



National Institute of Justice

Research in Brief

Julie E. Samuels, Acting Director

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Issues and Findings

Discussed in this Brief: An independent process evaluation of the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program, whose legislative basis is Title I of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. Covering primarily the first 4 years of the COPS program but including some projections up to 2003, the evaluation, sponsored by NIJ and conducted by the Urban Institute, is based on a series of nationwide telephone surveys, site visits, and case studies. The evaluation focuses primarily on COPS grants enabling law enforcement agencies (1) to hire police officers to engage in community policing activities, and (2) to redeploy existing officers to community policing by increasing officer productivity through the acquisition of technology or by freeing up officers for community policing by filling some officer-held positions with civilians.

Key issues: To what extent did the COPS program succeed in putting more officers on the street and, through its promotion of community policing, change the practice of policing in the United States? Did the distribution of COPS mirror the disparity in crime levels among jurisdictions? How satisfied were grantees with the COPS application and administration processes? Have grantees engaged in community policing

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The COPS Program After 4 Years— National Evaluation

by Jeffrey A. Roth and Joseph F. Ryan

Nearly \$9 billion of the \$30 billion of expenditures authorized by the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (Crime Act) was allocated to the law's Title I, the legislative basis of what soon became known as the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program. Title I listed four specific goals intended to change both the level and practice of policing in the United States:

1. To increase the number of officers deployed in American communities.
2. To foster problem solving and interaction with communities by police officers.
3. To encourage innovation in policing.
4. To develop new technologies for assisting officers in reducing crime and its consequences.

Over a 6-year period, the approximately \$9 billion was to fund three primary approaches to achieving the foregoing goals. The first approach involved the award of 3-year grants to law enforcement agencies for hiring police officers to engage in community policing activities. The second was to award grants for acquiring technology, hiring civilians, and, initially, paying officer overtime—all with the intent of increasing existing officers'

productivity and redeploying their saved time to community policing. The third approach was to award grants to agencies for innovative programs with special purposes, such as reducing youth gun violence and domestic violence.

The hiring grants were limited to 75 percent of each hired officer's salary and fringe benefits, normally up to a "3-year cap" of \$75,000. The grants for other resources were not limited by the cap. Normally, grantees were required to match the grants with at least 25 percent of program costs, to submit acceptable strategies for implementing community policing in their jurisdictions, and to retain the COPS-funded officer positions using local funds after the 3-year grants expired. Funds were authorized to reimburse up to \$5,000 of training costs for former military personnel hired under the Act.

Further, the Act required simplified application procedures for jurisdictions with populations of less than 50,000 and mandated an equal distribution of funds between jurisdictions with populations of more than and less than 150,000. As with most Federal grant programs, COPS-funded resources were required to supplement local expenditures, not supplant or replace them.

Issues and Findings

continued...

by building partnerships, solving problems, and doing crime prevention?

Key findings: Among the principal findings of the evaluation are the following:

- By May 1999, 100,500 officers and equivalents had been funded. Of them, preliminary estimates indicate that between 84,700 and 89,400 will have been deployed by 2003. Because some officers will have departed before others begin service, the federally funded increase (based on awards through May 1999) in policing levels will peak in 2001 between 69,000 and 84,600 before falling to 62,700–83,900 in 2003. These estimates will be revised as data collected in mid-2000 are analyzed. The COPS Office has continued to award grants since May 1999.
- The program accelerated transitions to locally defined versions of community policing. COPS funds seem more likely to have fueled movements toward adoption

of community policing that were already accelerating than to have caused the acceleration.

- An analysis found that the 1 percent of COPS grantees with the largest 1997 murder counts received 31 percent of all COPS funds awarded through 1997. The 10 percent of grantees with the highest murder counts received 50 percent of total COPS awards.
- COPS application procedures and customer service orientation resulted in many smaller police agencies reporting high levels of satisfaction with the program's application and administrative processes. Larger agencies tended to find administrative requirements no less burdensome than those of other grant programs.
- Building partnerships with communities by COPS grantees was commonplace in many of the agencies visited but, all too

often, partnerships were in name only or simply standard, temporary working arrangements. Most visited agencies did some form of problem solving, but form and visibility varied widely from agency to agency. In observed sites, crime prevention efforts abounded, primarily manifested as traditional programs now subsumed under the community policing label.

- The COPS program facilitated the efforts of agency chief executives who were inclined toward innovation and represented perhaps the largest effort to bolster development of law enforcement technology since the 1967 President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. COPS-funded technology is benefiting localities but not yet meeting productivity projections.

Target audience: State and local law enforcement agencies, State and local government administrators, Federal agencies and congressional committees involved in criminal justice issues, and researchers.

To meet the requirements of Title I, eight initiatives were undertaken:

1. Within a month after the Crime Act was signed into law, COPS Phase I grants for hiring officers were awarded to agencies that had previously applied unsuccessfully for grants under the previous Police Hiring Supplement (PHS) program; together, COPS Phase I and PHS funded nearly 4,700 officers.
2. Also within that month, the Department of Justice created a new agency, the COPS Office, to administer the new grant program.
3. In November, the COPS Office established two grant programs for hiring officers: Funding Accelerated for Small Towns (COPS FAST), with simplified application procedures for small agencies; and Accelerated Hiring, Education, and Deployment (COPS AHEAD), with more stringent application procedures, for large agencies. Later, these two programs were succeeded by the Universal Hiring Program (UHP) for all jurisdictions regardless of size.
4. Within a few months, the COPS Office created the Making Officer Redeployment Effective (COPS MORE) program to fund technology, civilians, and overtime (the overtime option was eliminated after fiscal 1995).
5. To process training grants for hired military personnel, the COPS Office established the Troops to COPS program.
6. To address local law enforcement needs other than new officers and other resources, the COPS Office received authorization to administer the existing Comprehensive Communities Program and created other grant programs to launch the Police Corps and to help grantees address such specific problems as domestic violence, youth firearms violence, gangs, methamphetamine, and school crime.
7. To encourage and assist the policing field in its transition to community policing, the COPS Office

funded four additional activities: the Community Policing Consortium to provide training and technical assistance in community policing; its own Program, Policy Support, and Evaluation Division to conduct assessments and evaluations of community policing activities; part of the policing research program of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ); and a network of Regional Community Policing Institutes (RCPIs), where educators, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations collaborated in community policing research, demonstration programs, training, and technical assistance.

8. To foster compliance with the programmatic requirement to implement community policing and with all administrative requirements, the COPS Office undertook an extensive program of information dissemination, training and technical assistance, telephone contact with grantees, legal reviews and opinion letters regarding grantees plans, and onsite monitoring by the COPS Office, working in conjunction with the Office of the Comptroller (OC), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

The national evaluation

Under its policing research program, NIJ was asked to administer an independent evaluation of the COPS program; NIJ selected the Urban Institute (UI) to conduct it. In addition, NIJ awarded grants to various organizations to evaluate several components of the COPS program other than the hiring and COPS MORE programs. With NIJ's concurrence, the UI team excluded the innovative programs from its scope to avoid duplicating other

evaluators' efforts. The PHS and COPS Phase I grants were awarded before all grantmaking innovations were adopted, and the award processes were fully completed before this evaluation began. Therefore, although UI counted those program resources in its analyses, it did not single out those programs for separate program evaluation purposes. Finally, because the RCPIs emerged well after the evaluation was under way and project resources committed, observations of their activities were limited to incidental findings onsite rather than a systematic evaluation.

This Research in Brief presents UI's national evaluation findings covering roughly the first 4 years of COPS, with primary focus on the COPS FAST, AHEAD, UHP, and MORE programs. Our work was guided by the logic model shown in exhibit 1, which outlines the COPS program and its intended effects.

The model indicates that COPS program outcomes depend on local decisions and actions to a greater degree than Federal block grant programs (in which formulas determine funding allocations) or discretionary programs (in which Federal officials select grantees based on detailed plans for using the funds). Starting from the upper left of the exhibit, distribution of COPS resources depended on eligible agencies' responses to a proposed exchange of Federal resources in return for local financial and programmatic commitments. The financial commitments were to share the costs of the resources during the life of the grant and to retain the COPS-funded officer positions thereafter. Grantees' programmatic commitments were to police their jurisdictions following principles of community policing.

As the COPS program was launched, neither the retention nor the community policing commitment was fully spelled out at the Federal level. The retention requirement was not precisely defined until 1998. Consistent with community policing principles, grant applicants were required to define the concept locally by submitting their own strategies specifying how they would meet four broad objectives—partnership building, problem solving, prevention, and organizational support of those objectives—using a plan tailored to local needs, resources, and context. Awards to applicants with inadequate community policing strategies were accompanied by a special condition requiring training and technical assistance by the Community Policing Consortium.

