

Measuring What Matters in Community Policing: Fiscal Year 1997

I. Introduction

This solicitation seeks proposals for research and evaluation to support activities of the Public Safety Partnership and Community Policing Act (Title I) of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (the Crime Act) as well as related areas of policing and law enforcement. (See 42 U.S.C. §3796dd-4, 3793(c)(11)(B).) It advances the commitment of the National Institute of Justice to examining issues pertaining to policing and law enforcement and to expanding our understanding of these issues through research and evaluation that informs practice and policy.

NIJ is trying to streamline its process to accommodate the volume of proposals anticipated under this and other Crime Act solicitations. Researchers can help in a significant way by sending NIJ a nonbinding letter of intent by Stephen T. Holmes or Phyllis McDonald by May 30, 1997. The Institute will use these letters to forecast the numbers of peer panels it needs and to identify conflicts of interest among potential reviewers. There are three ways to send these letters. You can fill out the mailer on the last page of this solicitation. You can reach NIJ by Internet by sending e-mail to tellnij@ncjrs.org and identifying the solicitation and section(s) you expect to apply for. You can write a letter with the same information to Measuring What Matters in Community Policing: Fiscal Year 1997, National Institute of Justice, 633 Indiana Avenue N.W., Room 303, Washington, DC 20531. Help us help you.

II. Background

This solicitation seeks proposals that advance the field of community policing research through the development, refinement, and application of rigorous measures of four aspects of policing: the context within which community policing occurs; the characteristics and qualities of community policing operations and organizations; the direct outcomes of community policing activities; and the ultimate consequences of community policing for the community at large. The emphasis on measurement is an extension of the Measuring What Matters Institute, sponsored jointly by NIJ and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). During three sessions in 1995 and 1996, presentations by police practitioners and community researchers highlighted the need to improve the indicators, tools, and measures with which police, departments, communities and researchers assess police departments and the outcomes and impacts of their activities and organizational characteristics.

This collaborative effort by NIJ and COPS to enhance and improve the way in which the organizations, activities, outcomes, and impacts of community policing are measured and assessed should be understood within the larger context of policing research. NIJ, with support from COPS, has entered its third year of research and evaluation under the Crime Act. The long-term goals of this multi year effort are already within reach. Thirty-seven local researcher-practitioner partnerships have been established to assist police departments in acquiring research and evaluation skills and to help communities in identifying and responding to local needs for research information on policing. A national evaluation of the policing Title of the Crime Act is also underway and holds

great promise for understanding the role of Federal funding and legislation in local crime-fighting. Evaluations of specific community policing practices have been funded to help illuminate this important shift in policing our neighborhoods and communities. Finally, research is being conducted examining the implications of community policing for defining the role of the police within the community as well as the characteristics and organizational features of police departments that most effectively advance the cause of public safety.

The research supported as part of the policing Title of the Crime Act covers a broad spectrum of issues, research designs, and scopes of study. Yet, there is a fundamental principle that unites them. Specifically, all the research undertaken by NIJ in connection with the Crime Act is expected to produce knowledge that will benefit State and local criminal justice practitioners. NIJ's research agenda in policing is guided by this principle: research should inform practice and should result in a contribution of not only theoretical significance but of practical utility. A corollary to this principle is that research should be undertaken in such a way that its utility is not confined to the specific community, agency, or programmatic context in which it was conducted: research designs (and the research questions which they address) should be construed to maximize the applicability of the findings to practitioners in a wide variety of communities and to researchers seeking to expand the basic understanding of policing.

Perhaps no other aspect of the research process is so crucial to applicability as measurement design. Practitioners must be able to assess their own performance in significant ways, track changes over time, and share the results of their efforts with other police organizations. Researchers must also use great care in specifying, validating, and documenting the measures used in their work. In

recognition of the value of new insights regarding the outcomes and impacts of policing, NIJ, in cooperation with the COPS Office, has established the research initiative entitled: Measuring What Matters. This solicitation is a call to the research and practitioner field to participate in the advancement of policing research through the measurement sciences.

