# Program Narrative

The Mississippi Division of Public Safety Planning is the State Administering Agency (SAA) for the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program. The DPSP is making this application to the US Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) in the federal funding amount of $ 1,858,617.00 to assist the State’s efforts to prevent and reduce crime and violence in Mississippi.

1. **Description of the Issue**

The latest U.S. Census Bureau estimates Mississippi’s population at 2,976,149 of which 59.1 percent of the population is white and 37.8 percent of the population is black or African American. Overall, the Hispanic population in Mississippi is steadily growing. The Hispanic or Latino population increased in Mississippi from 1.6 percent in 2006 to an estimate of 3.4% for 2010.

Its basic rural demographic and topographic features are conducive to drug related traffic and transfers. It ranks 31st in the nation in size and has a total land area of 46,907 square miles with a population density of 60.6 persons per square mile. Mississippi is one of the poorest states in the nation. It ranks last, or next to last, in most economic categories. According to data from the U. S. Census, the median household income in Mississippi was $43,567 in 2018. Per capita money income was listed as $23,434. It was further reported that 19.7 percent of the state’s population had incomes less than the poverty level. Mississippi has a violent crime ranking of 25.

The movement of illegal drugs into and through Mississippi has been a significant problem for law enforcement for a number of years. Mississippi is ideally suited with its Interstate system, deep-water and river ports, air, and rail systems as the “Crossroads of the South” to facilitate drug movement from the South Texas/Mexico area and Gulf ports to the entire Midwest and Eastern United States. The state is comprised of 82 counties, located within 47,233 square miles, with the majority offering rural agricultural areas. Mississippi has 362 miles of coastline extending from Louisiana to Alabama. Mississippi lies within 500 miles of more than 115 million consumers and 136 major metropolitan areas. Mississippi has an elaborate system of interstate highways and major thoroughfares that make traveling to these metropolitan areas quick and easy. Mississippi has seven passenger airports including the Golden Triangle Regional Airport in Columbus, Tupelo, Municipal Airport, Gulfport-Biloxi Airport in Gulfport, Hattiesburg-Laurel Regional Airport in Hattiesburg, Greenville Municipal Airport, Meridian Municipal Airport and the Jackson-Evers International Airport in Jackson. In Mississippi alone, primary rail carriers on the nearly 3,000 miles of train track include the Illinois Central Railroad, Kansas City Southern, Burlington Northern, Columbus & Greenville Railroad Company, and Norfolk Southern System. Amtrak passenger service to and from New Orleans, Louisiana to Chicago, Illinois transits the entire state with major stops in state providing yet another conduit for transporting and distributing large quantities of all types of drugs.

*(State’s strategy/funding priorities)*

The Mississippi Strategic Justice Plan, commissioned by the Mississippi Department of Public Safety’s Division of Public Safety Planning, utilized various methods and data sources to render a needs assessment of violent crime and drug crime in Mississippi, along with an analysis of criminal justice resources. Using Uniform Crime Report and state-level crime data, coupled with focus group interview and questionnaire data, the needs assessment revealed that while positive inroads against violent and drug-related crime have been made in recent years, there remains room for additional improvement. Mississippi continues to exhibit an unusually high murder rate, and Jackson is among the more violent cities in the United States. Although the five-year strategic plan is up for review and updating, The Mississippi Department of Public Safety Planning will continue the plan already in place until the pandemic is under control and stabilized enough for assistance from the National Criminal Justice Association technical support team. Consequently, three **violent crime strategic objectives** are proposed for attainment by the conclusion of the five-year strategic planning period:

1. Reduce the overall violent crime rate in the state by 5 percent;
2. Improve the violent crime ranking of Mississippi within the nation by two rank-levels, from the rank of 34 to the rank of 36;
3. Improve the violent crime ranking of Jackson among America’s most violent cities by two rank-levels, from a rank of 14 to a rank of 16.

Drug crime also continues to pose a number of challenges. A substantial proportion of Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) inmates have committed drug offenses, and law enforcement personnel contend that there are strong links between drugs and criminal activity. Mississippi features a multi-county High Intensity Drug-Trafficking Area in the state’s South-Central region, with diverted pharmaceuticals posing the most significant drug-related threats to public safety and well-being, followed closely by cocaine and methamphetamine. The following **drug crime strategic objectives** are proposed for attainment by the end of 2020.

1. Reduce the percent of Mississippi Department of Corrections inmates who committed a drug offense by 5 percent;
2. Expand the presence of drug courts in the state by establishing an additional three drug courts.

Opportunities for workforce, technology, and data capacity enhancement surfaced during focus group interviews, forums, key informant contacts, and questionnaires circulated to law enforcement statewide. The following **infrastructural objectives** have been proposed.