As shown in exhibit 1, successful applicants were to implement three kinds of organizational transitions. First, recipients of hiring grants had to recruit, hire, train, and deploy an influx of new police officers. Second, COPS MORE grantees were obligated to acquire and implement technology, to hire civilians, or (under 1995 grants only) to manage officers' overtime, thereby permitting the redeployment of officers or full-time equivalents (FTEs) to community policing. Third, to accommodate the demands of community policing, most agencies needed to change their organizations in various ways—an explicit objective of the COPS program.

As shown in the center of exhibit 1, successful local implementation was to include advancement of three programmatic community policing objectives specified by the COPS Office: problem solving, building partnerships with the community, and participating in prevention programs. In turn,

grantees' expanded pursuit of those objectives affects local criminal justice agencies and other units of local government.

The processes described above are the subjects of this Research in Brief. As a process evaluation, this study sets aside questions of community impact, represented in the shaded sector of the exhibit: how police and community actions stimulated by the COPS program affected levels of community satisfaction with police, fear of crime, social and physical quality of life, levels of serious crime, etc. More specifically, this report addresses the seven major questions noted in the accompanying sidebar (see "Major Questions Addressed by the National Evaluation" on page 7).

The answers to those questions were shaped by the history of the COPS program and its roots in presidential politics, academia, policing practice, and Federal assistance programs to local law enforcement and criminal justice agencies. Therefore, before this report addresses those evaluation questions, a review of the salient aspects of COPS history and roots is appropriate.

The COPS program and its roots

The COPS program can be viewed as the confluence of two forces. First, the 1992 presidential campaign occurred when public confidence in the ability of government to control crime was low, fear of crime was high, and resistance to Federal budget increases was even higher. In such a climate, a program to "put 100,000 officers on the street" made sense, especially if done with a display of Federal efficiency at minimal cost.

Second, over the preceding two decades, some students and practitioners of policing had begun to develop ideas that collectively became known as "community policing." The meaning of the term was fuzzy—as many believe it should be because its essence involves tailoring program specifics to local needs and resources. Nevertheless, a consensus was emerging that community policing had five main ingredients: solving underlying problems that linked seemingly unrelated incidents of crime and disorder instead of responding to them one by one; deemphasizing routine patrol and rapid response as primary crimefighting tools; involving the communities being policed as partners in identifying problems and planning or even executing responses; preventing crime through strategies for socializing children and youth and for making high-crime places safer; and changing organizations to support the other goals.

From the standpoint of many police executives, a program that combined community policing with additional officers had both positive and negative aspects. Community policing encouraged police to share crime reduction responsibilities with other segments of their jurisdictions. Additional resources are generally seen as useful, but involving other partners in deciding how to use them can raise sensitive issues. Similarly, while at the time "more technology and more civilian employees" was hardly a politically viable Federal response to the Nation's fear and outrage over crime, several prominent police chiefs and mayors were arguing that those resources would be more useful than additional officers.

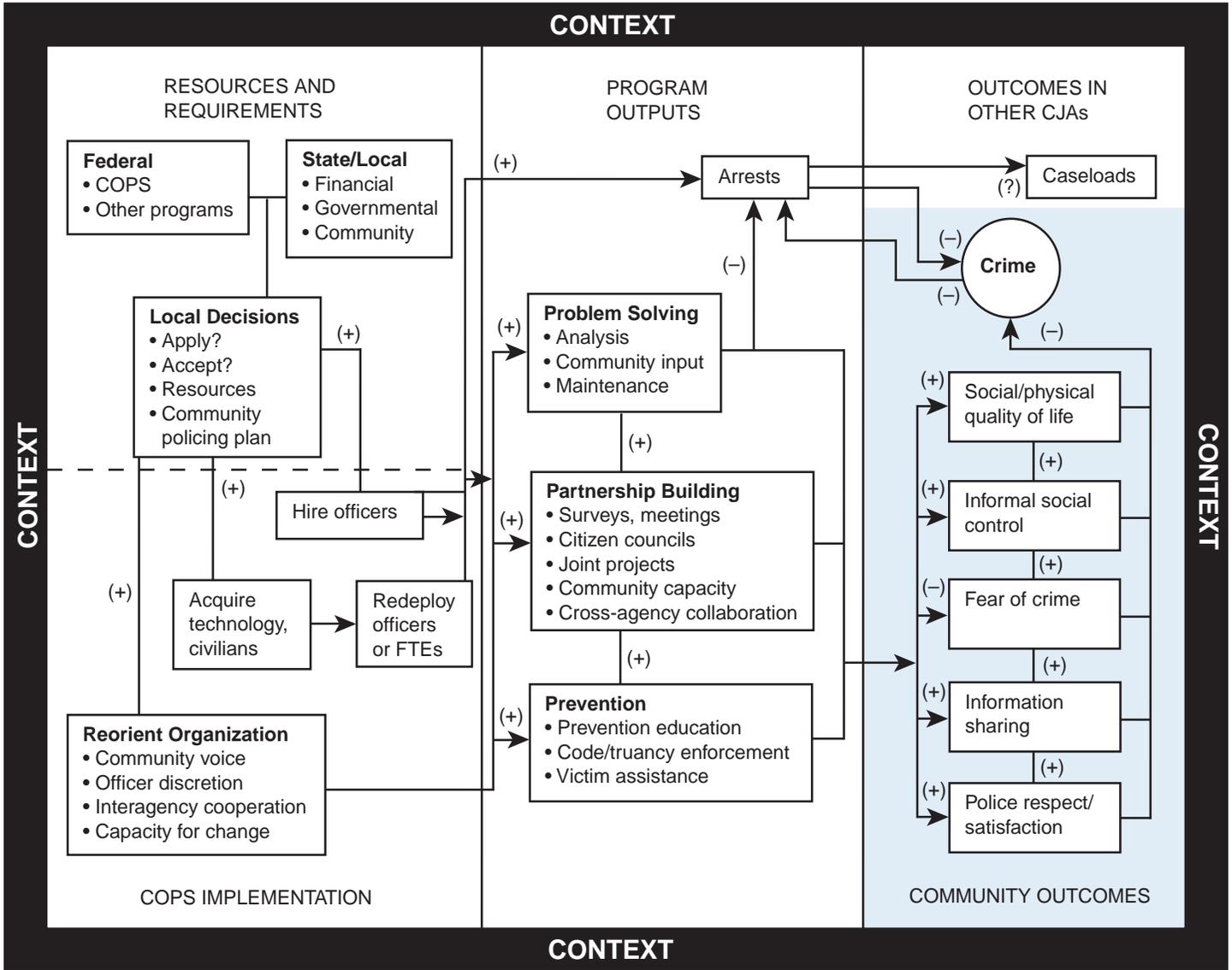
For several years, beginning in the Bush administration, the U.S.

Department of Justice and other Federal departments had begun to rethink the mechanisms for distributing Federal financial assistance. Grant programs had begun inching toward bypassing States to deal directly with local governments, reducing administrative burdens, and lowering categorical boundaries on how funds could be used. The difficult question was how to support local priorities in less constraining ways without giving up all Federal leverage for shaping those priorities. Early programmatic steps in this direction included the Bush administration's Operation Weed and Seed and the Clinton administration's early Project PACT and Comprehensive Communities Program.

These factors challenged the COPS program with an extremely ambitious goal: encouraging law enforcement agencies across the Nation to hire 100,000 officers and to adopt community policing as a guiding philosophy—without raising the Federal budget deficit. These objectives compete, because burdensome measures taken to monitor compliance with the community policing requirement could diminish the attractiveness of the grants. Yet failure to monitor compliance raises the danger that a program intended to increase the number of agencies doing community policing may reduce the quality of the community policing they do.

At the urging of several influential police chiefs who placed higher priority on acquiring technology and hiring civilians than on hiring new officers, the COPS MORE program was created to support these alternative resources. However, the statute obligated the COPS Office to require applicants to demonstrate that the productivity gains associated with these resources would

Exhibit 1. Logic Model



Abbreviations and Symbols:

FTEs: Full Time Equivalents

CJAs: Criminal Justice Agencies

(+): Items listed in preceding box result in positive impact on, or increase in, items listed in the following box.

(-): Items listed in preceding box result in negative impact on, or decrease in, items listed in the following box.

permit the redeployment of existing officers to the street at least as cost-effectively as hiring grants. Other benefits of civilians or technology were irrelevant under the statute. Lacking an experience base for estimating the

productivity gains, most applicants succeeded in projecting that redeployment would occur cost-effectively. However, achieving the projected redeployment became contingent on grantees' ability to implement

technologies that were sometimes unfamiliar and, in the case of one key technology—wireless transmission of field reports—essentially unavailable at the start of the COPS program.

Senior Justice Department officials concluded that demonstrating effectiveness of the Federal Government in this complex mission required a new organization doing business in new ways. Therefore, a new Office of Community Oriented Policing Services was created within weeks after passage of the Crime Act and quickly became known as the COPS Office. The new agency undertook the heroic task of staffing up, announcing the COPS program to all eligible grantee agencies, assuring that applications complied with programmatic requirements, and making award decisions, all within a few months.