Improvement in the measurement of the essential features and characteristics of policing today and of the consequences of policing for the larger community is critical to helping police and communities understand, assess, and evaluate their efforts. The difficult question must be addressed. How can police activities and the qualities of policing organizations best be measured to know whether these have an impact on crime, disorder, and fear? How can the amount of crime, disorder, and fear in a community best be measured? How are measures of their secondary consequences on the quality of life at the community level to be improved? What are the most meaningful performance measures for gauging the effectiveness of a police organization? The answers to these questions are of great concern to police administrators because they are essential to determining whether the organization is meeting its goals over time. These issues are also of concern to mayors, city councils, other public agencies, and communities, as they join with the police as coproducers of public safety and order.

There are two sections to the solicitation. Each section embraces the two related objectives of improving *measurement* and improving the *application* of measurement. In the first section, NIJ solicits applications that advance the measurement of the *social, political, and environmental contexts* in which police organizations operate, *the characteristics of community policing organizations and activities*, the *outputs* of community policing, and the

impacts of police efforts on the community. It further requests that applicants demonstrate how advances in measurement can be applied to testing hypotheses linking the community to policing and the specific outcomes and impacts of their activities on the population the agency serves.

The second section of the solicitation outlines a research demonstration program, incorporating measurement and assessment of policing within a dynamic process of police organization, management, and performance evaluation. The research question forming the basis of this section is what is the extent to which a capacity can be sustained within a police agency to measure, analyze, respond, and act on data that assess police operations and their outcomes and impacts for the express purpose of enhancing organizational performance and goal attainment. In this section, NIJ seeks applications that move beyond the confines of traditional research designs which place the management information and operational needs of organizational activities at the center of the research process.

III. Areas of Research Required

This solicitation focuses on improving the measures that provide distinct indicators of the *context* in which policing occurs and the *processes* by police organizations produce *outcomes* and *impacts* as there are two principal sections of the solicitation. The first section seeks proposals for research that improves the measurements that are used in policing research and that uses these measures to test the consequences of policing practices, programs, and organizational structures in terms of outcomes such as crime, fear, and social disorder. The second section seeks proposals to test whether departments can use such measures and indicators in a self-assessment of their department and its impact as a strategic planning tool.

Applicants are directed to designate specifically the section under which their application is to be considered and to ensure that satisfies the limits and design requirements of that section.

A. Improving our Measurements/Measuring Consequences

Like any other field of research, policing research can be hampered by inadequate measures. Biased or unreliable measures prevent the researcher from resolving the research question with a satisfactory level of confidence, or worse, lead the researcher to incorrect conclusions. In some cases, inadequate measures limit the ability to measure and characterize the police actions and endeavors. Other inadequacies in measurement may limit the ability of researchers to assess purported outcomes of policing and factors outside the police department. In the end, these inadequacies have hampered the ability of researchers to help police practitioners develop and implement internal assessment tools.

Measurement in policing research is made even more difficult by the changing nature of policing. The paradigm shift in policing to a community-oriented and problem-oriented model changes many police functions. This is reflected in the changing expectations of communities and public officials. The measures researchers employ to evaluate and assess police performance must be consistent with these new expectations and must reflect these changes.

In the past, measuring police performance tended to focus on productivity measures such as reported crime, response times, arrests, and clearance rates. These traditional measures tend to be driven by reports to government and citizens through traditional police reporting mechanisms and as a result have several shortcomings. They tend to overlook numbers and types of crimes for which the police are often not summoned, such as

child abuse, domestic violence, and extortion. These measures typically disregard the manner in which police arrest or clear cases. Similarly, additional undesirable aspects of policing are not typically characterized in these traditional measures, such as discourteous behavior, unresponsiveness, or the unwarranted use of force. Finally, these traditional measures fail to capture the preventive, proactive activities of the police and instead focus on essentially reactive actions.

