



Pinellas County

Staff Report

File #: 21-2455A, **Version:** 1

Subject:

Grant award from the U.S. Department of Justice for the 2021 DNA Capacity Enhancement for Backlog Reduction Program on behalf of the Pinellas County Forensic Laboratory.

Recommended Action:

Approval of the grant award for the 2021 DNA Capacity Enhancement Backlog Reduction Grant on behalf of the Pinellas County Forensic Laboratory (Forensic Lab).

- Grant award to provide recurring funding for the Forensic Lab.
- This grant continues to provide annual recurring funding to supplement the Pinellas Forensic Lab with 1.5 DNA Analyst positions and equipment/supply purchases to maintain DNA case workload and avoid backlogs.
- The grant award is in the amount of \$288,450.00 over two years. No match is required for the grant.

Strategic Plan:

Ensure Public Health, Safety & Welfare

2.2 Be a facilitator, convener, and purchaser of services for those in need

Deliver First Class Services to the Public and Our Customers

5.3 Ensure effective and efficient delivery of the county services and support

Summary:

The DNA program seeks to increase the capacity of publicly funded forensic DNA laboratories to process more samples and reduce potential backlog of samples awaiting analysis. This grant continues to provide annual recurring funding to supplement the Pinellas Forensic Lab with 1.5 DNA Analyst positions and equipment/supply purchases to maintain DNA case workload.

The year to year rate of increase of DNA submission between 2019 and 2020 was 13%. 2021 is running 22% above the same time frame (Jan-Jun) from the previous year. The rate of increase of residential property crimes has decreased (possibly due to quarantines associated with COVID, however, violent crimes have increased). The grant funded staff and casework supplies will be used to maintain casework capacity.

Without these funds, at this time, the laboratory would need to either accept longer turnaround times and backlogs or change our submission policies to minimize the acceptance of evidence from nonviolent crimes. That said, the laboratory's long-term plans include adding additional non-grant funded staff; however, an exact timeline has not been determined

Background Information:

Previous DNA grant awards have been received for Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 through FY2020. This

FY2021 grant award approval continues funding for positions, equipment, and supplies, PCFL estimates that the laboratory will be able to analyze 250 cases, perform 200 technical reviews using grant funding staff and casework supplies.

Fiscal Impact:

The total grant award is \$288,450.00 and no match is required. This agreement is not consistent with the development of the FY22 Adopted Budget. A resolution to the FY22 Budget will be proposed at a future Board of County Commissioners meeting.

Staff Member Responsible:

Karen Yatchum, Director, Human Services

Partners:

Department of Justice
Pinellas County Forensic Laboratory

Attachments:

2021 Grant Application
2021 Notice of Grant Award