10132. BJS may only use the information it collects for statistical or research purposes, consistent with 34 U.S.C. § 10134.

BJS is required to protect information identifiable to a private person from unauthorized disclosure and may not publicly release data in a way that could reasonably identify a specific private person [34 U.S.C. § 10231]. Any person who violates these provisions may be punished by a fine up to \$10,000, in addition to any other penalties imposed by law. Further, per the Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015 (6 U.S.C. § 151), federal information systems are protected from malicious activities through cybersecurity screening of transmitted data.

The [BJS Data Protection Guidelines](#) provide more detailed information on how BJS and its data collection agents will use and protect data collected under BJS’s authority. All contact information obtained during the verification will be maintained on secure servers at BJS and RTI and will not be shared with third parties.

Institutional Review Board

RTI Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the project per 28 CFR 46 and determined that all aspects of the project do not meet the definition of human subjects research (**Appendix B**).

Contact Information

Questions regarding any aspect of this project can be directed to:

Matt Durose
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice
810 7th Street NW
Washington, DC 20531
Office Phone: 202-598-0295
E-Mail: Matt.Durose@usdoj.gov

Appendices

Appendix A: 2024 Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories Verification Materials

Appendix B: IRB Submission Confirmation

Appendix A:

2024 Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories (CPFFCL) Verification Materials

Appendix A-1: Verification Form

Appendix A-2: Verification Invitation Email to Forensic Crime Laboratories

Appendix A-3: Verification Email Reminder to Forensic Crime Laboratories

Appendix A-4: Verification Call Script

Appendix A-1: Verification Form

OMB No. XXXX-XXXX: Approval Expires XX/XX/20XX

Agency

Please review and update your agency's contact information below.

Agency Name:

If you would like to update the agency name, please reach out to us at

Address *

City *

State *

Zip *

Point of Contact (POC)

Salutation

Title

First Name *

Last Name *

Email

Address 1 *

Address 2

City *

State *

Zip *

Phone *

ext.

Data Supplier

The data supplier is the person who typically completes the survey. We will reach out to the data supplier if there are any questions about the survey data.

Check here if the data supplier is the same as the point of contact.

Salutation

Title

First Name

Last Name

Email

Agency Head

Check here if the agency head is the same as the point of contact.

Salutation

Title

First Name

Last Name

Email

Address 1

Address 2

City

State

Zip

Phone

Phone Ext

[Save and continue](#)

Appendix A-2: Verification Invitation Email to Forensic Crime Laboratories

Email Subject: Verify Contact Information for the 2024 Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories

Dear [NAME],

The U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and RTI International are preparing to conduct the sixth Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories (CPFFCL) in spring 2025. This survey is designed to provide national statistics on staffing, budgets, workload, and resources of publicly funded forensic crime laboratories.

Prior to the survey launching, we are asking laboratories to log onto our website and verify their contact information. This request will only take about 5 minutes. If we don't hear from your office by MONTH, DAY, we will give you a call to confirm your information by phone.

Please verify your information online within the next 2 weeks:

URL: [HYPERLINK]

[entityname]

Username: [caseid]

Password: [password]

If you have any questions, please contact us at XXX-XXX-XXXX or at CPFFCL@rti.org. If you have any general comments, please contact Matt Durose, the program manager from BJS, at 202-598-0295 or Matt.Durose@usdoj.gov. Results from the previous 2020 CPFFCL may be viewed on BJS's website: <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/pffcl20.pdf>.

BJS and RTI International thank you for your time and effort in providing this information concerning your lab.

Sincerely,

CPFFCL Task Lead
RTI International

Appendix A-3: Verification Email Reminder to Forensic Crime Laboratories

Email Subject: Reminder - Verify Contact Information for the 2024 Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories (CPFFCL)

Dear [NAME],

The U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and RTI International are preparing to conduct the sixth Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories (CPFFCL) in spring 2025.

ACTION NEEDED NOW:

This is a reminder that, prior to the survey launching, we are asking you to log onto our website and verify your contact information. We will call your office by phone soon if we do not hear from you.

REMINDER: Please verify your information online by MONTH, DAY, 2024:

URL: [HYPERLINK]

[entityname]

Username: [caseid]

Password: [password]

If you have any questions, please contact us at XXX-XXX-XXXX or at CPFFCL@rti.org. If you have any general comments, please contact Matt Durose, the program manager from BJS, at 202-598-0295 or Matt.Durose@usdoj.gov. Results from the previous 2020 CPFFCL may be viewed on BJS' website: <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/pffcl20.pdf>.

