



MEMORANDUM

To: Galveston County Commissioners Court
From: Grants Administration Department
Court Date: February 02, 2026
RE: Galveston County Medical Examiner's Office
Testing of Forensic Evidence Grant Program, FY2027
“Restoring Identity to Galveston County’s Long-Unidentified Human Remains Through Forensic Genetic Genealogy”

BACKGROUND

GCME is a small, resource-constrained medical examiner office that conducts approximately 1,100 medicolegal examinations annually, including services for surrounding counties. While GCME maintains statutory responsibility for the investigation and identification of unidentified decedents, it lacks discretionary funding and internal capacity to pursue advanced forensic testing such as SNP-based genetic analysis. This project proposes to use OOG funding to conduct forensic genetic genealogy testing for all six cases, including evidence suitability screening, forensic-grade SNP profile development, genealogical analysis, and kinship confirmation as needed. The goal of this effort is to establish the identities of these decedents, update medicolegal records, and notify next of kin where possible.

This project is limited in scope to the six unidentified cases and does not create any ongoing financial obligation or operational commitment for Galveston County beyond the grant period.

SUMMARY

The Galveston County Medical Examiner's Office (GCME), under the authority of Galveston County, seeks funding from the Texas Office of the Governor (OOG) Public Safety Office – Testing of Forensic Evidence Grant Program (FY2027) to apply forensic genetic genealogy (FGG) to six unidentified human remains cases currently under its jurisdiction. These cases involve skeletal or partial remains, have exhausted all traditional forensic identification methods, and remain unidentified despite years of entry and maintenance within the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs).



The six unidentified decedents proposed for this project represent cases for which conventional approaches such as anthropology, odontology, fingerprinting, STR DNA analysis, and database searching have failed to yield identification. All six cases are non-homicide or undetermined in manner of death, rendering them ineligible for federal forensic genetic genealogy funding under the U.S. Department of Justice Interim Policy. As a result, these individuals have remained without names, and potential families remain without answers.

The proposed forensic genetic genealogy services will be performed by a qualified, accredited forensic genomics laboratory with demonstrated experience resolving unidentified human remains cases for Texas medical examiner offices.

State-level support through the Texas OOG represents one of the only realistic mechanisms by which these cases can be advanced. By funding this project, Texas will ensure that unidentified individuals in smaller, coastal jurisdictions are not excluded from modern forensic science due to policy limitations or resource inequities. Successful identification will restore names to the deceased, provide long-overdue answers to families who may still be searching, and reinforce the State's commitment to comprehensive and equitable death investigation practices.

Without access to state-level support, these unidentified individuals are likely to remain nameless indefinitely. The lack of identification prevents next-of-kin notification, leaves potential missing-persons cases unresolved, and undermines the completeness and accuracy of medicolegal records relied upon by law enforcement, public health agencies, and national databases. Over time, the likelihood of successful identification diminishes further as biological relatives age or pass away, records become harder to locate, and investigative context is lost.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Grant Application:	\$ 96,000
County Contribution:	\$ 0.00
Total Project Cost:	\$ 96,000

RECOMMENDATIONS

Grants Administration requests the Court to consider approval to submit the FY27 Testing of Forensic Evidence Grant Program grant application to the Office of the Governor's Public Safety Office – Criminal Justice Division and authorize the County Judge to sign supporting resolution.

ATTACHEMENTS FOR WET SIGNATURE

Authorizing Resolution