



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Second District

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Fourth District

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Fifth District

DATE: March 11, 2025

02

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

RATIFICATION OF APPLICATION TO THE CALIFORNIA OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES PAUL COVERDELL FORENSIC SCIENCE (CQ) IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM AND ACCEPTANCE OF FUNDS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

The California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) has funding available under the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science (CQ) Improvement Program to improve forensic science and medical examiner/coroner services, including services provided by laboratories operated by states and local governments. This program seeks to provide states and local governments with the tools needed to meet the challenges of responding to crime. Funding for this program will be used to cover training and continuing education costs for Medical Examiner toxicologists to attend national/local conferences to network and keep current with drug trends. Continuing education courses will be provided which will be tailored to increase foundational knowledge and interpretation in toxicology. These training and educational opportunities will allow Toxicologists to stay current and informed in the constantly evolving field of forensics. This grant will also provide additional resources to fund accreditation initiatives that comply with the standards of the National Association of Medical Examiners.

Today's request is to authorize the Medical Examiner to accept, if awarded, \$67,614 in grant funds from the CalOES CQ Program for training and continuing education costs. This is also a request to authorize the Chief Medical Examiner to apply for and accept grant funding from the CalOES CQ Program and execute all required or related grant documents in subsequent years, provided there are no material changes to the grant terms and funding levels. A waiver of Board Policy B-29, Fees, Grants, Revenue Contracts - Department Responsibility for Full Cost Recovery, which requires prior approval of grant applications and full-cost recovery, is requested as this funding request was not received by the Board of Supervisors at least fifteen days in advance of the date on which the grant request was submitted and the grant funds do not reimburse costs associated with administrative support.

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RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Ratify the Medical Examiner’s grant application to the California Office of Emergency Services Paul Coverdell Forensic Science (CQ) Improvement Program with a performance period of April 1, 2025, through March 31, 2026, in the amount of \$67,614 and authorize the Chief Medical Examiner to accept the funds if awarded.
2. Authorize the Chief Medical Examiner to apply for and accept funding from the CalOES CQ Program in subsequent years provided there are no material changes to the grant terms and funding level.
3. Authorize the Chief Medical Examiner, and/or designee, in this year and subsequent years, to review and execute all required grant documents, including any annual extensions, amendments and/or revisions thereto that do not materially impact or alter the services or funding level.
4. Waive Board Policy B-29, Fees, Grants, and Revenue Contracts – Department Responsibility for Cost Recovery, which requires prior approval of grant applications and full cost recovery for grants.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Department of the Medical Examiner investigates and determines the cause and manner of death for all homicides, suicides, accidents and most sudden and/or unexpected deaths in the county. The Paul Coverdell Forensic Science (CQ) Improvement Program aims to provide states and local governments with the resources needed to meet the challenges of responding to crime. These funds will enable the department to reduce disparities in forensic investigations and ensure that all individuals benefit from accurate and timely forensic and medical examiner services.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed action to accept grant funds will improve the Medical Examiner Toxicology Laboratory’s ability to stay current and informed in the constantly evolving field of forensics, contributing to the County’s sustainability goal of protecting the health and wellbeing of justice-involved individuals and the broader community. By providing the latest data on emerging trends, the Medical Examiner supports harm reduction strategies, strengthens public health initiatives, and informs evidence-based criminal justice efforts, contributing to a safer and more equitable community.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request will be included in the Fiscal Years 2025-27 CAO Recommended Operational Plan for the Medical Examiner. If approved, this request will result in estimated costs and revenue of \$67,614 in Fiscal Year 2025-26. The funding source is the CalOES Paul Coverdell Forensic Science (CQ) Improvement Program. The grant award recovers all direct costs but does not include costs associated with administrative support estimated at \$1,805 which will be funded by General Purpose Revenue. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

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N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

The Paul Coverdell Forensic Science (CQ) Improvement Program is dedicated to improving forensic science and medical/coroner services, including services provided by states and local governments. This funding opportunity offers grants to eligible state agencies and local governments to strengthen their forensic capabilities by promoting the implementation of new technologies and processes into public laboratories. The Department of the Medical Examiner (Medical Examiner) applied to this grant program to allow Toxicologists to stay current and informed in the constantly evolving field of forensics.

The Medical Examiner is responsible for investigating and determining the cause and manner of death for all homicides, suicides, accidents, and violent, sudden and/or unexpected deaths in the County of San Diego according to California Government Code Section 27491 and Health and Safety Code Section 102850. The Medical Examiner is a full-service agency that provides in-house toxicology for all death investigations within its jurisdiction. On February 3, 2025, the Department of the Medical Examiner applied to the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science (CQ) Improvement Program in the amount of \$67,614. Grant funds will be utilized to cover training and continuing education costs for Medical Examiner toxicologists to attend national and local conferences.

Today’s request is to ratify the application for the CalOES CQ Program and to accept the funds, if awarded. A waiver of Board Policy B-29, Fees, Grants, Revenue Contracts - Department Responsibility for Full Cost Recovery, which requires prior approval of grant applications and full-cost recovery, is requested as this request was not received by the Board of Supervisors at least fifteen days in advance of the date on which the grant request was submitted and the grant funds do not reimburse costs associated with administrative support.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today’s proposed action supports the Equity and Justice Initiative in the County of San Diego’s 2025–2030 Strategic Plan and aligns with the Department of the Medical Examiner’s core mission to improve public health and safety of the residents of San Diego County.

Respectfully submitted,



Andrew Strong for

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EBONY N. SHELTON
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)
N/A