

**Document Title:            Evaluability Assessment of Warrant Sharing  
Technology**

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## Evaluability Assessment of Warrant Sharing Technology

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### NIJ Guidance

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) does not recommend an outcome evaluation of warrant sharing technology in the site assessed below. NIJ remains interested, however, in evaluating the impact of warrant sharing technology in one or more other sites where a prospective time series design is possible with multiple pre- and post- measures. Applicants who propose to evaluate this technology are encouraged to consider outcome variables such as warrants served and closed, and impact on public safety, as well as challenges (including issues related to external validity) identified below. Further, NIJ is interested in applications examining outcomes related to regional warrant sharing (as it is accomplished through the ARJIS system – see below) as compared to warrant searches through NCIC alone.

Applicants may depart from this guidance by providing appropriate rationale.

**1. Technology Summary:** Warrant sharing is an important component of the movement towards increased information sharing between law enforcement jurisdictions. Warrant sharing is made possible by a Records Management System (RMS) utilizing a centralized relational data system that includes multiple data files that can be queried in tandem. Commonly an integrated RMS may include computer-assisted data (CAD), incident data, arrest information, officer and victim information. An RMS can produce time savings in several different ways. Officers can more quickly query databases for arrest report and incident report information. In addition, fully integrated RMS systems eliminate the need to enter duplicative information into records, CAD, and incident reports (<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/default.asp?Item=632>).

**Scope of Evaluation:** This feasibility assessment recommends that an evaluation on warrant sharing technologies not be conducted in the San Diego County Police Department. San Diego County represents a mature system with their warrant sharing technology; however, for jurisdictions that are not yet at this level of maturity, a time-series design is feasible to accurately reflect changes in likely outcomes of interest.

**Summary of Evaluability Assessment Activity:** The assessment of the feasibility of evaluating warrant sharing technologies began with a review of the literature, which revealed that this technology is widespread among agencies and departments across the United States. Although little is known empirically about the effects of warrant sharing technologies, it would be extremely difficult to implement a rigorous evaluation, and therefore is not recommended.

The Urban Institute (UI) identified San Diego, California's County Sheriff's Department as having a mature application of warrant sharing. On December 11, 2007, NIJ and UI staff met with officers in the County office to discuss, and see firsthand, their advanced technology.

**Finding:** It would be extremely difficult to implement a scientifically rigorous evaluation of the warrant sharing technology in San Diego County Police Department, and therefore is not recommended. As learned on our site visit, the technology heavily weighs on the collaboration among many different agencies, and this collaboration differs from county, to city, to state. The technology is only as good as the participating agency makes it. Agencies have the ability to expand their warrant sharing systems to incorporate a larger area, or a greater sophistication; this makes an empirical evaluation of warrant systems nearly impossible. There can be no random assignment in an agency with this technology already in place, and finding comparison groups is not viable.

It is, however, recommended that this technology be evaluated in a site that has not yet implemented the warrant sharing technology. For a select jurisdiction (s) that has not yet participated in warrant sharing, a time-series approach would provide a before and after snapshot of outcomes; the selected jurisdictions must have adequate levels of data pre-measurement, and continued levels of data collection efforts post-implementation to track the changes in the likely outcomes.

## **2. Brief Literature Review**

**What do we already know about projects like these? Would this evaluation add to what we know?**

Warrant sharing technologies exist in many states. For example, warrant sharing in the Rutherford and Henderson counties in North Carolina, with Spartanburg Department of Public Safety in South Carolina, have deployed VisionCONNECT, a law enforcement collaboration platform that allows sheriff's deputies to remotely access outstanding warrants and share computer-aided dispatch information from neighboring jurisdictions (<http://www.microsoft.com/casestudies/casestudy.aspx?casestudyid=201294>).

Also, in Colorado, The Police Chief Magazine (October 2001) reported that Colorado's system links together five different legacy criminal justice information systems. Not only does each system reside on its own hardware and software platform, but each agency also uses its own system to meet its business needs, a system developed without regard to the

needs of any of the other four participating systems. This makes the translation and mapping of data between the systems a task critical to the success of all data transfers

In Alabama, the House passed a bill (HB 45) that would have allowed law enforcement officers to serve a warrant in another county just as they would a county within their jurisdiction. Under current law, a judicial officer of a county is required to endorse an arrest warrant issued in another county or municipality before execution of the warrant. Under the bill, this would no longer be necessary. It would also authorize a law enforcement officer to pursue and execute an arrest warrant or a writ of arrest from a municipal court in another jurisdiction. The Senate Governmental Affairs Committee passed a similar bill (SB 248)

([http://64.233.167.104/custom?q=cache:QtBnw\\_cqSlgJ:www.theiacp.org/leg\\_policy/Leg\\_update/2005/Alabama.pdf+warrant&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=4&gl=us&client=google-coop-mp](http://64.233.167.104/custom?q=cache:QtBnw_cqSlgJ:www.theiacp.org/leg_policy/Leg_update/2005/Alabama.pdf+warrant&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=4&gl=us&client=google-coop-mp)).

### **Which audience(s) would benefit from this evaluation?**

The major benefactors of an evaluation of warrant sharing would be policymakers and the law enforcement agencies who do not presently implement this technology. If an evaluation demonstrates that this technology more effectively and efficiently increases arrests of outstanding warrants, it may lead to further policy development.

### **Level of Site Cooperation**

San Diego County Sheriff's Office has expressed a willingness to participate in an evaluation, although there has been no formal evaluation to date, and none currently planned. We do not believe this Office will be an appropriate site, due to the level of maturity at which the Office is already operating this technology. However, there are many jurisdictions that do not currently share warrants, and would presumably be willing to participate in an evaluation of this technology.