In this section of the solicitation, NIJ encourages research proposals that holistically explore and advance our understanding of the fundamental research issues of measuring important aspects of policing. This work might focus on refining or improving existing measures currently used by researchers and police practitioners. Alternatively, it might include work in developing and testing new measures that address some of the limitations of traditional measures of policing. Finally, proposed research might focus on developing new or improved data collection procedures to advance policing research and practice.

NIJ is interested in supporting research that improves the measurement of community or environmental *inputs* (the social context in which the police operate), police *processes* (the things police departments do), police *outputs* (the direct consequences of these activities (such as greater community access to police, more efficient use of resources, increased visibility of police and quicker responses) and policing *impacts* (the broader consequences of these outputs on the community serviced, such as public order, public safety and security, and community trust and satisfaction). For example:

Measuring community or environmental *inputs*:

- Develop measures to demonstrate the

diversity of opinions regarding what the community, government, or private sector agencies expect the police to do.

- Design measures to address the subjective sense of a community: how active is an area/neighborhood in terms of community building and participation and what role do neighborhood or community groups play in shaping public/policing policy.
- Improve the measurement of concepts related to service demand: how can the volume and types of service demands placed on a police department best be measured quantitatively and qualitatively.
- Enhance the measurement of police partnerships with government, businesses, and social service agencies.

Measuring policing *processes*:

- Develop and validate a scale for measuring a department's progress toward community policing: what are the hallmarks of community policing (e.g. community mobilization, decentralization, partnerships), and what measures or scales are needed to assess and guide a department's reorganization around principles of community policing.
- Develop more refined performance measures of police activity and resource allocation, including patrol deployment, movement, and response strategies: what are the chief elements comprising police activity, and how do these elements differ as departments move toward community policing.

- Design innovative means to measure officers' efforts to identify and solve problems.
- How can coding and reporting of computer aided dispatch and service call data be improved to better serve police operations and performance evaluation? How can measures be improved to take into account time and space information on crime, communities, and policing activities?
- How can the organizational health of a police department be measured? What are the key dimensions of an organization's functioning (e.g., centralization, decentralization, coordination among units, accountability, morale, motivation, dedication to task, equity, officer discretion and independence) that will affect performance and goal attainment, and how are they measured?
- What innovative measures can be used to assess either individual or organizational functions in addition to arrest or clearance rates?
- How can police integrity be measured? Are there communal expectations of ethical policing /government service? If so, who sets the standards? What type of activities influence the perceptions of the community on the ethical principles of a department or chief? Further, how can an agency be tested to determine if it is meeting some prescribed set of ethical standards?

Measuring the *impacts* of policing:

Measuring policing *outputs*:

- Develop accurate and usable measures of crime, fear, public disorder, and other critical community-level impact variables which are responsive to the new paradigm of community-oriented policing. How might categories of crimes and their severity be characterized apart from criminal codes?
- How can community satisfaction with police encounters be assessed? What information can be obtained from victims and from offenders to help clarify issues of fairness, concern, effort, and community satisfaction? What information should be obtained from the general population, users of police services?
- What promising measures can be developed for assessing the quality, equity, or economy of police service?
- What measurement decisions must be made to capture the impact of policing on the specific communities and neighborhoods served? What level of specificity (e.g., block, street, neighborhood, district, city) is necessary?
- What effective measures can be developed to describe and quantify the community's access to the police?
- Demonstrate new survey techniques or other data collection techniques for improving measures of community attitudes regarding policing and safety or other key variables in policing research including perceptions of the ability, fairness, and ethical behavior of police.

Accuracy in measurement achieves its greatest value when measures are used to provide a more definitive test of a specific hypothesis. How can improvements in measurement help researchers to assess more adequately what a policing organization does and demonstrate with a reasonable degree of certainty the link between organizational features and activities (inputs) and measures of its outcomes and impacts?

