Project Narrative

Problem Statement

The project service area is the City and County of San Francisco. San Francisco is the 4th largest city in California and the 13th largest in the country, with a population of 896,047. Its population resides within a 49 square mile peninsula and it is the 2nd most densely populated major city in the United States. The San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) Crime Lab serves an estimated population of 1.2 million persons daily.

In order to conduct analysis of suspected drug evidence in a timely and efficient manner, the SFPD Crime Lab is in need of two (2) controlled-substance hand-held Raman spectrometers. The instrumentation will allow SFPD Crime Lab criminalists, trainees, and technicians to perform field-based as well as in-situ analysis of unknown samples. Without updated instrumentation for analysis, the SFPD Crime Lab and staff will not be properly equipped for the accreditation and reopening of the Controlled Substance Unit.

The SFPD Crime Lab's Firearm and Toolmark Unit currently has a backlog of cases requiring microscopic comparisons as well as firearm only cases that need to be entered and compared to the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) Database. We have three (3) bench analysts, three (3) NIBIN technicians, and two (2) analyst trainees with NIBIN functionality to perform firearm-related

casework assigned to our unit. The Firearm and Toolmark Unit's prioritization plan is as follows: 1) homicides, 2) attempted homicides, and 3) incidents involving shots fired. Since priority during a normal work shift goes to examining rush cases, homicide cases, and officer involved shootings, the backlog and turn-around time on our routine casework, including cases that require microscopic comparisons as well as firearm only cases that need to be entered and compared to the NIBIN Database has increased.

Plan

Our project objectives include reducing backlog, improving turn-around time, addressing emerging forensic science technology needs, and maintaining accreditation.

To reduce backlog and improve the timeliness and quality of our forensic science services, we plan to secure funding to: 1) procure two (2) controlled-substance hand-held Raman spectrometers, so screening of unknown substances can happen immediately in a rapid and easy manner, minimizing the need for sample preparation and reducing possibilities for delay; and 2) purchase ammunition for an exemplar library, so ammunition is readily available to test-fire and perform complete firearm examinations in a more timely manner.

The use of Coverdell funds to meet these project objectives will benefit the City and County of San Francisco by ensuring backlog of cases are reduced, firearm cases are processed more quickly, and forensic staff are well equipped in the field. Faster case processing will have an impact on firearm-related cases and help to reduce the amount of gun crime in the community.