1. Institute a needs-based and data-driven competitive grant application system for local funding allocation by the end of 2020, with development and training to precede system implementation
2. Pursue technological enhancements, with a prioritization of real-time data access and reporting technology
3. Enhance statewide crime reporting and data management capacity through a state UCR

*(Subgrant award process)*

All agencies or organizations wishing to apply for grant funding should submit a subgrant application package which includes the following information: 1) a brief project summary; 2) a statement of the need for the grant and the problem to be addressed; 3) the objectives and projected impact for the project; 4) the implementation plan including the timeline for implementing the project and achieving its goals; 5) a sustainability plan; 6) a budget summary; 7) a budget narrative ; 8) an evaluation plan, summary of data that will be collected and provided to measure results; 9) a non-supplanting certification, which states federal funds will not be used to supplant state or local funds; and 10) an equal employment opportunity compliance, which states whether you are required to have an EEOC plan within your establishment.

Additional guidance on preparing a budget may be found at the Office of Justice Programs Web Site at www.ojp.gov/grants101/developbudget.htm

**Release of the Announcement and Timeline for Review**

The Mississippi Department of Public Safety will post a request for proposals as soon as practical upon notification of removal of the special conditions withholding funds by BJA. The request for proposals for sub-award funding will be published on the website for the Mississippi Department of Public Safety and will be distributed by email to all current and former sub-grantees.

The deadline for submission of grant applications to the Mississippi Department of Public Safety will be set for one month after the posting of the announcement and will be noted on the request for proposals and website. If special conditions are removed and the DPSP is authorized to award grant money in October of 2021, proposals will be due in January 2022 and selections will be made in March of 2022. Sub-award program implementation will begin as soon as practical following conclusion of the selective process, but most likely occur between March -May of 2022.

**Receipt and Processing of Proposals**

Applications from potential sub-grantees should be submitted in writing to the MS Department of Public Safety Planning. Applications should designate a point of contact for the submitting agency or organization and should include a telephone and email address for that individual. Applications may be submitted by U.S. mail or another carrier of the applicant’s choice but should be received by the established deadline.

*(Progress & Challenges)*

The Mississippi Department of Public Safety, Division of Public Safety Planning conducted an online stakeholder survey on May 24 through June 29, 2018 to update the MS JAG Strategic Plan already in place. The survey was created to gather input from a broad group of stake holders to determine the funding recommendations under the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program. The survey respondents ranked most challenging issues facing their community or the State of Mississippi. Nearly half of all respondents identified the following issues: drugs, property crime and alcohol offenses. The respondents were then asked to prioritize spending under the Byrne JAG funding across the eight federal purpose areas. Some responses aligned with the previous survey prioritizing spending for law enforcement, courts and mental health programs were the top three categories. However, the main challenge so far with the advisory group council is refining the funding recommendations and identifying best practices for program implementation. Due to the recent nationwide pandemic there has been no communication about reaching out to NCJA to help identify some questions that might get the advisory council group to get closer to align funding priorities based on data received from disciplines representing JAG purpose areas.

*(Description of the programs)*



**Selected Programs for 2021**

Upon generating the foregoing strategic objectives, the Strategic Planning Leadership Team also surveyed a series of programs that will be utilized to achieve these goals. They are listed below in summary form.

***1—Drug Courts (Mississippi)***

A drug court is a special court given the responsibility to handle cases involving drug-using offenders through comprehensive supervision, drug testing, treatment services and intermediate sanctions and incentives. This program will be funded in FY 2021.

Drug courts are special courts charged with addressing crimes committed by persons addicted to drugs or alcohol. Drug courts seek to rehabilitate drug-using offenders through drug treatment and intensive supervision. They use a variety of strategies to discharge these responsibilities, including drug-testing and frequent court appearances. Drug courts offer the incentive to remain out of jail and retain employment. Drug courts are also capable of issuing jail sentences if participants fail to remain drug-free or fall out of compliance with all program requirements.

Drug courts generally have three primary goals: (1) to reduce recidivism; (2) to reduce substance abuse among participants; and (3) to rehabilitate participants. Mississippi has a defined drug court program that is overseen by the Administrative Office of the Courts. All drug courts that are receiving funds through the JAG program are required to follow the 10 key components of drug courts established by the Drug Court Programs Office, U. S. Department of Justice.

**Workforce, Technology, and Data Enhancement**

***2—Local law enforcement support:***

This program will provide support to small jurisdictions that do not qualify for a direct award under the Justice Assistance Grant Program. These jurisdictions often lag in resources, including manpower, equipment and technology necessary to provide effective law enforcement

services. This program will especially target technological resources necessary for crime data reporting and inquiries into state and national criminal arrests databases. This program will be funded in FY 2021 and FY 2022.