Police leaders in some communities have begun to experience noticeable changes in crime rates. Many attribute recent reductions in crime and public disorder to major operational improvements. Others assert that reductions in crime rates in specific communities are a result of police actions in conjunction with important changes in legislation, the community, courts, and corrections. Still others maintain that changes in the level of crime and disorder occur primarily as the result of broader social, economic, and demographic changes which are largely independent of policing. Understanding whether or not police activities impact crime, fear, and disorder at the local level, determining the specific types of activities that have an impact, and identifying the conditions under which the impact occurs are crucial questions which remain largely unanswered by policing research. This information is critical to decisions pertaining to resource allocation, program development, and police, community and government relationships.

In each case, an examination of the relationship between police actions and their intended, or unintended, consequences is best served by a refinement and improvement of the measures of each critical aspect or variable (i.e., police inputs, outcomes, impacts) and the application of those measures within a compelling research design to reveal the relationships among these elements.

Funding targets and requirements: NIJ anticipates that applications to this section of the

solicitation may vary in terms of level of effort. NIJ anticipates making three to five awards for a total of up to one million dollars for research under this part. Applications under this part of the solicitation must convey the applicants' understanding of the current state of the art in measurement related to policing research, the ways in which existing measurement and data collection procedures are inadequate, and the ways in which the proposed research would advance the science of measurement and data collection in policing research. Applications must provide clear development and validation procedures for improving/refining/developing measures or data collection methodologies for the critical variables, outline a concise design which applies these measures in pursuit of a greater understanding of policing and its consequences, demonstrate the adequacy of the design for testing the hypothesis, and show how the research will lead to findings that advance both policing practice and the science of measuring policing and its consequences. Applications under this section are limited to no more than 36 months duration.

B. Measurement, Information, and Police Management: A Research Demonstration Program

The second part of this solicitation focuses on the ability of police departments to measure their activities, to measure the consequences of their activities, and to use these measures to improve their operations.

Like any organization, police departments are increasingly expected to maximize performance while minimizing cost, to be responsive to changing conditions, to be attuned to shifts in their constituencies and environment, and to sense and respond to changes in crime patterns and community conditions that occur as a result of police interventions.

Accurate information about the extent to which particular strategies achieve objectives is crucial to long-term operational success. Do community meetings enhance neighborhood perceptions of performance or a neighborhood's sense of safety? Does hot-spot policing reduce public disorder? Do neighborhood-based or geography based command structures reduce crime and the public's fear of crime?

As stated in Section 1, pursuing the answers to such questions is the essence of evaluation research: the outcome matters, and to measure the contribution of a particular procedure or practice toward achieving the desired outcome. In this sense, measurement matters. It is the foundation of sound information management. Increasingly, police departments are developing management information systems and self-conscious responsiveness to inform them about their organizations' performance, a requirement of modern effective policing. This capacity for self-measurement and the willingness to

incorporate assessments into an ongoing cycle of implementation, assessment, analysis, adjustment, further assessment, and further adjustment is the focus of this section of the solicitation.

Of course no organization is static, and the changing contexts for policing pose their own challenges. Creating and maintaining meaningful measures for organizational performance is particularly difficult for departments in the midst of transitioning to community policing. The transition poses its own inherent performance questions. For example:

- How is management changing to implement community-oriented policing?
- What reporting or scheduling changes have been made to foster the shift toward community-oriented policing?
- What investments in training are being made to bring the skills and abilities of the force in line with the objectives of community-oriented policing?
- Do these changes make a difference? What are these differences?

The purpose of this part of the solicitation is to encourage investigations that assess the capacity of a police department to engage in a self-conscious, self-correcting assessment of some set of practices, procedures, or organizational features in pursuit of a stated objective. *NIJ is interested in testing how one or more departments measure their own effectiveness and use the information provided to increase the likelihood of achieving a targeted objective.* Here, the research question is focused on the viability of establishing and maintaining within a police department an effective and dynamic system of measurement, assessment, and program/process modification in pursuit of

organizational and community goals and objectives.