The COPS Office succeeded in processing more than 10,000 grant awards in its first 4 months. While the early rounds of that work were completed before the national evaluation began, the design and implementation of the evaluation relied heavily on COPS Office manual and automated records. During that work, evaluators found that grant files typically showed evidence of fairly thorough eligibility and programmatic review. The high accuracy levels of COPS Office records greatly facilitated our work.

COPS grants were not exempt from standard Department of Justice budget review and administrative requirements, which are administered by the OC. For the relatively simple hiring grants, the combined COPS Office/OC process required about 7 months on average from application submission to signed acceptance of those awards. During startup, the COPS Office attempted to reduce this delay with an “accelerated” procedure that permitted agencies to hire officers after receiving an announcement letter but before formal obligation of grant

awards; 50 percent of AHEAD grantees and 35 percent of FAST grantees reported using this procedure. In some jurisdictions, local rules prevented agencies from hiring new officers before the official award.

Formal review and approval of the more complex COPS MORE grants required an average of 11 months, even under normal circumstances. For many grantees, this delay was prolonged between October 1995 and April 1996 while a Federal budget dispute shut down OC grant reviews and left the COPS budget in doubt. Consequently, an average of 16 months elapsed for 1995 MORE applicants between application submission and signed acceptance of the awards.

During debates over the 1994 Crime Act, a Local Law Enforcement Block Grant (LLEBG) program had been proposed unsuccessfully by Republicans as an alternative to the COPS program. After the 1994 elections, the LLEBG initiative resurfaced and COPS program authorizations were reduced by about \$500 million in the fiscal 1996 and subsequent budgets, with the \$500 million reprogrammed to LLEBG. This reprogramming raised concerns that LLEBG, with its lower match requirement of only 10 percent and fewer restrictions on how funds could be spent, would reduce localities’ interest in COPS grants.

Despite these difficulties, the COPS Office “customer satisfaction” orientation succeeded at the outset with small agencies (i.e., those serving jurisdictions of less than 50,000). Among small-agency Wave 1 survey respondents with prior Federal grant experience, nearly 80 percent described COPS application and administration

as simpler than others, as of 1996. This compared with 40–50 percent among large agencies, which faced more elaborate application requirements, especially among MORE grantees, who had suffered the most consequences of the Federal budget confrontation and whose applications required more elaborate review.

As startup difficulties were surmounted, the COPS Office shifted its focus to program operations, which were intended to encourage implementation of community policing and new technology and to foster compliance with administrative regulations. The office expanded the Community Policing Consortium, which the Bureau of Justice Assistance had created in 1993 to advance community policing, and created Innovative Community Oriented Policing programs. Some of those programs were intended to develop innovative approaches to such problems as gangs, domestic violence, and methamphetamine. Others were intended to advance community policing in special environments, such as schools and distressed neighborhoods, to advance problem-solving skills, and to advance community policing through supportive organizational innovations. Finally, the COPS-funded RCPIs brought academic, practitioner, and community perspectives to bear on training and local innovation for community policing.

To foster compliance with administrative regulations, five units were involved. The COPS Office Legal Division defined compliance by interpreting Title I, writing regulations, and applying them to specific local circumstances. The Grants Division informed the field about requirements, reviewed applications for compliance,

1. Major Questions Addressed by the National Evaluation

1. How did local agencies respond to the exchange offered by the COPS program? The evaluation addressed this question primarily through three waves of national telephone surveys. Wave 1 interviewed a representative sample of law enforcement agencies of all types and sizes, selected in May 1996 and stratified to overrepresent COPS hiring grantees, MORE grantees, and the nongrantees that were serving jurisdictions of more than 50,000. Wave 2 interviewed a new sample of agencies whose first COPS award was a 1996 UHP grant and reinterviewed members of the Wave 1 MORE subsample with grants for mobile computing technology. Wave 3 reinterviewed the municipal and county police agencies that were interviewed in Wave 1 and either (a) belonged to the Wave 1 nongrantee or hiring grantee subsamples or served jurisdictions of more than 50,000, or (b) belonged to the Wave 1 MORE subsample regardless of jurisdiction size. Under subcontract, the National Opinion Research Corporation collected the Wave 1 data in October–November 1996, Wave 2 in September–October 1997, and Wave 3 in June–July 1998. During June–July 2000, Wave 4 reinterviewed all agencies interviewed in Wave 1. Additional information came to light during site visits to 30 grantee agencies, conducted between early 1996 and 1998 by teams of researchers and police practitioners.

2. What distribution of COPS funds resulted from localities' application decisions through the end of 1997? Analyses of COPS Office grant management databases addressed that question. The analyses were updated several times between February 1996 and March 1998.

3. How did COPS hiring grantees accomplish their hiring and deployment objectives through mid-1998, and what were their expectations for retaining the COPS-funded officers? We addressed the hiring question primarily through the Wave 1 survey, the retention question primarily in the Wave 3 survey, and gathered supplemental information on both matters on site visits. The Wave 4 survey updated information on both issues.

4. How did COPS MORE grantees succeed in acquiring and implementing technology, hiring civilians, and achieving the projected redeployment targets through mid-1998? An analysis of a representative sample of 438 grant files for 1995 MORE awards ascertained what types of technology were awarded in the first year of the program. Implementation progress was the primary focus of the Wave 2 survey of all 183 1995 MORE grantees that received MORE-funded mobile computers, the most commonly awarded type of technology. For all types of technology, the Wave 3 survey updated this information by asking all respondents about all their MORE grants, regardless of how the agency was selected at Wave 1 or when their MORE grants were awarded.

5. What increases in policing levels were projected and achieved by local agencies using COPS resources? To estimate increases through 1998 based on grants awarded through 1997, survey-based estimates of hiring progress, technology implementation, and retention expectations were applied to the projections in COPS Office data. As a benchmark, we performed time-series analyses of 1989–96 data on sworn force size reported in annual Uniform Crime Reports (UCR).

For a preliminary estimate of long-term increases in policing levels due to COPS hiring and MORE programs, the evaluation applied factors estimated from the Wave 3 survey to COPS Office grant award counts as of May 12, 1999, when the White House announced achievement of the goal of funding 100,000 police officers. We plan to update this estimate based on the Wave 4 survey.

6. To what extent had the COPS program succeeded by mid-1998 in encouraging grantees to build partnerships with communities, adopt problem-solving strategies, and participate in prevention programs? To trace this evolution on a national basis, all three survey waves contained a checklist of tactics in support of these objectives. We compared grantee and nongrantee agencies' official statements on the extent to which these tactics were in place before 1995, were begun or expanded later, and were supported by COPS funds through mid-1998. Observing the "ground truth" behind the survey responses was a primary purpose of programmatic site assessments in 30 grantee agencies.

7. To what extent did grantees' organizations change through 1998 to support and sustain community policing? We obtained national profiles of organizational change using the survey methodology we adopted for programmatic change and observed "ground truth" during site visits. In addition, the question was addressed through 10 case studies conducted under subcontract by the Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management of the Kennedy School of Government.

and assigned grant advisors to maintain regular telephone contact. The Monitoring Division monitored compliance through site visits to 432 grantees in 1998, with a planned expansion to 900 in 1999. The OC established a separate branch to monitor compliance with financial and administrative requirements and to monitor the adequacy of grantees' accounting and administrative controls. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) audited COPS grantees onsite in search of possible violations of the Title I statute.

Between 1996 and 1998, as the COPS Office process of awarding grants yielded some of the center stage to compliance activities, the satisfaction of large local/county agencies with COPS Office operations declined somewhat. The percentage of hiring grantees describing COPS grants as easier than others to administer declined from 63 to 47 between 1996 and 1998. Although nearly 90 percent continued to describe their grant advisors as helpful, the percentage who found them "easy to reach" dropped from 81 to 74 percent.

COPS application decisions

This section describes who participated in local decisions to apply, what considerations weighed in their decisions, and what their future application plans were as of 1998.

Who participated in agencies' application decisions?

Law enforcement agencies' decisions to apply for Federal grants are typically a fairly closed process, involving the chief law enforcement executive, elected officials or their staffs, and, in larger agencies, the unit that will administer the grant and the agency grant manager, if one exists. Yet

many believe that community policing initiatives are more likely to succeed with broad and deep participation in planning throughout the agency.

For COPS applications, agencies' chief executives were reportedly involved in virtually all decisions and elected officials in more than 80 percent. According to the Wave 1 survey, about half the agencies brought sergeants into the application decisions, nearly 40 percent involved patrol officers, and various segments of the community were brought into 20 to 45 percent of decisions. Less than 25 percent involved union representatives. Despite COPS Office success in simplifying application procedures, some 40 percent of applicants nevertheless involved consultants in the application process.

Which agencies became grantees, and why?

