

**FY 2025 CRITICAL BUDGET REQUEST:
DIGITAL FORENSICS UNIT (DFU)**

Description:

**General Fund: 100
Cost Center: 03910**

Purpose/Objective:

The Office of the DeKalb County District Attorney seeks funding in the amount of \$418,817.00 to support critical staffing and operation needs within its Digital Forensics Unit. The request includes funding for the following six (6) positions. Five (5) digital forensic analysts (Job Code: 99530 / Grade 17) and one (1) Investigative Manager (Job Code: 39060/Grade S22).

In addition to salaries, this request includes necessary equipment, training, hardware and software required to ensure the analyst and manager are fully equipped to conduct digital forensic analyses and investigations effectively.

As the prevalence of digital evidence in criminal investigations and prosecution continues to rise, it has become clear that our current Digital Forensics Unit (DFU) would greatly benefit from significant expansion to more effectively manage the growing workload. Adding these six positions will enhance our capacity to handle complex felony cases, ensure the timely and accurate processing of digital evidence, and improve the overall effectiveness of felony prosecutions involving digital evidence.

These analysts will be responsible for conducting digital forensic analysis on electronic devices, including computers and mobile phones, as well as processing of digital evidence from social media companies, in support of felony criminal investigations and prosecutions. These analysts will be responsible for preserving and analyzing digital evidence to ensure its integrity for court proceedings, as well as preparing detailed forensic reports and providing expert testimony in criminal trials. These analysts will stay up to date on the latest digital forensics techniques, tools, and technologies and continuously improve skills through ongoing education, training, and required certifications. And as murders, gangs and domestic violence cases are of the highest priority, two of these analysts will be assigned specifically to work with the Homicide and Gangs Unit and the Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Unit to conduct analysis, court testimony and visualizations for trials

In late 2021, we requested and received ARP grant funding to stand up a Digital Forensics Unit; it has been a tremendous success. This Unit was created because in today's world, everything is done digitally using cellular phone and computer technology. Cell Phones are pocket computers that allow the user to make calls, access social media, the Internet, and use Apps for anything and everything imaginable. Computer technology is also moving at a pace where today's equipment is already outdated by the end of the year. We, in prosecution and law enforcement, must catch up

to the technology being used by the members of our community and in turn, being used by those involved in and perpetrating crimes in our County.

Every defendant arrested today for a violent crime has multiple profiles on a variety of social media platforms. The investigations to locate profiles and review all the media present is incredibly time consuming and highly specialized. However, when properly identified and investigated, these profiles and networks contain invaluable evidence, not only of existing offenses but often of future crimes. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, evidence obtained frequently identifies otherwise unknown co-conspirators and even potential victims.

Social media sites are also increasingly being used to instigate or conduct criminal activity and law enforcement personnel should understand the concept and function of these sites, as well as know how social media tools and resources can be used to prevent, mitigate, respond to, and investigate criminal activity. To do this, we must have personnel and equipment that are able to identify and capture evidence that exists on social media, web sites, apps, the internet, in cell phones and computer technology to include but not limited to tablets, iPads, hard drives and laptops. It has been shown that before, during and after a crime is committed, the people involved, whether they be victims, defendants, or witnesses are using some type of technology-based device. Or often they are “posting” videos, photographs, documents, or other matters that are evidence that can be used in both solving and prosecuting crimes.

Capturing and analyzing digital evidence is a critical part of proactive crime prevention because it creates a stronger path to solving crimes that have been committed and holding violent offenders accountable in a court of law. When violent offenders are held accountable, the threat to the community is removed and future violent crimes are prevented. It can reveal ongoing criminal activity in a way that allows us to proactively make connections, identify previously unknown drivers of violent crime in the community and intervene before the activity escalates to murders and shootings. In this regard, digital evidence empowers us to prevent ripples of violent crime from becoming waves.

The Digital Forensics Unit is dedicated to the collection and mining of this evidence. It has enhanced our ability to solve and prosecute crimes, and has worked to make the County a safer place because of what is accomplished through these means. County law enforcement agencies look to us for assistance and analyzing cell phones and other media.

Why we must increase the staffing of this Unit?

DFU has accomplished so much in a short period of time. Here is a snapshot of what they have done, just by the numbers.

Please see the attached Digital Forensics Activity Report for a detailed overview

Typically, a single phone exam takes about two to three hours including processing time, creation of case report, and case notes. This does not include technical support provided to ADA's and Investigators and time spent in court testifying at motions hearings and jury trials about said work.

Social media is the primary means of communication for many people. It can provide law enforcement with a lens into a subject's life with a real-time account of the subject's activity. The District Attorney's Office receives cases after arrest but does not have personnel who are dedicated to exploring social media platforms that our victims, witnesses and defendants use frequently. Often, this information can be used as evidence in our cases if discovered and preserved in a quick manner.

Each current DFU member (not including the ADA) has two critical software licenses from Cellebrite and Magnet Axiom. These fluctuate throughout the years as far as the price, but currently Axiom is \$6,400.00 per license and Cellebrite is \$8,800.00 per license. These licenses are separate from what we pay Cellebrite and Magnet for the unlocking of locked devices each year. We pay a straight yearly license for that as it is not restricted to a number of users.