Police organizations are established to achieve specific purposes. The question that must be answered is how police departments can best engage in a process of 1) assessing operations in pursuit of stated goals and objectives; 2) changing those operations as part of a continuing process designed to maximize the likelihood of achieving those goals and objectives; and, 3) reassessing their goals and objectives as needed, in light of changing conditions.

The evaluation of this self-assessing, ongoing corrective process could be carried out by an independent agency (a researcher outside the department) or by the department itself. The evaluation should be both a process evaluation (how did the department gather measures of its effectiveness, how was the information used, and how quickly did it make adjustments based on the information) as well as an outcome evaluation (did the department achieve its stated objective, to what degree). Specifically:

- Can the police department gather information about its operations and its impact on the target objective such that the information can be used to refine and adjust its operations?
- What independent assessment can be provided to show that the department made adjustments based on its own measurements, enhanced its operations, and increased the likelihood of achieving its stated objectives?

Funding targets and requirements: Proposals under this section of the solicitation might best be thought of as demonstration projects or test beds. NIJ anticipates making one to three awards

totally up to one million dollars. Proposals should contain fully executed research designs, providing evidence of the full capacity and commitment of the police department to undertake the dynamic information and measurement management demonstration, a capacity for capturing relevant process and outcome information about the police department and its activities under the demonstration, and independent assessment and validation of the department's ability to improve operations through the measurement/assessment/information management process. Applications under this section are limited to no more than 36 months.

IV. How to Apply

Those interested in submitting proposals in response to this solicitation must complete the required application forms and submit related required documents. (See below for how to obtain application forms and guides for completing proposals.) Applicants must include the following information/forms to qualify for funding:

- Standard Form (SF) 424—application for Federal assistance
- Assurances
- Certifications Regarding Lobbying, Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements (one form)
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- Budget Detail Worksheet
- Negotiated indirect rate agreement (if appropriate)
- Names and affiliations of all key persons from applicant and subcontractor(s), advisors, consultants, and advisory board members. Include name of principal investigator, title, organizational affiliation (if any), department (if institution of higher education), address, phone, and fax.
- Proposal abstract
- Table of contents
- Program narrative or technical proposal
- Privacy certificate, as appropriate
- References
- Letters of cooperation from organizations collaborating in the research project.
- Resumes
- Appendixes, if any (e.g., list of previous NIJ awards, their status, and products [in NIJ or other publications]).

Due date. While letters of intent to submit applications are not mandatory NIJ prefers that a letter of intent be submitted by the close of business on May 30, 1997. Completed proposals **must be received** at the National Institute of Justice by the close of business on July 1, 1997. Extensions of this deadline will not be permitted.

Award period. In general, NIJ limits its grants and cooperative agreements to a maximum period of 36 months. However, longer budget periods may be considered.

Number of awards. NIJ anticipates supporting three to eight grants under this solicitation.

Award amount. Awards totaling two million dollars will be made available for this NIJ solicitation.

Guidance and information. Applicants who have questions about this solicitation may contact the U.S. Department of Justice Response Center by phone at 800-421-6770 (local number is (202) 307-1480) and by fax at (202) 616-924. Specific questions may be addressed to NIJ staff members: Stephen T. Holmes, at (202) 616-3482, or Phyllis McDonald, at (202) 616-3653.

Obtaining application forms. To obtain application forms (including a sample budget worksheet) and guidelines for submitting proposals (including requirements for proposal writers and requirements for grant recipients), applicants can:

- Access the Justice Information Center on the World Wide Web: <http://www.ncjrs.org/fedgrant.htm#nij>. At this site, the NIJ application forms and guidelines are available as electronic files that may be downloaded to a personal computer.

- Request hard copies of the forms and guidelines by mail from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at 800-851-3420.
- Request hard copies of the forms and guidelines by mail from the Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770 (in the Washington, D. C., area, at 202-307-1480).