An estimated 19,175 law enforcement agencies were eligible for COPS grants. This estimate was obtained by merging law enforcement agency lists maintained by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the FBI's National Crime Information Center, the UCR Section, and the COPS Office. Duplicate records were removed and agencies that appeared to be ineligible deleted. Of these agencies, 10,537 (55 percent) requested and received at least one COPS grant by the end of 1997. Of grant recipients, 761, or about 7 percent, had withdrawn by March 1998.

After the COPS startup period, when short application deadlines and related local logistical problems discouraged some agencies from applying immediately, financial considerations became the primary influence on agencies' decisions not to apply. Financial concerns during the grant period—the explicit 25 percent match requirement

and the implicit match needed to cover annual salary and fringe benefits exceeding \$33,333 and collateral costs of an officer, such as training and equipment—were the most commonly mentioned reasons given in 1996 by agencies for their decisions not to apply in 1995. By mid-1998, concern over the cost of retaining the officers after grant expiration was the primary influence on decisions not to apply, and this concern also led to an estimated 40 percent of the agency withdrawals. At that time, the nature of the retention requirement was unclear: the U.S. Department of Justice had not announced the length of the required retention period (one complete budget cycle after grant expiration), and we believe the prevailing assumption was a much longer and more costly period.

Resistance to community policing was not a significant deterrent to applying for COPS grants. Objections to community policing or to Federal grants in general were mentioned by only 8 percent of respondents. Moreover, 88 percent of the largest agencies in our sample that had received LLEBG funds reported that they were using them to support community policing even though there was no requirement to do so. It appears that by covering collateral costs not covered by COPS grants, the advent of LLEBG may have encouraged participation in the COPS program.

What are agencies' future application plans?

In June–July 1998, the program remained popular among grantees: 74 percent of local/county grantees stated they were planning to apply for at least one additional COPS grant in 1998 or 1999, as were 66 percent of small agencies (jurisdictions of less than 50,000), 78 percent of medium-

size agencies (50,001–150,000), and 89 percent of large agencies (150,001 or more). Among the prospective applicants, MORE technology grants were resoundingly popular: 20 percent planned to apply for that type only, and an additional 41 percent planned to request MORE-funded technology in combination with officer hiring, civilians, or both. The most popular combination was technology plus sworn officers (25 percent of prospective applicants). Six percent planned to apply for hiring grants only, and 3 percent for civilians only.

As with prior application decisions, financial considerations strongly influence future intentions. Of the large local/county agencies surveyed in Wave 3, the local match requirement was described as “very important” by 55 percent of the agencies, restrictions on allowable *purposes* for which grant funds could be spent by 48 percent, restrictions on allowable *types of resources* by 43 percent, and uncovered collateral costs by 40 percent.

Distribution of COPS funds

This section summarizes the number and dollar amounts of COPS grant awards and their distribution pattern.

What is the total value of COPS grants for increasing the level of policing?

By the end of 1997, according to COPS Office records, awards had been announced of 18,138 grants worth \$3.47 billion. Of those, 754 were for innovative programs. The remaining 17,384 grants were intended to increase the level of policing. They carried a total of \$3.388 billion in awards: about 16 percent under COPS MORE, and 84 percent under hiring grant programs including PHS and COPS Phase

I. These programs, plus FAST, AHEAD, and UHP supported the hiring of approximately 41,000 officers. COPS MORE supported the acquisition of other resources (primarily technology and civilians) whose productivity was projected to yield the FTE of approximately 22,400 additional officers for at least 3 years, for a total of 63,400 officers and equivalents.

By May 12, 1999, according to COPS Office press releases, another \$1.9 billion had been awarded, about 74 percent under hiring grants and the remainder under MORE. At a ceremony that day, the White House announced that the goal of funding 100,000 police officers had been reached. By then, the COPS Office and its predecessors had awarded an estimated \$4.27 billion in hiring grants and another \$1.017 billion in MORE grants, for a total of \$5.387 billion, exclusive of innovative program support. These funds supported the hiring of 60,900 officers and the acquisition of other resources projected to yield 39,600 FTEs of officer time through productivity gains.

How were COPS funds distributed?

Eligible agencies’ application decisions led to significant variation by region, but regional patterns differed depending on how they were measured. The Pacific region ranked first in terms of the percentage of eligible agencies receiving grants but third in terms of COPS dollars awarded per capita and sixth in terms of COPS dollars per crime. The Mid-Atlantic region ranked eighth in terms of agency participation but first on both the per capita and per crime measures.

Of all agencies selected for awards by the end of 1997, 4 percent served core

city jurisdictions (i.e., central cities of Census Bureau Metropolitan Statistical Areas), which are home to 27 percent of the U.S. population. They received 40 percent of COPS dollar awards for all programs combined, and 62 percent of all COPS MORE funds. On average nationwide, core cities received substantially larger awards per 10,000 residents (\$151,631) than did the rest of the country (\$86,504). However, their average award per 1,000 index crimes (\$184,980) was less than two-thirds the average for the rest of the country (\$299,963).

Which types of agencies received the most COPS grants?

Some 75 percent of hiring and MORE funds went to municipal or county police agencies, 15 percent to sheriffs and State police agencies, and the remainder to a variety of special jurisdictions. As required by Title I, dollars awarded were about evenly split between jurisdictions with populations of more than 150,000 and smaller ones.

The growth in awards during 1996 and 1997 was driven largely by repeat awards to existing grantees rather than by first awards to new grantees. By the end of 1997, \$1.42 billion, or 47 percent of all funds designated for award, had been allocated to agencies with four or more grants. As a result, the distribution of COPS funds became skewed, so that through 1998 the 1 percent of grantee agencies with the largest grants had received 41 percent of grant funds.

Did COPS funds go where the crime was?

Awards to repeat grantees helped to focus cumulative COPS awards on jurisdictions that suffer disproportionately from serious crime. Of the 8,062 UCR contributors that had received

at least one hiring grant by December 1997 or one MORE grant by June 1998, the 1 percent with the largest 1997 murder counts received 31 percent of all funds awarded through the end of 1997. They reported 54 percent of all U.S. murders. The 10 percent with the highest murder counts received 50 percent of total COPS awards. A nearly identical pattern occurred with respect to robbery.

Officer hiring, deployment, and retention planning

After the COPS Office announced awards, OC reviewed and approved the budget and obligated the Federal funds. Following OC approval and obligation of the funds, the COPS Office mailed a formal award package informing grantees of all conditions. Grantees were allowed to draw down funds only after they had returned a signed acceptance of the award and conditions to the COPS Office. For the hiring grants, in which conditions were fairly standard and most OC review issues involved merely calculation of salary and fringe benefits, these processes moved fairly smoothly, even through the Federal budget dispute and Government shutdown in 1995–96. During those years, the mean elapsed time between COPS Office receipt of the application and mailing the award package to the grantee was 149–154 days for hiring programs, and grantees who had returned their signed acceptances by mid-1997 did so in an average of 70–75 days, for a total elapsed time of about 224 days.

How did officer hiring and deployment proceed?

Once funds became obligated and available to spend, hiring of COPS-funded officers proceeded smoothly throughout the entire 1996–98

observation period. In 1996, more than 95 percent of agencies reported hiring their officers within 10–12 months of award obligation. As of June 1998, 83 percent of medium and large local/county grantees reported they had hired all their officers funded through the end of 1997. Nearly 70 percent of them reported that all of their officers had finished training and begun working in their first regular assignments. All the agencies reported that they expected to have 100 percent of their officers awarded through 1997 on the street by June 2000.

As of the 1996 Wave 1 survey, half of all small-agency (COPS FAST) grantees reported deploying their new officers directly to community policing and 38 percent assigned them to “backfill” in routine patrol assignments for more experienced officers redeployed to community policing. About 68 percent of medium- and large-agency (COPS AHEAD) grantees reported using the backfill strategy, which the COPS Office recommended.

How are COPS-funded officers spending their time?

Two of the three prime components of community policing articulated by the COPS Office—partnership building and problem solving—were the most commonly expected uses of COPS-funded officers’ time; each was mentioned by about 40 percent of the medium and large local/county agencies in the Wave 3 sample. About 26 percent of those agencies reported their COPS-funded officers would spend substantial amounts of time on “quality of life” policing, a style some believe requires strong control by the community if it is not to undermine community partnership building. Routine patrol and “squeezing in proactive work” were both mentioned by around

30 percent of agencies. The COPS-funded officers were expected to spend substantial time on routine patrol by 40 percent of the agencies with agencywide community policing and by 24 percent of agencies with specialized community policing units. Some 23 percent of the agencies reported their COPS-funded officers would spend at least some of their time on undercover and tactical assignments, and 35 percent expected them to spend at least some time on administrative or technical assignments.