The goal of this program is to provide resources to local law enforcement agencies and to upgrade technologies, hire additional personnel, body-worn cameras and to send officers to VALOR training. The Department of Public Safety Planning will ensure local agencies put into place policies and procedures for the use of Body Worn cameras, Body Armor Policies, related to equipment usage, data storage, privacy, victims, access, disclosure, training, etc.

***3—Hot Spots Policing: (Evidence Based Program)***

Beginning with FY 2021 funding, the state proposes to implement effective crime reduction and crime prevention strategies in select communities that exhibit high rates of crime based on Uniform Crime Reports. This program has been evaluated and found to be effective.

The goal of this program will be to improve social and physical order in selected high crime areas in Mississippi. Primary components of the program are to: (1) increase arrests; (2) implement situational prevention strategies; and (3) implement social service actions.

*(NIBRS)*

The Criminal Information Center will be responsible for making sure the State of Mississippi is in full compliance by 2021. Robin Layton, NIBRS Program Coordinator for CIC has started implementing NIBRS meetings across Mississippi to get all cities and towns in NIBRS compliance and to complete a need assessment to assist the Mississippi JAG Program to understand what each Local Law Agency needs to report their Uniform Crime data by providing JAG funds under the Local Law Purpose Area to purchase either a Records Management System, equipment or software. The Justice Assistance Grant 3% percent set aside amount has been allocated to the Criminal Information Center in making initial preparations on training Local Law Agencies with submitting crime data according to the Uniform Crime Reporting Program’s standards for NIBRS. The estimate number of Local Law Enforcement Agencies at this time is a total of 512 in Mississippi.  There are currently 126 LEAs NIBRS certified of that estimated.  If acquiring a NIBRS Record Management System is too difficult or expensive for small local law agencies, DPSP has partnered with CIC on contacting a larger NIBRS participating agency in Mississippi to partner with a smaller agency to assist with reporting their data on their behalf. Also, the FY 2020 JAG award funding has prioritized the local law enforcement category budget be used to purchase software to make sure each agency is NIBRS compliant by 2021. Another recommendation will be to offer an online portal or furnish a Web form for agencies to report their NIBRS data through the Criminal Information Center.

1. **Project Design and Implementation**

The DPSP has partnered in a state and federal collaborative initiative with the National Public Safety Partnership (PSP) alongside the City of Jackson’s Police Department, Hinds County District Attorney’s Office, US Attorney’s Office (USAO), Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), US Marshals Service (USMS), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), and the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Jackson joined the Violence Reduction Network (VRN), now known as National Public Safety Partnership (PSP) in fall of 2016. The PSP provides an innovative framework for DOJ to enhance its support for law enforcement officer and prosecutors in the investigation, prosecution and deterrence of violent crime, especially crime related to gun violence, gangs, and drug trafficking. This approach serves as a platform for DOJ to directly engage with cities to identify and prioritize resources that will help local communities address their violent crime crisis.

Following Jackson’s induction into the former Violence Reduction Network (VRN) at the 2016 VRN Summit, the site identified four preliminary violence reduction focus areas: (1) gun and drug-related crime, (2) technology and information sharing, (3) community engagement, and (4) grants. In order to strategically focus its VRN efforts, in the first six months of VRN, Jackson engaged in various assessments (violence analysis assessment, crime analysis capacity assessment, grant landscape review, technology assessment, and homicide investigations and prosecution assessment), with the goal of developing a VRN Strategic Plan. The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) conducted a thorough assessment of the JPD’s technology capabilities in late 2016. The assessment examined areas such as dispatch software, records management software, the mobile environment, case management, crime analysis, IT support, and other related technologies. The JPD is using the assessment findings and recommendations to inform its VRN Strategic Plan and to identify grant opportunities. In addition, the FBI provided Digital Imaging Video Response Team (DIVRT) training in January 2017. The DIVRT initiative has demonstrated proven success in aiding police departments in solving violent crimes and forging positive police-community relations through the rapid recovery and exploitation of video evidence via traditional and social media.

During the State’s strategic planning process there were local communities’ stakeholders including justice leaders, local law personnel and community advocates from the State of Mississippi involved in Focus group interviews and questionnaires circulated statewide to over sixty (60) local law enforcement agencies that also produced prescient insight into the administration of justice in Mississippi. When asked about the top challenges faced by local law enforcement, the most significant proportion of those contacted identified inadequate resources as the key hurdle. More specifically, local law enforcement agencies have difficulty securing and retaining personnel. Equipment shortfalls are also linked to funding constraints. When asked about the actions needed to address these challenges, more funding was the most common response. Not surprisingly, funds are sought for hiring, retention, and training of personnel, as well as improved equipment (e.g., vehicles) and technology (e.g., computer hardware and software).

