



Cornerstone for Justice: How Nebraska Uses Byrne JAG Funding to Protect Public Safety, Prevent Crime and Reduce Recidivism

The Byrne Justice Assistance Grant program (Byrne JAG) is the nation’s cornerstone justice assistance grant program, supporting the federal government’s crucial role in improving state and local justice systems by spurring innovation and by testing and replicating evidence-based practices in crime control and prevention. States, localities and tribal nations are able to deploy Byrne JAG funding against their most pressing public safety challenges, to design complete programs or fill gaps, to leverage other resources and to work across city, county and state lines.

Byrne JAG funds may be invested across the criminal justice system for prevention, diversion, enforcement, courts, prosecution and defense, corrections, victim assistance, mental health and substance use disorder treatment, and other community-based support. Byrne JAG improves the administration of justice, reduces incarceration, enhances fairness, improves outcomes for the justice-involved and saves taxpayer money.

Byrne JAG in Nebraska:

In 2018, the Nebraska Crime Commission invested in numerous successful initiatives. Some examples include:

- In consultation with the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, the Lincoln Police Department launched a “community cleanup” project in several Lincoln neighborhoods to improve community policing and decrease crime and violent crime. The goal of this intervention is to make residents aware of the police presence, clean up disorderly properties and promote a sense that the police are protecting community interests. Several activities make up the police intervention including: 1) engaging the residents in “knock and talk” discussions, 2) warning property owners about problem properties including writing Disorderly House letters when necessary, 3) holding community meetings to discuss the neighborhood, 4) holding community picnics and social gatherings, 5) enforcing current property and housing laws, and 6) mapping the intervention areas and saturating them with police officers.
- Byrne JAG funds support the Sarpy County Mental Health Program which offers intensive case management to clients with mental health problems modelled after problem solving courts. The program attempts to help individuals improve their living skills, manage mental health needs and reduce additional contacts with the criminal justice system. The purpose of the program is to reduce recidivism through intensive case management services.

With Byrne JAG funds, state and local governments have made remarkable strides in advancing data-driven practices in criminal justice.

Nebraska’s Investment By Purpose Area

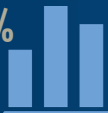
Total Investment = \$806,325

25%



Law Enforcement

31%



Planning ,
Evaluation &
Technology

10%



Corrections,
Community
Corrections &
Reentry

19%



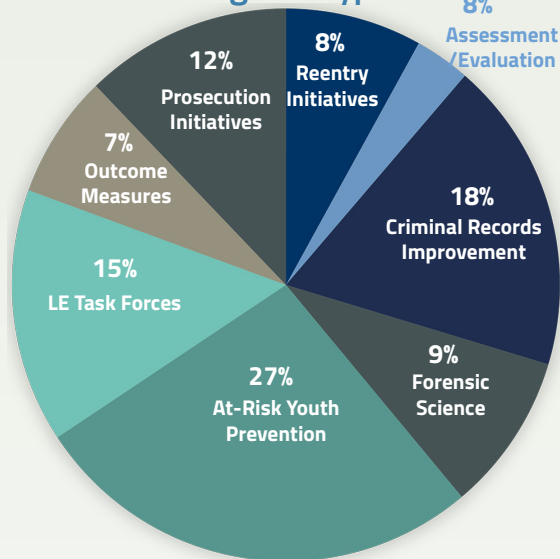
Drug Treatment
& Enforcement

15%



Prosecution & Courts

Nebraska's Byrne JAG Investments by Program Type



- Support for the Nebraska Department of Corrections in launching its second year of providing housing vouchers to parolees leaving the institution so that they can obtain appropriate and stable housing to assist them in transition from prison back into the community.
- The African Aid Initiative (AAI) is a non-profit agency that acts as an agent of change to educate, empower, and engage the war-ravaged refugee youth population from Africa. One of the AAI central goals is to reduce the rate of criminal activity among the refugee youth. AAI strives to strengthen families, encourage parental involvement in school and offer youth programming. With the assistance of the University of Nebraska, Lincoln AAI succeeded in these efforts during the last year by developing a state-of-the-art mentoring program that currently involves 40 refugee youth. The program is under development and moving toward an evidence based practice standard.
- Funding supports the Omaha Police Department (OPD), in collaboration with the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, to modify the Police Athletics for Community Engagement program (PACE) to focus more attention on youth currently in probation. Funds support home checks, conducted jointly by the OPD and Nebraska Probation

Officers, which include communications with the youth, communications with the parents, checks for contraband, education about the court order, penalties, and incentives, and an invitation to join the PACE project. The PACE project involves officers acting as sports coaches to engage the youth in sports activities (soccer, baseball, football, CrossFit and basketball) while developing meaningful relationships. The goal of this intervention is to develop strong positive relationships between the youth on probation and the officers in the service of ultimately reducing crime and violent crime in the communities involved.

How Byrne JAG Funding is Awarded:

Byrne JAG funds are awarded by a formula based on each state's population and crime rate. Sixty percent of a state's allocation is awarded to the state criminal justice planning agency (known as the State Administering Agency, or SAA) which, in turn, makes the funding available to local governments and non-profit service providers. The remaining 40 percent of the state's allocation is awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) directly to a number of local communities based on crime data.

Funding is authorized by Congress at \$1.1 billion, though annual funding has never reached that level. At its peak in FY02, Congress appropriated \$830 million. Until FY10 funding held steady at about \$500 million annually but has since dropped by about one-third. In FY18, the program was funded at \$340 million.

States and local communities use Byrne JAG funds to address needs and fill gaps across the entire justice system.

This document was created with the support of Grant No. 2016-DP-BX-K002 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the SMART Office, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions are those of the authors.