BJS and RTI International thank you for your time in providing this information concerning your laboratory.

Sincerely,

CPFFCL Task Lead
RTI International

Appendix A-4: Verification Call Script

Good [morning/afternoon/evening], my name is [INTERVIEWER NAME] from RTI International, and I am calling on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Statistics regarding the forthcoming Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories. This survey has been conducted periodically since 2002 to produce national statistics on staffing, budgets, workload, and resources of publicly funded forensic crime laboratories. BJS is preparing to conduct the new census of crime laboratories next year. I'm reaching out to confirm that we have the correct contact information so that we can make sure that the survey is mailed to the appropriate address.

Do you have 5 minutes to answer a few brief questions?

- 1 YES [GO TO 1.1]
- 2 NO [SET FOR CALLBACK]
- 3 NOT AVAILABLE NOW [SET FOR CALLBACK]
- 4 NOT THE DIRECTOR NAMED IN INTRO [GO TO 1.1a]

1.1 First, in case we get disconnected, I would like to confirm that this phone number is the correct phone number for [NAME OF DIRECTOR OR DEPUTY DIRECTOR].

- 1 YES [GO TO 1.2]
- 2 NO [GO TO 1.1a]

1.1a What is the correct phone number? _____

1.2 Can you confirm that [NAME OF FORENSIC CRIME LABORATORY] is the correct name of this agency?

- 1 YES [GO TO 1.3]
- 2 NO [GO TO 1.2a]

1.2a What is the correct name and spelling of the [FORENSIC CRIME LABORATORY]?

- 1 NOT A FORENSIC CRIME LAB [GO TO GENERIC THANK YOU SCREEN AND TERMINATE CALL]

1.3 I have the mailing address as [street address, city, state, zip]. Is this information correct?

- 1 YES [GO TO 1.4]
- 2 NO [GO TO 1.3a]

1.3a What is your full street address?

Street Address _____
City, State _____

Zip Code _____

1.4 Our records indicate that [TITLE] [FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME] is the Laboratory/Office Head. Is this information correct?

1 YES [GO TO 1.5]

2 NO [GO TO 1.4a]

1.4a Is the head of this crime laboratory the director or deputy director? If yes (or no), who is this person?

Title _____

First Name _____

Last Name _____

Professional Designation _____

1.5 Would [Person from 1.4] be the best point of contact for sending a survey about laboratory operations and providing the responses and data, including administrative, budget, and resource information?

1 YES [GO TO 1.6]

2 NO [GO TO 1.5a]

1.5a Please provide us with the name of the best point of contact for sending a survey.

Title _____

First Name _____

Last Name _____

Professional Designation _____

1.6 What is the best phone number to contact the [Head of Office or Best Point of Contact]?
PHONE NUMBER _____

1.7 What is the best email address to contact the [Head of Office or Best Point of Contact]?
EMAIL ADDRESS _____@_____

1.8 Thank you for answering these questions. In early 2025, your office will receive an invitation to participate in the Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories conducted by RTI International on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Statistics. We will request that you complete the survey online, however, we can mail you a copy of the survey if you would prefer to complete by hand. Would you like a copy mailed to you as well?

- 1 Yes, mail me a paper survey
- 2 No

GENERIC THANK YOU. Thank you so much for your time.

END. Thank you. Those are all of the questions that I have. If your laboratory is eligible, RTI International, the data collection agent for the Bureau of Justice Statistics, will send you the survey using the contact information you've provided. We thank you for your help. If you have any questions in the meantime, please call us toll free at 1-XXX-XXXX. Thank you again for your time.

Appendix B:
IRB Submission Confirmation



NOT HUMAN RESEARCH DETERMINATION

June 13, 2024

Belinda Weimer
919-485-7706
weimer@rti.org

Dear Belinda Weimer:

On 6/12/2024, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	2024 Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories (CPFFCL)
Investigator:	Belinda Weimer
IRB ID:	STUDY00022921
Funding Source:	Dept of Justice BJS
Customer/Client Name:	Dept of Justice BJS
Project/Proposal Number:	0219263
Contract/Grant Number:	15PBJS-23-GK-00836-BJSB
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None

The IRB determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by DOJ regulations 28 CFR 46.

Although RTI IRB oversight of this activity is not required, this determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and may not apply should any changes be made. If the nature or scope of the activity changes and there are questions about whether the revised activities constitute human subjects research, you should contact the IRB to discuss whether a new submission and determination is necessary.

Sincerely,

The RTI Office of Research Protection