



# OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

## U.S. Department of Justice

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### DOJ OIG Releases Audit of the National Institute of Justice's Grants Management

Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced today the release of a report examining the National Institute of Justice's (NIJ) management of its grants program. The NIJ is a component of the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) that seeks to improve knowledge and understanding of crime and justice issues through science. Between fiscal years 2013 and 2016, NIJ awarded 180 grants totaling \$910.6 million.

The DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that, since its reorganization in 2015, NIJ has made progress in improving its grant management. However, we determined that further improvements are needed. The specific findings include:

- **Grant Award Process.** When issuing competitive and non-competitive grants, the NIJ generally used a fair and open process. However, the OIG found that the NIJ did not consistently document justifications for awarding competitive grants. Proper documentation of the justification for awards is important to maintain consistency and transparency, particularly in cases when the ultimate grant recipient received a lower pre-award peer review score than other applicants, as we identified in 42 applications in our sample.
- **Pre-Award Assistance.** We found instances of improper pre-award assistance to grant applicants prior to the FY 2016 solicitation cycle. However, NIJ developed new policies to address this concern, and we found no instances of improper pre-award assistance to grant applicants throughout the FY 2016 solicitation cycle and thereafter.
- **Post-Award Violations.** We found 11 instances of post-grant violations between 2010 and 2017. The majority of these violations involved NIJ social science analysts improperly performing duties assigned to grant managers, which increased the risk of inconsistent controls over grants.
- **Low Employee Engagement.** Since 2013, the NIJ's scores on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey have consistently been lower than the scores for DOJ, OJP, and the government-wide average in the categories of Employee Engagement and Leaders Lead. These low scores may indicate concern among the NIJ staff with their leaders'

motivation, communication, and integrity. NIJ leaders only began developing and implementing an action plan to address these concerns in 2017.

Today's report makes 7 recommendations to assist OJP to improve the NIJ's grants management and administration. OJP agreed with 6 recommendations and neither agreed nor disagreed with one recommendation, and has taken steps to resolve and/or close all 7 recommendations.

**Report:** Today's report is available on the OIG's website under "Recent Reports" and at the following link: <https://oig.justice.gov/reports/2019/a1909.pdf>.

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