As an indirect measure of COPS-funded officers’ activities, we asked how those activities were affecting other agencies. Among the large local/county grantees, 83 percent reported greater demands on code enforcement and sanitation agencies; 83 percent reported greater demands on community organizations and businesses; and 66 percent reported greater demands on agencies that deal with violence in the home. These impacts are consistent with direct reports of strong emphasis on problem solving and partnership building, along with referrals of domestic violence cases.

How were agencies planning to retain the COPS-funded officers as of 1998?

Through the 3-year hiring grant periods, 98 percent of respondents reported they had either kept their COPS-funded officers on staff or replaced departed officers expeditiously. At the time of the Wave 3 survey in 1998, our sample contained few agencies with expired grants. Therefore, findings are limited to plans and expectations regarding retention, not actual retention experience.

The Wave 3 survey was conducted before the COPS Office announced the

length of grantees' retention commitment: compliance with the retention requirement requires keeping grant-funded officer positions filled using local funds for at least one budget cycle beyond grant expiration. Despite the uncertainty, approximately 66 percent of Wave 3 respondents reported they were "certain" their agencies would retain the COPS-funded officers when their grants expired. Another 24 percent indicated they were "almost positive" they would retain the officers; 6 percent were "pretty sure"; only 4 percent stated they were "not sure at all."

Next, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements intended to describe in more detail their expectations about how their agencies would retain the COPS-funded officers. About 95 percent reported that the COPS-funded officers either were or would be part of the agency's base budget by the time the grant expired. About 52 percent stated they were uncertain about long-term retention plans. Only 10 percent of the respondents reported that despite the "good faith effort" required as a grant condition, unforeseen conditions were likely to keep their agencies from retaining all of the positions.

Other common responses are difficult to interpret and suggest that despite extensive COPS Office efforts to educate agencies about the retention requirement, the persons authorized to speak to our interviewers on behalf of the agencies may have been uncertain about what the requirement entailed. About 37 percent reported expecting that the COPS-funded officers would be retained by "using positions that open up" (i.e., through attrition, indicating an intention to retain the COPS-funded officers but not the positions).

About 20 percent reported expecting that the COPS-funded officers would be retained by cutting back positions elsewhere, a plan that would constitute supplanting under many common conditions; 5 percent agreed that the COPS-funded officers were likely to be retained both through attrition and by cutbacks elsewhere. Now that the retention requirement has been spelled out in more detail, we are reexamining long-term retention plans in the Wave 4 survey.

MORE awards and projected productivity gains

COPS MORE was a pivotal component of the COPS program. From the administration's perspective, MORE was key because it accounted for 39 percent of the 100,000-officer total but only 19 percent of the COPS budget. From the grantees' perspective, MORE-funded resources, especially technology, were extremely attractive because they promised a variety of local benefits without the burden of postgrant retention costs that new officers carried. This section describes what is being acquired with COPS MORE awards, how implementation of MORE-funded technology and achievement of productivity gains is proceeding, and how MORE-funded civilians are being integrated into grantee agencies.

How are COPS MORE funds being allocated and used?

COPS MORE has been especially popular with large jurisdictions, and awards have been more heavily concentrated than hiring grant awards in relatively few agencies. Of the 17 agencies serving populations of more than 1 million, 53 percent had received at least one COPS MORE grant by the end of 1998, compared with just

5 percent of agencies serving populations less than 25,000. By the end of 1997, the 1 percent of grantees with the largest MORE grants had received 48 percent of the \$528 million awarded to that point, compared with 37 percent for the largest hiring grantees. The concentration of large MORE grants was even greater among local/county police agencies, and it increased slightly during 1998.

In 1996, the General Accounting Office reported that technology absorbed just over half of 1995 COPS MORE resources, civilians somewhat less, and overtime less than 10 percent. Overtime was not supported by COPS MORE after that year. By 1998, 38 percent of MORE grantees had been funded exclusively for technology, another 44 percent for both technology and civilians, and 5 percent for technology, civilians, and overtime.

What is the relationship between COPS MORE grants and counts of officers?

To receive a MORE grant, an applicant had to produce a credible projection that the funded resources would yield at least four FTEs in increased productivity per \$100,000 of grant funds—the rate at which Federal COPS funds supported officer hiring. On average, in a random sample of 1995 MORE grant applications, civilians were projected to yield 4.54 FTEs per \$100,000, largely through replacement of officers on a one-for-one basis. Technology projections averaged 6.12 FTEs per \$100,000

Starting in 1996, the COPS Office began converting dollars from MORE technology grants to projected FTEs at the four-per-\$100,000 minimum needed to demonstrate cost-effectiveness—a more conservative

assumption than applicants' projections. The conservative projections were used in COPS Office estimates of total FTEs funded and were the standard of accountability imposed on grantees. Even under the conservative assumption, technology accounts for 64 percent of total productivity gains projected for COPS MORE.

Implementation of MORE-funded technology

Starting with the budget review and funding obligation process, COPS MORE technology implementation was problematic. Because of the additional complexity of COPS MORE plans and budgets, Federal processing of applications required at least 4 months longer than hiring grants. For 1996 applicants, the average time between receiving a MORE application at the COPS Office and mailing the award package to the grantee was 269 days, compared with 149 days for hiring programs.

Between October 1995 and April 1996, the MORE award process was stretched out even further by a Federal budget confrontation. A Government shutdown halted OC review of 1995 applications in the pipeline. Also, uncertainty over the fiscal 1996 COPS Office budget delayed award decisions on applications received just before the September 30 end of fiscal 1995, which had pushed the total requests for fiscal 1995 beyond available MORE resources. As a result, successful 1995 MORE applicants waited an average of 16 months between submitting their applications and receiving authority to draw down funds.

What types of technology were acquired and what redeployment was projected? At the time of our Wave 1 survey in 1996, few agencies

had received more than one MORE grant, and so most local/county MORE technology grantees were pursuing only one type of technology. By far the most common was mobile computers, being implemented by an estimated 60 percent of these agencies, followed by management/administrative computers (23 percent) and booking/arrest technology (10 percent). Some agencies were pursuing telephone reporting systems (2 percent), Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) systems (1 percent), and other technologies such as geo-mapping and reverse 911 systems.

By 1998, many MORE agencies were implementing more than one type of technology. Therefore, the percentage of agencies implementing each technology type had grown to 79 percent for mobile computers, to 45 percent for management/administrative computers, to 12 percent for CAD systems and booking/arrest technology, and to 6 percent for telephone reporting systems. The 1996-98 changes make clear that most CAD and telephone reporting system projects were begun more recently than most mobile and management/administrative computer projects.

Although automated COPS Office records do not allow one to attribute projected FTEs to specific technologies, it was possible to compute the number of FTEs for categories of MORE technology grantees based on their combinations of funded technologies. These computations suggest that the mobile computers were projected to play an important role in increasing productivity. Of 16,870 projected FTEs funded through June 1998, 34 percent were generated by agencies with mobile computers only, and 29 percent by agencies with a combination of mobile computers, manage-

ment/administrative computers, and other technologies. Only 24 percent were projected to come from agencies without mobile computers.

The knowledge base from which MORE applicants could develop their projections of FTEs saved through productivity gains was sparse. For most of the technologies, projections clustered around 2.4 hours per officer per shift, slightly more than the 2 hours used by the COPS Office as an example in the MORE application kit.

How rapidly is implementation proceeding? Technology implementation was far from complete as of summer 1998, even by agencies whose first COPS MORE grant was awarded under the 1995 program. Among those agencies, 61 percent reported that management/administrative computers were fully operational, as did 47 percent for telephone reporting systems, 45 percent for booking/arrest systems, 44 percent for mobile computers, 39 percent for CAD systems, and 65 percent for other technologies. For computing technologies, implementation has proceeded most rapidly among small agencies: 50 percent of agencies serving jurisdictions of less than 50,000 have all mobile computers operational, compared with 23 percent of agencies with jurisdictions of more than 150,000. For management/administrative computers, the comparable percentages are 78 percent and 53 percent.

Some management/administrative and mobile computers were not operational simply because they were purchased not long before the Wave 3 survey. Nevertheless, for two reasons these figures probably understate the adverse effect of delays in mobile computer implementation on achievement of

projected productivity increases. First, CAD and telephone system projects began, on average, under more recent grants than computer implementation. Second, the one available time study indicates that any projected mobile computer productivity increases will be due to wireless field reporting, which eliminates trips to stations to write reports—not from wireless inquiry functions applicable to driver’s license, vehicle registration, and other files. The inquiry capability produces benefits such as improved officer safety, elimination of waits for clear voice-radio channels, and protection from scanners but are unlikely to save measurable officer time that can be redeployed to community policing. Yet, to our knowledge, as of June 1999, no major police department has achieved departmentwide implementation of wireless field reporting, although three are reportedly in the final phases of testing. Therefore, all the agencies that reported they had operational mobile computers were referring to inquiry capability, not wireless field reporting.

What productivity gains are being achieved and reallocated to community policing?

