



# **National Institute of Justice Launches New Criminal Justice Testing and Evaluation Consortium**

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*The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) recently introduced the Criminal Justice Testing and Evaluation Consortium (CJTEC), a new program that unites the agency's compliance testing and*

*standards development efforts with a new focus on identifying the criminal justice community's most important technology needs and developing rigorous and objective data about them.*

CJTEC Director and Chief Forensic Scientist Jeri Roper-Miller says that rather than attempting to influence current practice, the new program focuses on “getting ahead of the curve on innovative technologies. CJTEC is designed to help the entire criminal justice community get objective information as early in the adoption process as possible. The idea is to focus NIJ’s resources on rigorous testing and evaluation of technologies that we expect to come into practice in the next three to five years.”

To that end, NIJ has broken CJTEC down into four interlocking tasks that work together to bring those results to the courts, corrections and law enforcement communities. The process starts with technology foraging, also known as technology scouting, as Task 1. The idea, Roper-Miller says, is that CJTEC will assess the full range of technologies in commercial development and try to determine what’s close to implementation for the law enforcement, courts and corrections communities.



“For example, wearables is an emerging area, and we’re doing some foraging there. We’re looking at how wearables can be deployed in both law enforcement and corrections to do a variety of tasks,” Ropero-Miller says. “A lot of people are wondering whether wearables can actually determine the safety and wellness of officers on duty. We’re looking to promote understanding of how these tools can actually make practitioners’ lives better.”

Another example is driving under the influence of drugs (DUID); Ropero-Miller says CJTEC is taking a look at various roadside technologies and practices that will help officers determine if drivers are under the influence of marijuana or other drugs, in addition to examining new methods of alcohol testing. Task 2 at times may flow directly out of Task 1: it’s the actual testing and evaluation work.

“Through foraging, we will identify the most important issues and develop rigorous and objective data about those

technologies,” Ropero-Miller says. These testing and evaluation efforts take place through the efforts of various consortium members, including lead agency RTI International and various universities, criminal justice agencies and criminal justice associations.

“These combined efforts will help us capitalize on the very best expertise in T&E, and allow us to focus on areas where information would be lacking without NIJ’s funding this work,” Ropero-Miller says.

In addition to the consortium of agencies that makes up the heart of CJTEC, the new program will also draw on the efforts of another NIJ-funded consortium, the Criminal Justice Priority Technology Needs Initiative. Ropero-Miller explains that the Initiative convenes working groups of subject-matter experts who identify specific research needs in assigned focus areas, and CJTEC will also use their reports to determine where to focus Task 1 and Task 2 efforts.

“We’re essentially doing secondary research, as well as potential test and evaluation efforts, in the areas they identify. We’ll be doing landscape studies of available technology, similar to those RTI does now with the Forensic Technology Center of Excellence, as well as more traditional operational evaluations where we put the technology in the hands of users and let them assess practicality, robustness, probability of implementation and ability to meet or exceed manufacturer’s claims,” she says.

“We’ll also be doing assessments of the impact of putting this technology into place in the criminal justice setting.”

CJTEC’s Task 4 will back up those efforts by continuing NIJ’s standards development process, previously conducted by the Justice Technology Information Center (JTIC has been closing out efforts throughout 2019, and will end on December 31.) CJTEC takes over the management of the existing Special Technical Committees (STCs) of practitioners, subject-matter experts and laboratory personnel, including those for ballistic- and stab-resistant body armor. Those efforts are expected to wind down in 2020 with the release of new versions of the existing standards. CJTEC will then turn its emphasis to new areas to include ballistic shields, firearms and civil disturbance unit (CDU) equipment.

“We expect CDU equipment to be a fairly major enterprise. We’re looking at its full range and we expect several standards to be updated or created,” Roper-Miller says. “This will be a major part of what we’ll be working on over the next two to three years. There’s a great deal of interest in making sure that officers not only have the tools to do their work safely and reliably, but they also have access to safe and effective policies and procedures. We’re looking at creating a broader STC that focuses on all kinds of personal protective equipment.”

And finally, Task 3 maintains a long-standing NIJ effort: Operation of the Compliance Testing Program (CTP). The

majority of the staff that ran the program under JTIC moved over to CJTEC, with a goal of making the transition so seamless that program participants and the criminal justice community barely noticed a change.

“The goal was to have no interruption in the testing process. We communicated the need for a brief shutdown to the stakeholders, and they planned accordingly,” says CTP Manager Alex Sundstrom. “We’re now back up and running and everything is on track.”

Sundstrom did note that manufacturers have slowed down on developing new ballistic-resistant models that comply with the 0101.06 version of the standard in anticipation of the publication of the 0101.07 version. This allowed staff to temporarily focus on ballistic-resistant Follow-up Inspection and Testing (FIT) and prepare for the inception of a FIT program for stab-resistant models as well.

CTP Task Lead Lance Miller notes there were several challenges in switching program management from one company to another, as well as physically moving operations from the Washington, D.C., metro area to Raleigh, N.C.

“There were several challenges, but we focused on making the change seamless to program stakeholders to the largest extent possible. There are still a lot of things going on behind the scenes, but as issues emerge, staff has responded. We’ve been continuously communicating with NIJ, and I believe that nearly

everyone felt the transition was indeed seamless,” he says.

For more information on CJTEC, contact Jeri Roper-Miller at [jerimiller@rti.org](mailto:jerimiller@rti.org) or NIJ Program Manager Steve Schuetz at [Steven.Schuetz@nij.ojp.gov](mailto:Steven.Schuetz@nij.ojp.gov).

*Article photo: Justice Technology Information Center*

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