



## Nationwide Justice Trends: Planning, Evaluation and Technology Improvement Byrne JAG Purpose Area

The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program (Byrne JAG) is the nation’s cornerstone public safety grant program. Under the law, states and localities may invest the funds across the entire justice system under eight broad purpose areas.<sup>1</sup> One of those, the **planning, evaluation and technology improvement purpose area**, may include support for local and statewide planning efforts, justice information sharing, state analysis centers, program evaluations, fusion center support, and criminal justice record improvements, among other programming and activities.

In practice, states and territories have used or plan to use Byrne JAG funds to implement and support a broad range of activities, including, but not limited to:

- Data analysis and program evaluation
- Criminal records improvement efforts
- National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) compliance efforts
- Computer-aided dispatch and record management systems (CAD/RMS)
- Return on investment (ROI) evaluation of corrections spending
- Criminal justice information sharing investments
- Court technology and security improvements
- Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS)

NCJA provides training and technical assistance (TTA) to the state administering agencies (SAAs) in each state and territory responsible for planning how Byrne JAG funds will be allocated. This brief provides a high level **overview of trends and agency needs** in the planning, evaluation and technology improvement purpose area that states may find valuable as they conduct Byrne JAG strategic planning.

### National Planning, Evaluation and Technology Improvement Trends

A scan of national trends in criminal justice planning, evaluation and technology improvement programming identified several current areas of focus. These include:



Preparing for and participating in updated federal crime reporting requirements such as the [National Incident-Based Reporting System \(NIBRS\)](#)<sup>1</sup> as directed through the FBI. NIBRS represents a shift from summary-based reporting to incident-based reporting that allows for more detailed analysis of trends. (See table next page.)



Multiple states have begun data visualization projects that enable criminal justice practitioners and the public to access up-to-date crime data and trends. Arizona is one example of a [data visualization system](#) that provides an intuitive visualization platform to increase awareness and transparency.<sup>2</sup>

1. To learn about the Byrne JAG program and the eight purpose areas, see NCJA’s ‘[Investing Byrne JAG](#)’ webpage. (<https://www.ncja.org/investing-byrne-jag>)



Many jurisdictions have invested in [GIS mapping technology](#) that allows the identification of current and future areas of high crime for targeted law enforcement. These systems translate law enforcement data into “heat” maps showing the kinds of offenses being reported and types of arrests as well as time of day or week crime is being committed.<sup>3</sup>



Jurisdictions are also improving [data sharing among criminal justice agencies](#). These efforts seek to integrate disparate reporting and data management systems to better coordinate services and response between, for example, law enforcement, courts and community treatment providers.<sup>4</sup>

### Comparison of Information Captured by Summary Reporting Systems (SRS) and Incident-Based Reporting Systems

	Time/location of incident	Weapon used	Demographics	Relationship to victim	Property description & \$\$ value	Clearance date
<b>OLD Reporting System (SRS)</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>NEW Reporting System (NIBRS)</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

### National Planning, Evaluation and Technology Improvement Needs

Justice systems face policy, training and programmatic needs in the Planning Evaluation and Technology Improvement area, many of which may be addressed with Byrne JAG funding, including:

- Creation and investment in a [national data architecture](#);<sup>5</sup> one that enables local, state, tribal and federal information systems to integrate. This need has been compared to the standardization of railroad track gauge sizes that allowed the system to connect the coasts. Without this architecture, integration can be difficult.
- Rigorous strategic planning is crucial to ensuring that justice funds are allocated to impactful and evidence-based programs or, conversely, away from unproductive initiatives. The [National Criminal Justice Association](#) provides guidance and resources to help states plan their justice investments effectively.<sup>6</sup>
- In addition to the systems and technology needed to capture and share essential criminal justice data, states will need people who can [manage and analyze large data sets](#).<sup>7</sup> Higher education programs have emerged to produce justice data analysts who will be in high demand as more systems strive to become truly data-driven.

## Looking for Assistance?

With support from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the NCJA Training and Technical Assistance team provides Byrne JAG support to all state and territories free of charge. SAAs interested in training or guidance in completing a Byrne JAG strategic plan, accessing resources and information on promising practices, or opportunities to connect with and learn from their peers should visit [www.ncja.org](http://www.ncja.org) or email [strategicplanning@ncja.org](mailto:strategicplanning@ncja.org).

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## Endnotes

- 1 FBI. (2020, August 4). Are you ready? The countdown to NIBRS. FBI. <https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/cjis-link/are-you-ready-the-countdown-to-nibrs>.
- 2 SAC community data portal. (n.d.). [https://acjc.azcjc.gov/cdp\\_site/default.aspx](https://acjc.azcjc.gov/cdp_site/default.aspx).
- 3 Hunt, J., Inc., P. S. S., & About the author Joel Hunt is a computer scientist in NIJ's Office of Science and Technology. (n.d.). From crime mapping to crime forecasting: The evolution of place-based policing. National Institute of Justice. <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/crime-mapping-crime-forecasting-evolution-place-based-policing>.
- 4 Creating a framework for criminal justice information sharing. National Institute of Justice. (n.d.). <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/creating-framework-criminal-justice-information-sharing>.
- 5 Lacy, D. (2017, July). Analysis of the Criminal Justice System's Data Architecture (No. 250964). US Department of Justice. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/250964.pdf>
- 6 National Criminal Justice Association. (2021). NCJA's Training & Technical Assistance (TTA) to State Administering Agencies (SAAs). [https://370377fc-459c-47ec-b9a9-c25f410f7f94.filesusr.com/ugd/cda224\\_5bf7f2a440084817bd-920cffc0b925c4.pdf](https://370377fc-459c-47ec-b9a9-c25f410f7f94.filesusr.com/ugd/cda224_5bf7f2a440084817bd-920cffc0b925c4.pdf)
- 7 Criminal Justice | Data Analysis Is Driving Justice Reforms. (2020, July 31). National Conference of State Legislatures. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/criminal-justice-data-analysis-is-driving-justice-reforms-magazine2020.aspx>

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