We pay various nominal fees for different professional certifications (ex: NW3C, IACIS). We need three new Talino Forensics Workstations that cost around \$26,000.00 depending on configuration. Those need to be on an update/replace cycle. We need to maintain our current software licensing but need funds for additional software that assists DFU such as the ability to process Macintosh Computers and various other items. A good example for planning purposes but also a need is Recon Lab Forensic Suite which is approx. \$2,500.00 per year for a lab license.

Continuing education in this field is critical. Each DFU member needs to attend one of the various top tier classes at the IACIS Conference held yearly in April. These classes are in the \$2,500.00 to \$4,000.00 range which does not include travel. At a minimum, our current DFU members (not including ADA) need to attend the IACIS conference in April of 2025 and go to one of the various classes. These are invaluable and some of the best training there is in the field.

Managing the flow of cases, requests, software, equipment, and the lab itself is a full-time job. It has become almost unmanageable given that there are only three total, including the supervisor, who examine devices. Currently, the device case load and testifying are split equally among the three of them. If we expand, the manager of the Unit would not carry a full case load in order to fully function as a supervisor and manager in the most effective way. Each examiner requires a workstation and licenses for all critical software (Cellebrite, Axiom).

Justification:

The expansion of DFU is essential to address the increasing complexity and volume of cases involving digital evidence. Adding five (5) additional analysts and a manager will:

- Increase Prosecution Success: Digital forensics plays a pivotal role in securing convictions, particularly in complex felony cases such as homicide and gangs, human trafficking, domestic violence, and child sex crimes. By expanding the team, we can ensure that digital evidence is processed efficiently and used effectively in court.
- Reduce Case Backlogs: Additional forensic analysts will help speed up evidence analysis, reducing delays in the prosecution process, and allowing cases to move forward more quickly. As

a result, exculpatory evidence can be identified earlier, exonerating those who may be wrongfully charged.

-Adapt to Growing Needs: As technology continues to evolve, the demand for digital forensic analysis will only increase. This expansion positions the office to stay ahead of increasing demands, ensuring our continued ability to prosecute cases effectively and efficiently.

The expansion of the Digital Forensics Unit is a critical step toward strengthening our office's capacity to manage the growing volume and complexity of cases involving digital evidence. The addition of five analysts and one investigative manager will significantly enhance our ability to prosecute felony cases ethically, efficiently, and effectively.

The Enhancement Links to a Budget Priority of Improving Public Safety:

Over the past few years, we have seen a rise in crime nationally and locally. Reducing violent crime is an Administration Priority. Continued funding of DFU would have a direct effect on public safety. This team has a direct effect on all cases that come into our office. They also assist outside law enforcement agencies with analysis of evidence. Funding of this request would ensure that we are collecting and analyzing all of the possible evidence needed to solve and prosecute violent crimes, thus making the county safer.

The Enhancement Links to a Budget Priority of Retention, Hiring and Training:

Retention, hiring and training remain key priorities of this Administration, Without the requested funding, the Digital Forensics Unit (DFU) will face strain on existing staff, which may lead to the loss of experienced personnel and hinder our ability to effectively investigate and prosecute crime in our community. Adequate funding for the DFU is essential to ensure that DeKalb County remains on par with other jurisdictions in processing digital evidence for trial and achieving just outcomes in all cases.

Need/Impact:

The funding necessitates appropriate staffing by the District Attorney, beginning October 13, 2025. Five (5) digital forensic analysts (Job Code: 99530 / Grade 17) and one (1) Investigative Manager (Job Code: 39060/Grade S22).

Fiscal Impact:

\$418,816.00 for the District Attorney's Budget

Digital Forensics Activity Report

January 2025 - July 2025

Cases Worked

| Category | Count |
|--|-------|
| Phone Exams/Extractions | 136 |
| Computer Exams/Extractions | 0 |
| Misc. Digital Device Requests/Social Media | 31 |
| Trial Testimony | 23 |

Prosecutor Assistance with Search Warrants

| Category | Count |
|--|-------|
| Device Search Warrants (phones, computers) | 205 |
| Cell Phone Providers/ISPs | 171 |
| Social Media Search Warrants | 77 |
| Google/Geofence Search Warrants | 47 |
| Apple iCloud | 16 |
| US Marshals/Fugitive Warrants | 76 |
| Miscellaneous | 18 |

2024

Cases Worked

| Category | Count |
|--|-------|
| Phone Exams/Extractions | 248 |
| Computer Exams/Extractions | 14 |
| Misc. Digital Device Requests/Social Media | 41 |
| Trial Testimony | 23 |

Prosecutor Assistance with Search Warrants

| Category | Count |
|--|-------|
| Device Search Warrants (phones, computers) | 429 |
| Cell Phone Providers/ISPs | 261 |
| Social Media Search Warrants | 150 |
| Google/Geofence Search Warrants | 84 |
| Apple iCloud | 24 |
| US Marshals/Fugitive Warrants | 190 |
| Miscellaneous | 29 |

