

**Position Announcement – Director****Orleans Parish Post Conviction DNA Testing Project & Evidence Inventory**

The New Orleans Police and Justice Foundation seeks potential candidates for Project Director for an ambitious biological evidence backlog project in New Orleans. The position is an 18 month contractual position with the potential to be renewed for an additional 18 months pending the availability of grant funding. It will begin on January 1, 2010. The successful candidate will be committed to helping New Orleans rebuild and will have the ability to keep the long range goals and vision of the project in mind while implementing the ambitious day to day agenda of the project. This means the candidate should have skills in: management, organization, diplomacy, leadership, communication and accurate data management.

The Project Director will manage a project with dual purposes: the project will provide the human resources and money needed to clear up and inventory the evidence rooms in Orleans Parish and it will involve the DA's office and Innocence Project New Orleans to make sure that DNA testing is performed on all biological evidence found during the inventory in old cases where it could prove innocence or confirm guilt. The project involves multiple agencies and an advisory board of stakeholders (representatives from all the criminal justice agencies involved as well as the criminal district court bench). The Project seeks to transform evidence storage facilities in Orleans to institutions with the capacity to raise the standard of criminal justice administration in the city; organized, inventoried evidence facilities will support effective and speedy prosecutions of crime and provide accountability in older cases. The success of the project, which can serve as an example in other areas of criminal justice and as a state-wide model, will be determined by the vision and efficacy of the person hired to be Project Director.

The Project Director will be based at the Clerk of Court's office and will oversee the implementation of the entire project: managing and scheduling an evidence inventory, liaising with the Advisory Board and other organizations and offices involved in the project, and working with the Attorney General's Office in the latter part of the grant to promote the project's implementation in other jurisdictions around the state.

**Answers To**

The Project Director will be selected by and will answer to the project's Advisory Board. The position will be a contract position with the New Orleans Police and Justice Foundation. The Project Director will meet with the Advisory Board every two weeks.

**General Responsibilities**

The Project Director will coordinate the seven Clerk's office staff working overtime on the cataloguing evidence and the three contract staff hired for the project. The Project Director will be supported by an administrative assistant. The Project Director will ensure timely performance and that the project's goals are met, oversee

accurate data entry and produce lists of potential biological evidence cases on a weekly basis. The Project Director will be responsible for the generation and maintenance of all data on the project for the purposes of reporting progress on the grant. The project Director will consult regularly with all agencies involved in the project. The overview of the project is below.

### **Salary/Workload**

The position will pay \$37.50/hr. The workload envisioned for this project will require the Project Director to work an estimated 40 hours per week over the 18 month project period.

Specific responsibilities of the Project Manager will be:

### **Responsibilities for the First Quarter of Project**

1. Assess the scope and goals of the project and devise a realistic implementation plan that incorporates a plan for management;
2. Meet with all members of the project's Advisory Board;
3. Meet with existing clerk's office staff and NOPJF staff to assess data collection needs and progress and methods of inventorying evidence to date;
4. Become familiar with BEAST evidence tracking software and ensure project assistant is trained in use of the software;
5. Organize training in DNA capabilities for entire clerk's staff and project staff; and
6. Oversee the initial inventorying and cataloguing of the Clerk of Court evidence facilities.

### **Responsibilities for the Duration of Project**

7. Meet every two weeks with project's Advisory Board.
8. Oversee and perform daily management of inventory work of contract staff, clerk's staff and project staff;
9. Ensure the accurate entry of data into the BEAST system;
10. Ensure the accurate and complete assessment of case status in cases in which biological evidence is found by liaising with clerk's office, NOPD and DA's office;
11. Ensure accurate production of weekly reports of biological evidence found and homicide and rape cases in which non-biological evidence is found;
12. Ensure accurate production of weekly reports of cases and their status in which biological evidence is found. Promptly circulate those lists to NOPD, IPNO and DA's office;
13. Liaise with NOPD evidence room staff on ongoing searches and ensure weekly production of search results lists from NOPD and transmission of those reports
14. Create accurate progress reports for the advisory board and for purposes of grant reporting to the NIJ, including number of evidence items searched, number of

- cases in which biological evidence is found, cases in which biological evidence was screened, and progress of cases sent for testing;
15. Attend case screening meetings of IPNO/DA's office;
  16. Instigate and manage meetings with the Attorney General's Office. Keep Attorney General's office apprised of progress and challenges of project. Work to develop a replicable model to be implemented across the state.