Because of the delays in technology implementation, the 1998 Wave 3 survey offers only a fragmentary basis for comparing actual productivity gains with those projected in MORE grant applications. As of June 1998, MORE grantees from 1995 expected to achieve only about 49 percent of the projected FTEs, but the Wave 3 sample was not designed to produce a definitive national estimate. The estimate of productivity gains will be updated in a future report based on the Wave 4 survey in 2000, when more grantees are expected to have experience with fully operational technology.

What other benefits and costs of technology are local agencies experiencing?

Although prospects for achieving 100 percent of the projected productivity gains are not encouraging at this time, agencies report expecting or achieving a variety of other benefits from their mobile computers, even without wireless transmission capability. These include:

- **Automated field reporting:** more complete, accurate, and recent real-time information and permanent records; improved crime/data analysis capability; more accurate/complete/timely records; improved spelling/grammar/legibility; more report writing; easier retrieval of information; shorter review process; and reduced time for records staff.
- **Wireless query and response functions:** improved officer safety due to faster, more secure responses to queries regarding license plates, vehicle registrations, and persons; secure car-to-car communication; and fewer demands on dispatchers.
- **Increased effectiveness:** higher clearance and conviction rates due to improved reports; better recovery of stolen property; positive response from the community (though some report adverse reactions from victims and witnesses); more information sharing across shifts; better communications with neighboring agencies; better tracking of community events; easier provision of information to the public; and better preparation for court.
- **Agency benefits:** opportunity for staff to learn computers; officer morale booster (sometimes after a break-in period); and expected financial savings in the long run.

Agencies also experienced extra costs due to the new technology. The most common were computer staff time, system installation time, and time to train personnel in the use of the technologies. Time incurred by computer staff and/or vendors was an especially common expense in agencies with ongoing technology projects that MORE-funded technology had to fit. Some agencies that anticipated the costs included them in their initial grant budgets without sacrificing the cost-effectiveness of their MORE programs. Depending on technology type, 23 to 27 percent of MORE technology grantees implementing the five most common technology categories reported that unexpected implementation costs increased the local cost of their MORE grants by at least 10 percent over the match they had originally planned.

Not surprisingly, the likelihood of an agency experiencing unexpected costs increased as implementation progressed. The percentage reporting unexpected costs rose from 21 percent of agencies with mobile computers not fully implemented to 31 percent of agencies that had completed implementation. The percentage reporting unexpected costs rose from 22 percent to 29 percent for agencies implementing desktop computers, from 26 percent to 43 percent for CAD systems, from 3 percent to 60 percent for automated booking systems, and from 12 percent to 32 percent for telephone-reporting systems.

Three categories of cost have been especially problematic for agencies funded for mobile computers, especially those pursuing wireless field reporting. These are upgraded telecommunications capacity; integration of field reporting with existing (or developing) records management

systems; and vehicle mounts, which were frequently designed from scratch.

Use of MORE-funded civilians

This section describes the functions being performed by MORE-funded civilians, civilian hiring and retention, and deployment of the officers replaced by the new civilians.

How did hiring, deployment, and retention of civilians proceed?

During 1995, the first year of COPS MORE, the program awarded \$145 million to fund civilians to create 6,506 FTEs of sworn officer time. By June 1998, this amount had risen to \$287.2 million to support 12,975 FTEs. At that time, more than 80 percent of grantee agencies reported having completed their civilian hiring, and all expected to complete their civilian hiring by the end of 1999. Sixty-four percent of grantees reported that all their civilian hires were still on staff, and 80 percent of the remainder reported that they had replaced all who had left. An estimated 96 percent reported that the civilians were saving officer time, and, for the four most common civilian positions, 73 to 80 percent of agencies reported that their new civilians had been used either to create a new position or to increase the total number of people in each position.

The MORE civilian program appears to have provided modest encouragement to an ongoing trend toward civilianization. Approximately 45 percent of MORE civilian grant recipients claimed to be already in the process of civilianization when they received their grants. The annual average increase in civilians between 1993 and 1997 (which span the early COPS years) was 4 percent, up from 3 percent annually over the preceding 3 years.

What functions are the MORE-funded civilians performing?

MORE-funded civilians were hired to increase resources for community policing in four ways:

1. Shedding routine tasks from sworn officers to civilians, such as clerical/administrative positions (e.g., typing, filing, scheduling duty rosters, taking phone messages) and record maintenance.
2. Replacing sworn personnel in existing specialist positions, such as desk/duty officers, dispatchers, telephone reporting unit staff, and evidence technicians.
3. Filling new or existing specialist positions that are expected to improve officer productivity, such as computer technicians.
4. Staffing new community policing positions, such as community coordinators/organizers, domestic violence specialists, or CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) planners.

The most common assignments of MORE-funded civilians were to clerical/administrative positions (43 percent of agencies assigned at least some civilians to such positions), dispatchers (34 percent), and telephone response unit members (26 percent).

COPS effects on policing levels

The effect of the COPS program on policing levels is the total of the two components discussed in the preceding sections. The first is sworn officers hired through COPS grants and retained after the grants expire. The second is productivity gains, measured in officer FTEs yielded by MORE-funded resources. This report contains preliminary estimates of both effects,

which should be treated with caution for several reasons. First, anticipating the Wave 4 survey, we did not design Wave 3 to survey a representative sample of small local/county agencies or, indeed, any samples of other types of agencies. Second, Wave 3 data were collected at a time when grantees had little actual experience on which to base estimates of two key factors in the projections: the percentage of hired officers that will be retained following the required period and the actual number of FTEs generated from resources acquired with COPS MORE grants. The Wave 4 survey and other data will be used to produce updated, more valid, estimates.

With these cautions in mind, we report estimates of COPS program impacts as of two points in time: the impact, through the end of 1998, of grants awarded through 1997; and the long-term impact of grants awarded through May 12, 1999, the date the White House announced that the goal of funding 100,000 officers had been met.

How will COPS hiring grants affect the number of law enforcement officers in the United States?

Wave 3 survey data were first used to estimate the number of COPS-funded officers hired as of June 1998. Through 1997, the COPS Office had awarded hiring grants for 41,000 officers; survey results indicate that about 39,000 of them had been hired. The difference reflects grantee delays in accepting awards, recruiting candidates, and hiring officers.

This gross increase is partially offset by delays in filling vacancies for non-COPS positions, and cross-hiring between agencies. Allowing for these factors, we estimate that the 41,000

officers awarded by the COPS Office as of the end of 1997 resulted in a national net increase of between 36,300 and 37,500 officers by the end of 1998.

In the longer term, offsetting factors include certain federally approved cuts in sworn force size and less-than-complete retention of COPS-funded positions beyond the 3-year grant period. Given the uncertainty surrounding these factors, a best case scenario would have grantees retain 91 percent of their new hires indefinitely, and a worst case scenario would result in a 64 percent retention rate.

By May 1999, the COPS Office had awarded agencies approximately 60,900 officers through hiring grants. Under the best case scenario, these awards will produce an estimated peak effect of 57,200 officers by the year 2001 and, after postgrant attrition, the permanent effect of the grants will stabilize at an estimated 55,400 officers by 2003. The minimum retention scenario, in contrast, suggests that the net impact of these awards will peak at 48,900 officers in 2000 but decline to a permanent level of 39,000 by 2003.

How will COPS MORE grants affect the number of FTE officers redeployed through increased productivity?

Estimates of time savings from MORE grants were based on the Wave 3 survey, which contained a representative sample of 1995 municipal and county MORE grantees. To develop preliminary national estimates, we extrapolated the results of these agencies to other types of agencies and later cohorts of MORE grantees.

By the summer of 1998, the COPS Office had awarded agencies 22,400

FTEs through MORE grants for civilians and technology, and survey results indicate that grantees had redeployed 6,400 FTEs with these grants. At that time, however, only 23 to 78 percent of MORE technology grantees (depending on agency population category and type of technology) described some or all components of their technology as fully operational. Therefore, grantees were also asked to estimate future productivity increases they expected to achieve once all grants were fully implemented.

Agencies that had progressed the furthest in making their technology operational projected productivity gains that were smaller (60 percent of the original projections) than those expected by MORE grantees as a whole (72 percent of the original projections), suggesting that agencies adjust their expected productivity gains downward as they gain more experience with operational technology.

We used those figures to compute best case and worst case interim estimates but recognize the worst case estimates are based on only a partial subsample that has substantial implementation experience. This subsample is growing and becoming more representative over time, and so revisions of estimates of MORE-supported productivity increases are planned in 2000 using Wave 4 survey data.

Using these assumptions and an estimated 3-year timeframe for full implementation by grantees, we estimate that by the end of 1998, between 9,100 and 10,900 officers were redeployed from resources funded by MORE grants awarded by the end of 1997. If these implementation patterns hold for post-1998 MORE grants, the 39,600 FTEs awarded as of May 1999

will result in the redeployment of between 23,800 and 28,500 FTEs by 2002.

What will be the combined effect of hiring and MORE grants awarded by May 1999 on the level of policing?

By May 1999, the COPS Office had awarded approximately 100,500 officers and officer equivalents through hiring grants and MORE grants. Our estimates for the two types of grants are combined in exhibit 2. Upper bound projections based on June 1998 survey estimates of maximum officer retention and maximum officer redeployment suggest that these awards will result in a peak national net increase of 84,600 officers and equivalents by the year 2001, before declining somewhat and stabilizing at a permanent level of 83,900 by 2003. Lower bound projections based on estimates of minimum officer retention and minimum officer redeployment suggest that the COPS-supported increase in the number of officers and FTEs deployed at any point in time will peak at 69,000 officers in the year 2001 and decline to a permanent level of 62,700 by 2003.

Total COPS-funded FTEs added to police agencies throughout this period will be greater than the number available during any particular year, especially if our lower bound projections prove more accurate. In this regard, the COPS program might be compared with an “open house” event, in which the total number of visitors to the event is larger than the number present at any given point in time. Using this open house concept, we estimate that COPS awards made through May 1999 will result in the temporary or permanent hiring of 60,900 officers and the deployment

of between 23,800 and 28,500 FTEs, thereby adding between 84,700 and 89,400 FTEs to the Nation’s police agencies at some point between 1994 and 2003, though not all these FTEs will be simultaneously in service at any single point in time.

Whether the program will ever increase the number of officers and equivalents to 100,000 on the street at a single point in time is not clear. The COPS Office has continued to award COPS grants since May 1999. If the agency continues to award hiring and MORE grants in the same proportions and our upper bound projections are correct, roughly 19,000 additional

officers and equivalents awarded could be enough to eventually produce an indefinite increase of 100,000 officers on the street. If the lower bound assumptions are more accurate, the program may require an additional 59,000 officers and equivalents awarded to create a lasting increase of 100,000 officers. More definitive answers to these questions will be available following completion of the Wave 4 survey in 2000.

COPS and the style of American policing

The COPS Office listed four principal goals of community policing: building

police-community partnerships, problem solving, crime prevention, and organizational support for these programmatic objectives. The evaluation used three approaches to observe how the COPS program affected law enforcement agencies’ pursuit of these goals. First, at three points in time, the national survey of agencies measured agency representatives’ official statements about the implementation status in COPS grantee and nongrant agency of 47 tactics for pursuing these objectives, as well as the role of COPS funds in grantees’ implementation of those tactics. Second, teams of police practitioners and researchers visited 30 sites, many twice, for programmatic

Exhibit 2. Estimates of COPS Impact on Level of U.S. Policing

Program	Awards Through December 31, 1997			Awards Through May 12, 1999		
	Funded (12/97) (1)	Officers Hired and FTEs Redeployed		Funded (4)	Estimated Net Hired or Redeployed	
		Gross (6/98) (2)	Net (12/98) (3)		Year	Projection (5)
Hiring (PHS, COPS Phase I, FAST, AHEAD, UHP)	41,000	39,000	36,300–37,500	60,900	High 2001 2003+	: 57,200 : 55,400
MORE	22,400† ‡	6,400	9,100–10,900	39,600	Low 2000 2003+	: 48,900 : 39,000
					High 2002+	: 28,500
					Low 2002+	: 23,800
Total	63,400	45,400	45,400–48,400	100,500	High 2001 2003+	: 84,600 : 83,900
					Low 2001 2003+	: 69,000 : 62,700

† Net of 3,600 second- and third-year supplements for retaining civilians, which are included in COPS Office records of 26,000 FTEs funded.

‡ As of June 1998.

+ Indicates “steady rate” projection, e.g., 2003+ indicates “for year 2003 and beyond.”

site assessments of the “ground truth” underlying agencies’ statements about the tactics in use. Third, to explore the roles of local leadership and COPS resources in facilitating community policing innovations, 10 case studies were conducted by a Kennedy School of Government team.

Has the COPS program advanced the adoption of community policing in the United States?

The answer is “yes,” but it must be quickly qualified. “Adoption of community policing” has very different meanings in different jurisdictions, and COPS funds seem more likely to have fueled movements that were already accelerating than to have caused the acceleration.

Between 1995 and 1998, the use of a number of tactics commonly labeled as community policing swept the country among grantees and nongrantees. Among those that reportedly spread the fastest were citizen police academies; cooperative truancy programs with schools; structured problem solving along the lines of SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment); and patrolling on foot, bike, or other transportation modes that offered more potential than patrol cars for interacting with citizens. Grantees and nongrantees alike reported revising their employee evaluation measures and their mission, vision, and values statements to codify their versions of community policing. Packaged prevention programs became almost universal by 1998, such as Neighborhood Watch and drug resistance education in schools, which in 1995 were already among the most widespread tactics commonly described as community policing.

We have no measure of the extent to which the COPS program played various roles that may have indirectly encouraged nongrantees to adopt these tactics. Possible mechanisms included training and technical assistance programs and materials, publicizing grantees’ community policing successes, and acting as a catalyst that encouraged grantees to demand more community policing training from regional and State academies.

The advancement of community policing among nongrantees offers some weak evidence that the COPS program provided fuel but not the launch pad for the nationwide proliferation of community policing tactics between 1995 and 1998.

With a few exceptions, COPS grantees’ reported use of community policing tactics grew more rapidly than did nongrantees’. However, the difference in reported adoption rates was statistically significant for relatively few. They include joint crime prevention projects with businesses, citizen surveys, techniques for bringing the community more fully into problem solving, and bringing probation officers into problem-solving initiatives. Grantees were significantly more likely than nongrantees to report adopting late-night recreation programs and victim assistance programs. Finally, grantees were significantly more likely than nongrantees to report instituting three organizational changes in support of community policing: new dispatch rules to increase officers’ time in their beats, new rules to increase beat officers’ discretion, and revised employee evaluation measures.

In this information age, the community policing vocabulary is well known.

Federal funding rewards departments that profess the successful implementation of community policing principles. In that context, survey findings that agencies’ use of community policing tactics grew between 1995 and 1998 could merely reflect socially desirable responses, at least for COPS grantees. Our site visits were intended to learn the ground truth behind the survey reports and to shed light on the different meanings that law enforcement agencies assign to strategies and tactics that are commonly labeled as community policing. Given the limited time on site, one might expect it to be difficult to separate the rhetoric of community policing from the reality of what law enforcement agencies actually do. Indeed, it often was. Therefore, the enormous variation detected across sites in the operational meanings of key community policing concepts is especially telling. This variation is described next.

How are COPS grantees building partnerships with communities?

Problem-solving partnerships for coordinating the appropriate application of a variety of resources are commonplace in many of the agencies visited. Yet all too often, partnerships are in name only, or simply standard, temporary working arrangements. Partnerships with other law enforcement units and agencies merely to launch short-term crackdowns are not in the spirit of problem solving or partnerships nor are partnerships in which citizens and business representatives are merely “involved,” serving primarily as extra eyes and ears as before. True community partnerships, involving sharing power and decisionmaking, are rare at this time, found in only a few of the flagship departments. Other jurisdictions have begun to lay foundations for

true partnerships, however, and as problem-solving partnerships mature and evolve, the trust needed for power sharing and joint decisionmaking may emerge.

How are COPS grantees implementing problem solving?

Certainly, it appeared onsite that the majority of agencies visited are engaged in problem solving, although its form and visibility vary widely from agency to agency. Some of the strongest features of problem solving that evaluators observed included: the evolution of problem solving from “special operations” to more complex activities that attack disorder and fear and require police to search for interventions other than arrest; administrative systems that recognize problem solving at multiple scales and multiple levels within the organizations; broadly distributed authority to initiate problem-solving “projects”; systems to assess the impact of particular projects and to learn from them; and the ability of the law enforcement agency to engage other government agencies in defining and solving community problems.

In some jurisdictions, traditional enforcement and investigative activities are called problem solving under the community policing umbrella when these activities are directed toward problems the community has identified as concerns. Problem-solving projects dominated by enforcement actions, however, rarely advance the objectives of community policing, in that they are unlikely to either fix underlying causes or attract the community support needed to maintain solutions. Therefore, enforcement-based solutions to stubborn problems are likely to be short term, although when suc-

cessful, they sometimes encourage residents to reenter public spaces and begin developing more permanent solutions.

A visible sign of enforcement-based problem solving is the recent and growing trend toward zero-tolerance policing, a term also lacking consensual definition. In the sites visited, zero tolerance policies take different forms. Some are manifested as zero tolerance efforts of short duration (e.g., operated for a few days each quarter or once a year) with a narrow focus (e.g., street drug dealing or public drinking on the July 4) and within a circumscribed area (e.g., high-trafficking area or downtown). In other jurisdictions, zero tolerance is less focused. What might have been called a crackdown 5 years ago is now implemented under zero tolerance or order maintenance policies and classified as part of community policing.

Zero tolerance policies have been included by some agencies under community policing, since they often focus on quality of life crimes and incivilities, and primarily because “the community wants it.” Zero tolerance policies may help achieve some goals of community policing within a framework that uses community input in setting priorities and delegates discretion to officers working under mission statements that value the dignity of citizens, even suspected offenders. However, there are dangers that without adequate mechanisms for the diverse communities within most jurisdictions to register their demand for or opposition to zero tolerance tactics, those tactics may directly undercut the objective of partnership building by alienating potential community partners.

How are COPS grantees implementing crime prevention?

Prevention efforts abounded in observed sites, primarily manifested as traditional prevention programs now subsumed under the community policing label. Neighborhood Watch, D.A.R.E.®, and a wide variety of youth programs remain the mainstays of prevention efforts. Beyond the standardized programs, examples were rare of systemic prevention efforts based on the resolution of the underlying causes of crime.

What legacy will remain from community policing initiatives stimulated or facilitated with COPS funds?

There are shining stars among the COPS grantees that provide examples of what most observers would classify as “the best of community policing.” There are far more agencies striving to change their organizations to pursue community policing objectives and are somewhere on the long and tortuous road. A few want nothing to do with it.

The national survey and site visit results indicate that COPS funding has helped to accelerate the adoption and broaden the definition of “community policing.” The effects of this massive support for community policing has both positive and negative aspects. Certainly, COPS funding has enabled a great number of law enforcement agencies to move ahead in their implementation of community policing as locally defined. Funding conditioned expressly on community policing implementation, coupled with peer pressure to embrace this model of policing, has also led a substantial number of law enforcement agencies to stretch the definition of community policing to include under its semantic

umbrella traditional quick-fix enforcement, draconian varieties of zero tolerance, long-established prevention programs, and citizen advisory councils that are *only* advisory.

Our supplemental study of multiple funding streams in large grantee agencies hinted at the power of local decisions to determine the course of the community policing movement. Of the 100 largest grantee agencies in the national sample, 88 reported using their LLEBG funds to augment COPS and local funding of community policing, despite the absence of any requirement to do so. However, 82 of the 100 agreed or strongly agreed that their “agency has a clear vision and is able to interpret grant requirements to support that view.”

Given the power of local decision-makers, the COPS program will almost certainly wind up affecting the nature of policing in three ways. In some jurisdictions, the forces fueled by COPS grants will achieve the community policing objectives articulated by the COPS Office. In others, local forces will transform the objectives into something unrecognizable by forebears and creators of the program. In still others the forces will fizzle out for reasons that have to do with leadership, implementation strategies, turnover at top levels, organizational processes within grantee agencies, and communities’ capacities and willingness to join the enterprise.

Precisely where each of these outcomes occurs will not be known for some years. However, change seems most likely to be institutionalized and sustained when: planning for change is broad based; the commitment to change is rooted throughout the senior leadership of the agency and the po-

litical leadership of the jurisdiction; changes are organizationwide rather than limited to a special unit; organizational changes become embodied in new physical plant or technology; the new programmatic objectives are reflected in administrative systems (e.g., for personnel administration or performance measurement); and the change redefines the culture of a department, or at least of an entire age or rank cohort within the department.

Measures of success

Readers of an evaluation report are entitled to the clearest possible answer to the question “Did the program succeed?” In the case of COPS, the clarity of the answer depends on the criterion for success. At least the following success criteria warrant attention:

- Client satisfaction.
- Effect on the quantity or level of policing in the United States.
- Effect on agencies’ transitions to community policing.
- Effectiveness in stimulating technological and organizational innovation.
- Effect on crime.

Client satisfaction

If one considers grantees the clients of a Federal grant program, the COPS Office one-page application and customer service orientation largely succeeded with law enforcement agencies serving small jurisdictions (i.e., those serving populations of less than 50,000). For many of those agencies, COPS was their first Federal grant experience and they reported high levels of satisfaction with the application and administration processes; small agencies with prior Federal grant

experience found COPS grants easier than others to request and administer. Larger agencies tended to find administrative burdens no less burdensome than other grant programs, but a number of innovative departments combined COPS funds with other funding streams to support their community policing initiatives.

Simplification had one unfortunate consequence. By avoiding tedious explanations, the grant application kits failed to resolve ambiguity in two key administrative requirements: retention of COPS-funded officer positions and nonsupplanting of local fiscal effort. At least a few jurisdictions failed to apply because of their overly conservative interpretations. Other jurisdictions adopted more aggressive interpretations. Determining the compliance status of some of those required several years for OIG audits, COPS Office appeals of audit findings, and independent mediation to resolve disagreements between OIG and the COPS Office regarding compliance status.

Effect on level of policing

Our best estimate at this time is that by 2003, awards through May 1999 will have raised the level of policing on the street by the equivalent of 62,700 to 83,900 full-time officers. This estimate contains two elements: 39,000–55,400 hired officers (net of attrition and cross-hiring between agencies), and 23,800–28,500 full-time equivalents (FTEs) of officer time created by productivity gains due to technology and civilians acquired with COPS MORE funds. To those who considered the level of policing in 1994 inadequate, this constitutes success, even though it falls well short of the target of “100,000 new cops on the beat.”

Even though we plan to update and refine these estimates after the Wave 4 survey, the actual increase is unlikely ever to be known precisely, for several reasons. First, if the optimal number of police officers in a jurisdiction is related to local conditions, such as crime rates or tax receipts, then the benchmark against which the COPS-funded increase is counted should shift when conditions change. Second, only about half the COPS MORE grantees have systems in place to measure productivity gains, and because the measurement requires before-and-after comparisons, it is already too late to put measurement systems in place. Third, even where measurement systems are in place, they are likely to understate the productivity gains because some of it occurs in very small increments of time, which officers may well forget to record.

Effect on transitions to community policing

It seems clear that the COPS program accelerated transitions to locally defined versions of community policing in at least three ways. First, by stimulating a national conversation about community policing and providing training and technical assistance, the COPS program made it difficult for a chief executive seeking professional recognition to avoid considering adopting some approach that could plausibly be labeled “community policing.” Second, the COPS hiring funds and innovative policing grants allowed chief executives who were so inclined to add new community policing programs without immediately cutting back other programs, increasing response time, or suffering other adverse consequences. Third, the COPS funds

created an incentive for agency executives to adopt community policing.

Whether, in accelerating transitions to community policing, the COPS program distorted or watered down the concept is difficult to say. Tautologically, more replications of any strategy that encourages tailoring to local conditions will stimulate deviations from one specific definition of that strategy. In addition, two policing strategies burst onto the national scene during the life of COPS but apparently independently of it: zero tolerance and COMPSTAT (computer comparison statistics), the New York City Police Department’s system for increasing commanders’ accountability. Although the obligation of COPS grantees to pursue community policing may have encouraged some police executives to describe those strategies as “community policing because the community wants it,” it seems at least plausible that use of those techniques would have proliferated even if there had been no COPS program.

Effects on organizational and technological innovation

In agencies whose chief executives were inclined toward innovation, the COPS program facilitated their efforts in several ways. First, the broad semantic umbrella offered by the term “community policing” creates latitude for experimentation with new policing tactics and organizational structures. Second, the application required specification of a community policing strategy, thereby offering an occasion for engaging broad segments of the agency and community in planning that strategy. Third, COPS resources allowed departments the opportunity to add new modes of policing without

drawing resources away from existing priorities. Fourth, although achieving the projected productivity increases from MORE-funded mobile computers required telecommunications and other technology that was unavailable at the outset of COPS, the MORE funds fueled a large enough market to attract vendors’ interest and to stimulate their efforts to satisfy the new demand. This represented perhaps the largest effort to bolster development of law enforcement technology since the recommendations of the 1967 President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice.

Effects on crime

As a process evaluation, this study did not address the question of whether the COPS program had an effect on crime. Indeed, that question could not have been seriously addressed in the early years of COPS because “the COPS program” meant something different in each jurisdiction.

However, the adoption of new policing tactics by so many agencies as they expanded their sworn forces does present an opportunity to investigate which tactics (or clusters of tactics) had beneficial effects on crime rates. By statistically relating local crime trends to the adoption of new tactics, it should be possible to identify promising strategies that were more likely than not to reduce crime more rapidly than the national average. Once promising strategies or tactics are identified statistically, semistructured site observations should help to identify the qualitative aspects of implementation that distinguish effective from ineffective uses of these promising strategies.

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Jeffrey A. Roth, Ph.D., is Director of Crime Control Policy Studies at the Urban Institute, Washington, D.C. Joseph F. Ryan, Ph.D., is Chair, Departments of Public Administration and Criminal Justice, Pace University, White Plains, New York. They are co-principal investigators of the national evaluation summarized by this Research in

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