Local law enforcement personnel were in general agreement that data needs in the state are formidable. Many identified various gaps in the technological infrastructure. These generally included outdated computers coupled with a lack of software for recording and reporting criminal activity. As a close second, a series of data problems were commonly mentioned. These included an inability to integrate data from various sources (e.g., state to locality and vice-versa), as well as a lack of mobile data for use on patrol. Law enforcement would welcome technology

that would enhance their ability to record and track crime, as well as platforms that would permit two-way data sharing and data integration across localities. In summary, Mississippi exhibits clear and compelling needs with respect to the enhancement of public safety. The state has made noteworthy inroads with respect to deterring some types of violent and drug-related crimes, but there remains a great deal to be done to improve the public safety climate in the state by diminishing the high proportion of violent and drug-related crimes committed in Mississippi.

**Strategic Justice Plan Committees and Public Safety Planning Staff**

*(Stakeholders)*

The Division of Public Safety Planning, Department of Public Safety, acknowledges the participation and contributions of members of the Strategic Justice Plan Advisory Committee and participants in the Needs Prioritization and Goal Development Forum in the development of the state's strategic justice plan. Members of the respective committees were:

**Strategic Justice Plan Advisory Committee**

* Judge Thomas Broome, County Court Judge, Rankin County
* Andre DeGruy, State Defender, Office of State Public Defender
* Penney Ainsworth, President, Boys and Girls Club of Central MS
* Christy Gutherz, Deputy Commissioner, MS Department of Corrections
* Audrey McAfee, Deputy Administrator, MS Department of Corrections
* Ann Rodio, Program Administrator, Department of Mental Health
* DeWann Clark, Program Director, Criminal Information Center
* Dr. Gwen Bouie-Haynes, Retired, Catholic Charities, Inc.
* Russ Andreacchio, Director, Weems Community Mental Health Center

**Division of Public Safety Planning Staff**

Ray Sims, Executive Director

Emberly K. Holmes, Office Director, Office of Justice Programs

Sharon Nguyen, Bureau Director, Office of Justice Programs

Melinda Padfield, Program Manager, Office of Justice Programs

1. **Capabilities and Competencies**

The Division of Public Safety Planning (DPSP) will continue to coordinate and collaborate with federal, state and local criminal justice system agencies, and other entities in administering the JAG program. DPSP presently administers several federally funded programs. Efforts will be coordinated with the PSP Project, RSAT, PSN, PREA, Juvenile Justice and other justice related programs in implementing approved programs under JAG.

In the near future, the DPSP will be working closely with National Criminal Justice Association on defining the next strategic plan goals by reviewing and processing the MS Stakeholder Survey which was distributed throughout the State of MS and holding the first MS JAG Strategic Planning meeting on June 5, 2018 with assistance from NCJA. There was a 26-question survey open between May 24-June 29, 2018 with responses from individuals across the state representing a broad spectrum of justice system partners. NCJA staff then conducted a data analysis of the survey and generated a preliminary summary report which was distributed to DPSP staff for discussion during the onsite strategic planning meeting held on June 5, 2018. The NCJA and partner organizations facilitated this training and worked with Mississippi to provide stakeholders and staff with an overview of 2019 JAG requirements and strategies for coalition building and collaboration between the SAA and identified providers and agencies. The next steps will be to reach out to NCJA again for more technical assistance with a planning meeting to hold another Focus Group with the Advisory Council to recommend new programs or keep the programs already in place based on the last survey.

1. **Plan for Collecting the Data**

The Division of Public Safety Planning will submit quarterly Performance Measurement data to the office of BJA along with reporting on the Death in Custody Reporting Act via the BJA Performance management Tool (PMT). The subgrantee performance measurement data will include all required OJP/PMT measures: Number of offenders participating in program, participants receiving treatment, alternative courts or programs created, number of offenders’ arrest, prosecuted, drug seizures, increase in local arrest, local policing capability, and proper use and reporting of funds.

**PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE**

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| ACTIVITY | 10/01/2021 –  12/31/2021  Year 1 | | | 01/01/2022–  12/31/2022  Year 2 | | | 01/01/2023 –  12/31/2023  Year 3 | | | 01/01/2024 –  12/31/2024  Year 4 | | |
| **Award grant funds to program sub-grantees. (Year 2)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Verify program participant’s qualifications for program participation. (Year 2)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Provide technical assistance to sub grantees for implementation of new awards. (Year 2)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Work with sub grantees to establish effective policing strategies and programs.**  **(Year 3)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Verify establishment of related services as partnership and or networking systems between other agencies for data information sharing.**  **(Year 3 & 4)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Continue to meet with the Criminal Information Center about becoming in Full Compliance with the FBI’s NIBRS data submission.**  **(Year 1-4))** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Verify program duration and participant’s completion.**  **(Year 4)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Develop coordination between SAA and sub-grantees about reducing violent crimes in the community. (Year 2-4)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Continue to engage the local communities in the strategic planning process. (Year 2-4)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |