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Executive Summary for
AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WORKSHOPS
FOR FACILITATING THE TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY

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AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WORKSHOPS
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background. The Office of Technology Transfer of the NILECJ has the mission of improving the process of developing and disseminating new information about programs and technology relevant to the criminal justice system. To accomplish this goal a number of programs have been established within the Model Program Development Division. These programs focus on the need to communicate more effectively to criminal justice administrators and practitioners significant research and program experiences. Two of the three activities of the Model Program Development Division are: (1) preparation and dissemination of Prescriptive Program Packages; and (2) identification and discussion of information on Exemplary Projects.

As a method of disseminating information about Exemplary Projects and new criminal justice concepts, the Office of Technology Transfer sponsors training workshops throughout the country. During 1975 four workshop series were conducted; the general objectives of each series were to encourage and to assist jurisdictions to adopt all or portions of a specific exemplary project or criminal justice concept.

Objectives of Study. The objectives of the study reported herein were to evaluate each workshop series with respect to: (1) the degree to which workshop attendees attempted to implement in their own community all or portions of the program or concept discussed at a workshop; (2) workshop techniques and materials which were especially liked and disliked by attendees; (3) ways in which future similar workshops might be improved; and (4) the identification of workshop follow-on activities which might be supported by the NILECJ so as to more adequately ensure the transfer of technology regarding improved criminal justice programs and concepts.

Each workshop series differed in format and content but in general they were two and one-half days in length and consisted of a series of lectures, small group discussions and small group exercises. Audience participation was encouraged. Each workshop was supported by a training manual and by visual aids. Three of the workshop series were supported by either a Prescriptive Package or an Exemplary Project Handbook. The manuals and handbooks described in detail the project or concept discussed at the workshop.

Study Methodology. A questionnaire was employed to obtain information from workshop attendees. Each attendee was sent a questionnaire approximately three months after attending a workshop. For the four workshop series collectively, questionnaires were distributed to 1330

attendees. Returns were received from 656 persons for a rate-of-return of 49.3 percent.

Study Findings. The most significant finding of this study was that many workshop attendees reported that they were able to interest their community to adopt all or portions of the program or concept discussed at a workshop. Of the 571 attendees who provided usable information, 24% reported that, as a result of attending the workshop, their community already had adopted or was in the process of adopting all or portions of a new criminal justice program. An additional 13% reported that their community had made a decision to adopt all or portions of a program. Another 34% of the attendees reported that adoption of all or portions of a program still was under consideration in their community. These figures indicate that the workshop series were effective; the workshops did motivate community representatives to adopt new criminal justice practices and programs.

To implement a criminal justice program various barriers may have to be surmounted. Frequently reported implementation barriers included the lack of money and manpower, jurisdictional disputes, community attitudes and legal barriers. Some respondents felt that their community did not have an adequate case load to warrant the adoption of certain programs.

After returning to their community 29% of the workshop participants sought additional information about the program reviewed at the workshop. Most frequently these attendees desired additional information on funding sources and how to apply for these funds. Also, the attendees wanted to learn more about how a program operated in other communities. The workshop participants most frequently searched for additional information by referring to the manuals and handbooks distributed at the workshop. The third most frequently used source of information was "people I met at the training workshop." Quite a few attendees turned to their State Planning Agency for additional information and assistance.

In general, the workshop attendees reacted quite positively to the workshop and to the manuals and handbooks distributed at the workshop. Many persons reported that the workshop was a useful way to acquire new ideas and information. A number of respondents commented favorably on the informal style of the workshops, the high degree of audience participation, the heavy utilization of small group exercises, and the presence of knowledgeable persons to conduct the workshops.

The training manuals, Prescriptive Package handbooks and Exemplary Project handbooks distributed at the workshop were judged to be useful by most attendees. Reaction to the training manuals was more positive than to the handbooks. Probably this was because the training manuals tended to be used during the workshop whereas the handbooks seldom were referred to.

Most attendees reported that they received a number of benefits from participating in a workshop. In particular, many felt that they

had made "contacts with people who can or may be able to provide assistance to me." A number of respondents mentioned that they received some type of technical assistance at the workshop, to include making arrangements to visit a community that already had or was in the process of establishing a program identical or similar to that discussed at the workshop.

Recommendations for Improving Workshops. The study findings clearly indicated that the NILECJ-sponsored workshop series were successful. The attendees did provide, however, a number of suggestions regarding how the workshops and their supporting manuals and handbooks might be improved. The following recommendations pertain to ideas and actions which seem readily implementable. This list will be followed by a set of suggestions which although meritorious may not be cost-effective.

Recommendation #1: There were a number of workshop features which were "especially liked" by a substantial number of attendees. These features should be emphasized in future workshops. They include: (1) the use of small group exercises involving role-playing, the solving of simulated problems and the development of implementation plans; (2) the fostering of audience participation and interaction during all phases of the workshop; (3) conducting the workshop in a fairly informal fashion; (4) attempting to answer attendee questions in an open and candid fashion; (5) employing instructors and consultants who are highly knowledgeable regarding the topics under discussion and who preferably have had first-hand experience at implementing and/or operating the program being presented at the workshop; (6) integration of training manuals and Prescriptive Package handbooks into the workshop presentations; and (7) the use of audio-visual material to present an overview of the program under discussion and/or selected details of the program.

