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**Introduction**

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is the research and development agency

of the U.S. Department of Justice. Created in 1968 by Congress pursuant to the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act, the Institute is authorized to:

Sponsor research and development to improve and strengthen the Nation's system of justice with a balanced program of basic and applied research.

Evaluate the effectiveness of criminal justice and law enforcement programs and identify those that merit application elsewhere.

Support technological advances applicable to criminal justice.

Test and demonstrate new and improved approaches to strengthen the justice system.

Disseminate information from research, development, demonstrations, and evaluations.

This Plan signals the new administrative direction that NIJ will follow to achieve its research and evaluation goals. Conceptually, the Plan is the basis of NIJ's pyramid of research. It will be supplemented over the coming months by a series of solicitations on topics that speak to current or persistent policy concerns that warrant research investments. By their nature, those solicitations will represent a somewhat more focused part of this pyramid. Intramural studies are at the apex of the research pyramid. Questions with strong policy orientation or immediate concern may best be addressed by NIJ staff who can interact directly with the policymakers asking the questions.

Readers of prior NIJ Plans will find that this Plan has been substantially shortened. Much of the traditional background text has been discarded; suggested research topics have been reduced from paragraphs to phrases. This change in style, however, implies no change in the kinds of research being sought. NIJ believes that this abbreviated format is more consistent with the spirit and intent of the Plan as a vehicle to encourage the field to submit original ideas on a wide range of research issues.

Focused solicitations will appear intermittently over the next year. These will address more specific topics for which special funding is available. Certain activities funded under the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (Crime Law) will be focal points—specifically, community policing, violence against women, boot camps, and drug courts—as will evaluations of selected Bureau of Justice Assistance programs. NIJ will also initiate solicitations in collaborative arrangements with other

Federal agencies, as well as for topics that NIJ believes merit special attention for the development of knowledge. These solicitations will be announced through the **Federal Register** and other NIJ communications channels including the Internet (the Department of Justice and NCJRS Online) and special mailings. Interested applicants should telephone the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) at 800-851-3420 or e-mail [askncjrs@ncjrs.aspensys.com](mailto:askncjrs@ncjrs.aspensys.com) for pending releases and dates of announcement.

Partnerships are another new priority for the Institute. NIJ believes that many of today's crime problems require solutions that extend beyond criminal justice boundaries. The Institute has been active in discussions with other Federal agencies and private foundations and has established a variety of collaborative relationships. Some of these will manifest themselves in the form of special solicitations on specific topics or programs. Others will simply encourage collaborative or interdisciplinary research and offer the prospect of joint funding. Still others will result in the development of shared research agendas. NIJ encourages researchers from all disciplines to explore the opportunities for collaborative efforts presented in this Plan and subsequent announcements, and to propose arrangements that they are able to construct beyond those mentioned. NIJ particularly encourages coordination of research applications with submissions in other OJP agency Plans.

An organizational change has also occurred. The factors that distinguish "research" from "evaluation" are subtle and secondary to the substance of the issues. Therefore, the Institute has merged these functions into a single Office of Research and Evaluation that will review submissions for both areas. The Plan invites proposals for a range of funding amounts. It includes a category of small grants (less than \$50,000) across all goals and subjects. Readers should consult the administrative sections of the Research Plan for additional information on the differences in application requirements.

**Six Strategic Long-Range Goals**

In FY 1993, the Institute set forth six long-range goals as the focus of NIJ research, evaluation, and development in the coming years. The creation of this long-range agenda was well received; a large number of research and evaluation proposals were submitted, providing an interdisciplinary framework for 1994.