

# Making the Most out of Your Innovative Prosecution Solutions Grant

---

Through the Innovative Prosecution Solutions (IPS) initiative, the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) supports prosecutors' efforts to combat violent crime and enhance public safety. IPS has enabled criminal justice practitioners across the country to employ creative strategies to more efficiently and effectively address violence—ranging from gang and gun violence, violence against women, to opioid-related offenses.

In many cases, prosecutors have collaborated with researchers or crime analysts to engage in real-time data collection and analysis that has led to immediate, actionable intelligence. Some jurisdictions have developed diversion programs to better serve youthful offenders and defendants with substance use disorder. Prosecutors' offices have also deployed software programs and investigative technology tools to enhance case management systems and investigative capabilities and expedite case-level decision-making.

Regardless of the specific project focus, the most successful prosecutors' offices are the ones that engage with external stakeholders. IPS grantees have partnered with court officials, local law enforcement, crime analysts, community-based service providers, and other allied professionals to maximize the effectiveness of prosecution strategies. Many jurisdictions have also engaged professional researchers to generate evidence-based findings about the impact of their projects.

Any jurisdiction that implements an ambitious criminal justice initiative will likely face challenges along the way. These may involve challenges with getting projects started, keeping lines of communication open, ensuring all partners or collaborators have the resources to achieve goals, or meeting intended targets. The IPS Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) team is available to all grantees to help address these issues.

While each grantee is unique, this resource seeks to share lessons learned for overcoming challenges common to IPS grantees—and for strengthening both the internal capacity of prosecutors' offices and the partnerships between prosecutors, researchers, crime analysts, other collaborators, and TTA partners.

## Overview of Key IPS Roles

---

### *IPS Site Team*

The **prosecutor and implementation team** is responsible for:

- Directing and implementing the proposed prosecutor-led crime reduction strategy
- Creating protocols or programming that will streamline and enhance various capabilities within the prosecutor's office
- Developing an action plan
- Identifying and onboarding partners or collaborators
- Managing the IPS grant
- Working with the IPS TTA partners

A **research partner** can be a vital resource for:

- Helping the prosecutor and implementation team develop a performance assessment plan
- Working with the prosecution team to identify and collect performance metrics
- Conducting interviews with staff and key stakeholders to collect information about strategy implementation, challenges, and lessons learned
- Reviewing data and providing findings on performance assessment to the prosecutor and implementation team on a periodic basis
- Contributing to the final IPS grant report

**Crime analysts** or **data collection staff** offer expertise in:

- Assessing the types of technology (e.g., data analytics software, forensic evidence review and processing, communication systems, inter-agency case management systems) that can help reduce and manage caseloads and enhance efforts to reduce violent crime
- Making evidence-based recommendations based on performance assessments throughout the life cycle of the IPS grant

## **IPS TTA Partners**

**Prosecution support:** Available are a team of former prosecutors led by **AEquitas** and supported by independent experts with extensive experience in prosecution and TTA to support prosecutors and collaborators, deliver practice-based trainings and webinars, conduct legal research and analysis, and connect IPS grantees to subject matter experts.

**Research, technology, and analytic support:** Available are a team of researchers, led by **RTI International**, with extensive justice-based research and evaluation experience to support research or crime analyst partners, deliver trainings and webinars, and connect IPS grantees to subject matter experts.

***For more on the IPS TTA team and the assistance it can provide, visit***

**<https://innovativeprosecutionsolutions.org/about-us/>**

## **How a Research Partner or Crime Analyst Can Help a Prosecutor Leading an IPS Initiative**

---

- Provide evidence-based information to **identify more efficient practices and protocols** that can be implemented and develop actionable plans to help decide upon—and eventually measure— a technology modernization program within the prosecutor's office.
- **Create or review an action plan**<sup>1</sup> and other conceptual tools (e.g., timeline, logic model, case flow, impact evaluation plan) that map out the specific steps of an IPS project.
- **Throughout the life cycle of the grant, provide evidence-based findings** that can inform necessary changes to specific aspects of:
  - the prosecutorial strategy,
  - performance metrics (to measure the success of the strategy or the programming), and/or
  - the study design or prosecutorial programming.

---

<sup>1</sup> All IPS grantees are required to develop and submit an action plan to BJA through the JustGrants System. The IPS TTA team has action plan templates and sample action plans to aid sites' development of these documents.