2023

Cases Worked

| Category | Count |
|--|-------|
| Phone Exams/Extractions | 342 |
| Computer Exams/Extractions | 2 |
| Misc. Digital Device Requests/Social Media | 39 |
| Trial Testimony | 15 |

Prosecutor Assistance with Search Warrants

| Category | Count |
|--|-------|
| Device Search Warrants (phones, computers) | 328 |
| Cell Phone Providers/ISPs | 211 |
| Social Media Search Warrants | 112 |
| Google/Geofence Search Warrants | 53 |
| Apple iCloud | 8 |
| US Marshals/Fugitive Warrants | 145 |
| Miscellaneous | 18 |

2022

Cases Worked

| Category | Count |
|--|-------|
| Phone Exams/Extractions | 187 |
| Computer Exams/Extractions | 7 |
| Misc. Digital Device Requests/Social Media | 35 |
| Trial Testimony | 13 |

Prosecutor Assistance with Search Warrants

| Category | Count |
|--|-------|
| Device Search Warrants (phones, computers) | 154 |
| Cell Phone Providers/ISPs | 145 |
| Social Media Search Warrants | 49 |
| Google/Geofence Search Warrants | 41 |
| Apple iCloud | 7 |
| US Marshals/Fugitive Warrants | 70 |
| Miscellaneous | 4 |

**DeKalb County District Attorney's Office:
FY2025 Critical Budget Request-DFU**

| Position Requests | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------|---------------|--------------|-------------|---------|-------------|--------------------|---------------------|--|
| Type | Position | Job Code | Base Salary | Health Cost | FICA | Pension | 401 (a) | Annual Salary Cost | Cost per pay period | Prorated Salary Cost (October 13- December 31, 2025) |
| New | Management Analyst II | 99530 | \$ 70,000.00 | \$ 13,500.00 | \$ 5,355.00 | \$ - | \$ 2,100.00 | \$ 90,955.00 | \$ 3,498.27 | \$ 17,491.35 |
| New | Management Analyst II | 99530 | \$ 70,000.00 | \$ 13,500.00 | \$ 5,355.00 | \$ - | \$ 2,100.00 | \$ 90,955.00 | \$ 3,498.27 | \$ 17,491.35 |
| New | Management Analyst II | 99530 | \$ 70,000.00 | \$ 13,500.00 | \$ 5,355.00 | \$ - | \$ 2,100.00 | \$ 90,955.00 | \$ 3,498.27 | \$ 17,491.35 |
| New | Management Analyst II | 99530 | \$ 70,000.00 | \$ 13,500.00 | \$ 5,355.00 | \$ - | \$ 2,100.00 | \$ 90,955.00 | \$ 3,498.27 | \$ 17,491.35 |
| New | Management Analyst II | 99530 | \$ 70,000.00 | \$ 13,500.00 | \$ 5,355.00 | \$ - | \$ 2,100.00 | \$ 90,955.00 | \$ 3,498.27 | \$ 17,491.35 |
| New | Deputy Chief Investigator, DA | 39060 | \$ 111,000.00 | \$ 13,500.00 | \$ 8,491.50 | \$ - | \$ 3,330.00 | \$ 136,321.50 | \$ 5,243.13 | \$ 26,215.67 |
| TOTAL | | | | | | | | \$591,096.50 | | \$ 113,672.40 |

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|-----------------------|--|----------------------|
| PERSONNEL REQUEST | | \$ 113,672.40 |
| OTHER EXPENSES: | | \$ 305,144.00 |
| TOTAL REQUEST: | | \$ 418,816.40 |

**DeKalb County District Attorney's Office:
FY2025 Critical Budget Request-DFU**

| Software and Equipment | | | | |
|---|--------------|----------------------------|----|----------------------|
| Cellebrite Licenses and Training (6) | \$ 13,184.00 | Software | x6 | \$ 79,104.00 |
| Axiom Licenses and Training (6) | \$ 13,400.00 | Software | x6 | \$ 80,400.00 |
| Cell Phone (6) | \$ 360.00 | Equipment | x6 | \$ 2,160.00 |
| Computer Equipment (6) | \$ 3,330.00 | Equipment | x6 | \$ 19,980.00 |
| Specialized Forensic Laptop (6) | \$ 5,000.00 | Equipment | x6 | \$ 30,000.00 |
| Talino Forensic Workstation (2) | \$ 28,000.00 | Equipment | x6 | \$ 56,000.00 |
| Law Enforcement Equipment (1) | \$ 8,500.00 | 1-Investigator Position | x1 | \$ 8,500.00 |
| Law Enforcement Vehicle (1) | \$ 29,000.00 | 1-Investigator Position | x1 | \$ 29,000.00 |
| Total: | | | | \$ 305,144.00 |

Cellebrite Breakdown:

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|-----------|--------------|
| Licenses: | \$ 8,584.00 |
| Training: | \$ 4,600.00 |
| Total: | \$ 13,184.00 |

Axiom Breakdown

| | |
|-----------|--------------|
| Licenses: | \$ 6,400.00 |
| Training: | \$ 7,000.00 |
| Total: | \$ 13,400.00 |