### **Qualifications/Skills**

In addition to the general qualities described in the opening paragraph, the successful candidate will have:

- At least a four-year degree
- At least four years of work experience
- Excellent computer skills
- Excellent written presentation
- Willing to submit to background check/drug testing
- Experience in any of the following will be favorably considered, but are not necessary: (a) evidence and property management/best practices for evidence management; (b) logistics, warehousing/inventorying; (c) criminal justice.

The New Orleans Police and Justice Foundation is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Qualified applicants will be considered for the contract without regard to age, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or veteran status.

### **To Apply**

The New Orleans Police and Justice Foundation is accepting e-mail applications only for this position. The position will be advertised until November 30, but applications will be considered on a rolling basis and the position may be filled before November 30 if a suitable candidate is found. Please send: (1) a resumé; and (2) a cover letter of at least 1.5 sides that describes (a) how your experience and qualifications make you a suitable candidate, (b) why you are motivated to take on this position; and (c) your understanding of the place and relevance of evidence storage in the criminal justice system. E-mail to Nathaniel Weaver at [Nathaniel@nopjf.org](mailto:Nathaniel@nopjf.org).

### **Orleans Parish Post Conviction DNA Testing Project - Summary**

As a result of the havoc wrought by Hurricane Katrina on the evidence storage facilities in New Orleans, no-one knows in how many cases biological evidence remains that could be subjected to modern DNA testing.

While 1,571 prisoners are in state custody for rapes and homicides from Orleans Parish, because finding biological evidence, given the current state of the evidence facilities, is not possible with existing manpower, only three postconviction DNA tests have been conducted in Orleans Parish cases since Louisiana's postconviction DNA

testing law was passed in 2001. The Orleans Parish Postconviction DNA Testing Project will resolve this manpower shortage, determine the number of cases in which biological evidence exists, review every case for the potential for probative postconviction DNA testing and submit for testing those in which it could prove guilt or innocence. In the process, the project will create a computerized inventory of the entire evidence room of the Orleans Parish Criminal Clerk's office.

The project will involve the Orleans Parish Clerk of Court, District Attorney's Office, New Orleans Police Department (NOPD), Innocence Project New Orleans (IPNO), and the New Orleans Police and Justice Foundation (NOPJF). The model for the inter-agency cooperation in this proposal is the New Orleans APSIRES working group. Formed in 2007 to address the crisis in evidence storage and preservation policies in New Orleans that was exacerbated by Hurricane Katrina, the group includes representatives from all branches of the New Orleans criminal justice system who have successfully worked together to promulgate best practices and policies for evidence handling and storage.

The project will cost \$1,375,196 over eighteen months. It will use contract staff and a Project Director to inventory the evidence facility at the Orleans Parish Criminal Clerk's office. This will be complemented by searches of the NOPD's evidence facility. Over eighteen months, all evidence will be catalogued and logged and all biological evidence from rape and homicide cases that survived Hurricane Katrina will be identified. The Project Director will determine the status of those cases in consultation with DA's office and Clerk's staff and compile weekly lists of cases in which a conviction is final and evidence has been found.

Using those lists, the DA's office and IPNO will review case materials, cross referencing to IPNO applications. With reference to categories in the NIJ's 1999 publication, "Post Conviction DNA Testing: Recommendations for Handling Requests," the DA's office and IPNO will determine which cases should be submitted for DNA testing. *Orchid Cellmark* will perform DNA testing for the project, ensuring it is performed promptly within the grant period.

The project's staff will be accountable to, and actively supervised by, an Advisory Board, taken in part from current members of the ASPIRES working group. The Advisory Board will ensure the project's sustained progress even during the inevitable challenges it will encounter.

Because there is no way to know how much biological evidence has survived, the objective is to ensure all facilities have been searched for remaining evidence, their inventories catalogued and the maximum amount of salvaged evidence DNA tested in cases in which it could conclusively prove guilt or innocence. The project will serve as a pilot program for other jurisdictions around Louisiana.

Finally, the project will be a laboratory for improving the administration of criminal justice. Any cases of wrongful conviction discovered will be subjected to the scrutiny of project staff at the DA's office and IPNO. They will create a joint report on the causes and the lessons we can learn from each case. The report will be widely circulated amongst stakeholders and used as a joint teaching presentation across the State.