- Work with the prosecution team to develop a plan to **acquire, collect, and analyze data to assess performance**, as well as create regular feedback and communication among the crime analysts and the practitioners.
  - Lead focus groups, interviews, or surveys with stakeholders.
  - Develop a data collection, analysis, and reporting timeline.
  - Use the analysis to inform/amend project activities on an ongoing basis.
- **Collect qualitative data and report findings.**
  - Document barriers, successes, and lessons learned.
  - Identify key staff or ingredients of the “secret sauce” that are instrumental to success to better promote the chance of the project being sustained long-term.
  - Document and analyze the effect of external changes, such as the outcome of a local election, turnover of key staff, or changes to state law.
  - Identify, track, and measure the innovative components of the IPS grant.
- **Collect quantitative data and report findings.**
  - Conduct a review of available data sources to identify data elements that could be used to assess performance.
  - Develop a list of data elements and sources that will be used to assess performance; negotiate data access with agencies or organizations that maintain needed data.
  - Conduct internal validity checks to ensure the logical consistency and soundness of performance aspects that are being measured.
  - Analyze the data to measure performance related to the implementation and effect of the crime reduction strategy.
- **Comply with all ethical requirements related to research with human subjects**, which may include approval from an Institutional Review board.

## How a Prosecutor Leading an IPS Initiative Can Help a Research Partner or Crime Analyst

---

- **Involve the research partners or crime analysts in regular IPS team meetings.**
  - **Conduct and share findings from data analysis** to help inform and guide the IPS crime reduction strategy and to assess performance.
  - **Provide real-time updates to research partners or crime analysts** on any changes to project strategies or challenges that arise, particularly if this has the potential to impact performance measurement.

- **Facilitate research partners' or crime analysts' ability to regularly acquire data** and access staff or collaborators for data collection activities.
- Include research partners or crime analysts on **any requests for TTA.**

**Former IPS  
Grantee:**

***“It is ... common and expected for grantees to make strategic, tactical, and programmatic changes based on data analysis and feedback from researchers.”***

## **How IPS TTA Partners Can Help the IPS Site Team**

---

### ***Training***

- The IPS TTA team provides interactive, dynamic, and customized content that can be tailored to prosecution or multidisciplinary audiences. Training can be conducted virtually (through private or public webinar and learning platforms) or in-person (circumstances permitting).
- The TTA team can also identify training hosted by other subject matter experts and support grantee participation in those trainings.

### ***Research***

- Upon request, the TTA team can conduct legal research on any topic in the form of nationwide legal surveys or jurisdiction-specific legal analyses. It can also provide annotated bibliographies and reviews of social scientific literature.

### ***Enhancing Project Implementation***

- The TTA team can help site teams strategize on case-level issues (e.g., assistance drafting a motion or brief, charging strategies, jury selection assistance, etc.) and office-level issues (e.g., assessing, developing, and refining project policies and protocols; developing Memoranda of Understanding).
- The TTA team can also facilitate exchanges with peer jurisdictions.

### ***Subject Matter Expertise***

- The TTA team can connect grantees with a wide pool of subject matter experts in areas such as caseload management, violent crime investigations, forensic

expertise, trial advocacy, crime and data analysis, the implementation of investigative and administrative technologies, alternatives to incarceration, **and much more.**

**Ongoing Project Support**

- The TTA team can assist with the development of action plans to align project implementation with project goals; answer questions regarding project budgets, subcontracts, and extensions; and strategize with sites to sustain projects.

**Evaluation Support**

- The research TTA team can support sites in developing and refining research designs, data collection and analysis processes, and data management strategies; brainstorming outcome, performance, and implementation metrics; and provide recommendations for data management, analysis, data-mining, and file-sharing software.

And more! If you don't see something you need here, email us at [info@aequitasresource.org](mailto:info@aequitasresource.org)

**Overcoming Common Challenges**

---

Like other jurisdictions that have implemented ambitious criminal justice initiatives, IPS grantees often face challenges in getting projects started, keeping lines of communication open, ensuring all partners or collaborators have the resources to achieve goals, and meeting intended targets. **We encourage you to speak with your TTA team about any challenges you may face or anticipate facing as you implement your project.** Listed below are some common challenges and proposed strategies for addressing them:

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Strategy</b>
<b>Staff turnover (e.g., project lead is reassigned or leaves the office)</b> makes it difficult to sustain project activities	<b>Information-Sharing Plans:</b> These plans enable key project staff to share information internally with office leadership and other project partners so that administration and activities of the project become institutionalized, allowing new personnel assigned to come quickly

	up to speed.
<b>Major systemic changes</b> (e.g., shifting from a horizontal prosecution model to a vertical prosecution model) have affected project implementation	<b>Virtual Site Visits:</b> During site visits, TTA partners identify the status of the project, as well as any existing or upcoming issues within a jurisdiction that may impact the project, and brainstorm solutions to those issues to maintain project momentum.
<b>Limited or inconsistent data</b> to support performance metrics or project evaluation; or <b>issues with data-sharing</b> (e.g., difficulty obtaining data/information from diversion participants due to low participation rate/closures from COVID; data entered into systems by various partners without data entry guide or dictionary)	<b>TTA Research Partner Assistance:</b> The TTA team’s research partner can assist sites in identifying data sources and collection strategies, as well as solutions for overcoming challenges with incomplete or inconsistent data.
<b>Lack of buy-in from key stakeholders</b> to make the project successful (e.g., criminal justice or community partner is reluctant to commit personnel to project); difficulties with collaboration or communication with interagency partners	<b>TTA Prosecution Partner Assistance:</b> The TTA team’s prosecutor partner can assist sites with stakeholder outreach and with recruitment and collaboration strategies in coordination with a vast network of BJA and TTA partner contacts and subject matter experts. The TTA team can help enhance project collaboration by providing or developing MOUs and resources on community coordinated responses.
<b>Project delays</b> due to the time needed to satisfy grant's special conditions (e.g., budget approval, action plan submission)	<b>TTA Team Assistance:</b> The TTA team partners with BJA to assist sites with any grant management issues, including completing required financial and semi-annual reports and submitting materials to satisfy all special conditions of the grant.
<b>Project delays</b> due to time needed to purchase technology, subcontract with allied professionals, and unforeseen delays	<b>Monthly Calls/Action Planning:</b> The TTA team maintains regular contact with grantees to help anticipate and resolve any delays related to jurisdiction contracting or purchasing requirements that support grant activities. They also assist in creating an action plan with a

	project timeline to keep activities on track and with requests for project extensions when delays impact timely project completion and evaluation.
<b>Difficulty converting project objectives</b> into realistic and tangible action steps	<b>Action Planning:</b> The TTA team regularly assists sites in creating action plans from the objectives in the site’s grant narrative by identifying specific activities, persons/agencies responsible for completing the activities, any assistance/resources needed to complete the activities, and a timeline for completion of the activities.

## Key IPS Project Milestones

---

The period of performance for each IPS grantee is two years (*i.e.*, 24 months). Below is an estimated timeline for key project milestones.

Months	Key Tasks
<b>Months 1-3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Assemble the IPS site team (project prosecutors, law enforcement partners, social service providers, crime analysts, research partners, etc.) and confirm roles and responsibilities for each team member.</li> <li>➤ Develop and submit project budget for BJA approval.</li> <li>➤ Attend introductory calls with IPS TTA partners.</li> </ul>
<b>Months 1-6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Participate in virtual site visit with IPS TTA partners for project assessment and action planning (requires participation of lead prosecutor for project and research partner, if involved).</li> </ul>
<b>Months 4, 10, 16, 22</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Submit semi-annual progress reports to JustGrants at <a href="https://justicegrants.usdoj.gov">https://justicegrants.usdoj.gov</a></li> </ul>
<b>Months 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Submit quarterly financial report to JustGrants at <a href="https://justicegrants.usdoj.gov">https://justicegrants.usdoj.gov</a></li> </ul>
<b>Months 18-24</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Develop and submit final technical report.</li> </ul>



<b>Months 1-24</b>	➤ Meet regularly with IPS TTA team for implementation and maintenance of the innovative strategy.
<b>Months 1-24</b>	➤ Monthly/bi-monthly calls with IPS TTA partners.

## High-Level Expectations Over the Course of the IPS Grant Period:

---

**A designated prosecutor leads implementation of the IPS strategy and regularly involves all relevant partners.**

- A **research partner or crime analyst collects and analyzes data** in order to assess project strategies or team performance.<sup>1</sup>
- The site team **participates in regularly scheduled recurring calls with IPS TTA partners** to discuss strategy implementation, grant management, and TTA needs; monthly for the first year of the grant and then every two months for the second year (or more frequently if needed).
- **Prosecutors and research partners/crime analysts meet frequently** to discuss:
  - Evaluation or performance assessment planning
  - Preliminary evaluation or assessment findings and strategy implementation updates
  - Barriers to implementation and course corrections for the innovative strategy
  - Updates to action plans or performance metrics
  - Data sharing and collection, including creating Memorandum of Understanding or other data-sharing agreements
  - Recommendations for new software programs or other technological tools and staff training
  - Case dispositions
  - Sustainability planning
  - TTA needs

---

<sup>1</sup> A research partner is not required for FY2020 grantees.

*This project was supported by Grant No. 2017-YX-BX-K002 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's 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 Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.*