Recommendation #2: A rather detailed brochure should be prepared for each workshop. At a minimum this brochure should contain: (1) a brief description of the program or concept to be covered at the workshop (these exist already); (2) a workshop agenda; (3) a description of the workshop style; (4) a description of audience participation techniques to be employed at the workshop; (5) the suggested audience for the workshop, to include the types of agencies and communities which this audience should represent. Every effort should be made to distribute these brochures to communities and agencies that might wish to send representatives to the workshop, with a request that the brochure be forwarded to the person(s) selected to attend the workshop.

Recommendation #3: During various workshop sessions, and especially through the use of reference material, information should be provided about related programs operating or in the process of being implemented in other communities. In particular, this information should identify: (1) programs suited to rural communities and to large cities; (2) programs which can be operated on a county or regional basis. The programs should be identified at least by location and by name and address of a contact person.

Recommendation #4: Additional information regarding how to implement an Exemplary Project or criminal justice concept should be incorporated into the workshop. This can best be accomplished by providing specific references in a training manual. Reference should be made to: (1) any literature available on how to implement a program; (2) identical or similar programs whose director might be turned to for assistance; (3) any resources, consultants, funding sources, etc. which might be available to assist in and/or support the implementation process. This should include the role which the State Planning Agency might play to support program implementation.

Recommendation #5: A workshop should contain a number of small group problem and/or planning exercises. However, the use of such exercises should not be overdone. Future NILECJ-sponsored workshops should utilize such exercises in accordance with the following suggestions: (1) no more than one-third of the workshop should be devoted to practical exercises; (2) enough time should be scheduled for each exercise so that a majority of groups can finish the exercise within the allotted time; (3) only a sample of groups should be selected to present their solution to the practical exercise problem; and (4) each exercise should terminate with a review of the "lessons learned" as a result of participating in the exercise. This should be an instructor-led activity.

Recommendation #6: Small group discussion sessions should not be held when there is no group leader who is fully knowledgeable regarding the role he is to play during the discussion session.

The following is a list of suggestions for improving the transfer of information and technology pertaining to criminal justice programs.

Use of On-Site and Specially Tailored Workshops. A number of respondents suggested that the workshops might be improved if they were tailored to more homogeneous audiences. Some of the specific suggestions offered were: (1) conduct follow-up workshops for those communities which are trying to implement an exemplary project; (b) present different versions of the same workshop, each version tailored to a general stage of implementation; (c) present short, one-day workshops for communities which have indicated an interest in implementing an exemplary project; (d) present special workshops for SPA, LEAA regional, and State criminal justice representatives; (e) conduct workshops at the community level as opposed to the regional level; and (f) hold workshops at the site of an exemplary project.

Provision of Technical Assistance. In one manner or another many respondents suggested that the NILECJ should provide various types of technical assistance to those communities which are interested in adopting an exemplary project or criminal justice concept. Frequently mentioned suggestions included: (a) provide consultants and/or contact teams during the planning and/or implementation stage of an exemplary project; (b) establish a "program evaluation" team which would evaluate local criminal justice programs; and (c) inform SPA's and regional LEAA representatives as to how to better process requests for assistance.

Provision of "Program Selling" Assistance and Material. Many respondents provided suggestions regarding how the NILECJ might help sell an exemplary program at the community level. Suggestions offered included: (a) provide brochures, audio-visual presentations and so on which explain the exemplary program; (b) provide assistance regarding the selling of the exemplary project to local officials and representatives, and to heads of local agencies; (c) provide more national publicity for new criminal justice projects; and (d) establish a "speakers bureau."

Development of Improved Information Dissemination Methods. A number of suggestions were offered regarding how the NILECJ might better disseminate information about new criminal justice programs. These suggestions included: (a) distribute newsletters each covering a specific exemplary project; (b) distribute a newsletter which provides information about all new criminal justice programs supported by the LEAA; (c) for each exemplary project, provide a list of similar projects in the USA with the name and address of the director of each project; (d) establish a centrally located data bank to process and disseminate information about new criminal justice programs; and (d) place more emphasis on the dissemination of the results of LEAA-supported projects.

Provision of Funding Assistance. A number of respondents suggested that the LEAA/NILECJ should provide program implementation grants, or at least should encourage states to provide such grants. Also, they suggested that the LEAA and/or the SPA's should provide more information about potential sources of funds and how to obtain these funds, and should provide assistance regarding the preparation of grant applications.

Follow-On Workshops for Replication Site Program Directors. As an adjunct to this study a Technology Transfer Workshop was held for the directors of the six projects which are in the process of replicating the Des Moines, Iowa Community-Based Corrections Program. That workshop lasted for one and one-half days and gave the replication site directors the opportunity to meet each other, to exchange information about their program and to discuss problems with the Des Moines Exemplary Project staff. Reaction to the workshop was highly favorable and the attendees expressed an interest in holding similar workshops in the future.

Many of the persons surveyed in the study reported herein recommended that follow-on workshops be held for communities which have decided to or which are in the process of replicating a LEAA-sponsored criminal justice program. This recommendation merits serious consideration but only if the intent of the workshop is to interest and to aid communities replicate all portions of a program. If the intent is to help communities replicate only portions of a program then the type of workshop evaluated in this study should suffice.

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