### **3. Background History**

In 1973, San Diego County had a regional system for warrant sharing, and there were more than 70 agencies in the region. During this time, San Diego set up a mainframe system. There was a legislation passed to rid warrants that were issued from moving violations or traffic stops. More than 80% of the 100,000 warrants came out of the local court, which meant that very little data entry was involved. Those that came from a different route were handled manually by the Sheriff's division. From 1952 to 2000, the Court Services was the County Marshalls, and became the Bureau of Sheriff. This was the only agency that was allowed to issue warrants, and the Bureau issued warrants for the entire county. In 2000, the Sheriff's office absorbed the Marshall's office, and alleviated the grand jury.

From 2002 to 2004, San Diego County Sheriff's Department started investing in their mainframe. They created an extranet known as SDLaw. The SDLaw extranet is a

private, web-based system, and runs many important applications. Two primary applications run on the extranet include: 1) eJIMS, which is a portal into the sheriff's Jail Information Management System that provides real-time information on inmates, including bookings, arrests, charges, mug shots, court appearances, charge disposition, release date and type, and the current location of the inmate; 2) eWarrants, which provides a high-speed, near-real-time search for warrants, restraining orders and hits in the San Diego County Officer Notification System (ONS). EWarrant users have the capability of searching for warrants based on name and number or location such as a street address. This allows local police departments to plan and execute warrant sweeps in a targeted area.

Other components were added to the mainframe, such as geographic searching capabilities. EWarrant also allows the public to enter "tips" on criminals, and allows every agency in the county to post field notes. According to San Diego Sheriffs, this upgrade sped up searches from two months, to two minutes. Previously, all warrants could only be detected by way of dispatch. Each warrant had to be processed and printed; there was no way to share with other officers because there were only hardcopies.

## **Reporting**

The newer system has many qualities that surpass the old one. In the old system, in order to pull up a warrant, you had to have a name. EWarrants can run searches in numerous categories, including time arrested (so as to pursue newer warrants), zip code, last name, street address, HUD complex, felonies, misdemeanors, or crime. CAD runs all the information.

Therefore, after roll-call, officers head to a computer, run their search, and print up reports of the warrants they will try to recover. EWarrants is updated four times per day, which allows officers on new shifts the chance to run updated reports.

## **Training**

To train officers on the technology, a bulletin was created to aid existing officers. All officers trained in the Academy receive training on the warrant sharing technology, and there is a field-training officer who trains onsite.

## **4. Program Design**

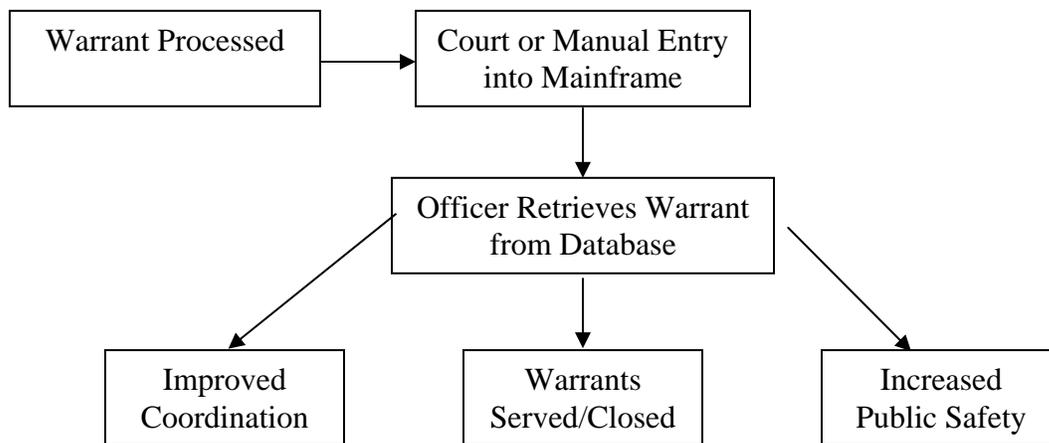
### **Project Goals and Objectives**

The key goal of this technology is to improve the collaboration of agencies, and to improve public safety by increasing the number of arrests for outstanding warrants.

## **5. Program Logic Model**

Exhibit 1 presents the basic technology logic model. As the model demonstrates, once the warrant is processed, it gets entered into the mainframe, which is either by way of the court, or manually entered by Sheriff's Office personnel. Approximately 80 to 90% are entered through the court. After an officer completes roll-call, he or she then pulls up the warrants on the computer at the station. Depending on the search criteria, any number of the warrants in the system can be accessed. The system spans multiple cities and counties in the state, as well as all serious felonies in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). Officers can use this warrant database to improve their coordination (including targeting warrant "sweeps"), and to improve public safety by capturing more warrants in a more efficient manner.

### Exhibit 1. Warrant Sharing Logic Model



#### Is the logic supported by empirical evidence?

No found testing has been conducted to support the logic.

#### Are there apparent contradictions or conflicts between certain activities and the outcome expected?

It is logical to use the warrant sharing technology as a tool for law enforcement to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of relieving warrants. However, this technology is highly contingent on the agencies and users. Conducting an evaluation in multiple agencies is recommended, so that measures of individual agencies can be included as control variables.

## 6. Implementation Issues

#### Is the project being implemented as planned?

Yes. It appears that the San Diego County Sheriff's Office has successfully integrated the technology into their existing CAD.

### **Describe staffing/users.**

There are presently more than 17,000 users of the warrant sharing technology, and more than 18 cities. This includes the San Diego Sheriff's Office and 9 counties. This technology is available to many agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the military, the Sheriff's office, Public Defenders, Mental Health, Welfare, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF).

### **Describe the stability of the project over time.**

It is clear that the technology is nearing advanced stages. However, it is also clear that updates are necessary, and San Diego anticipates further updates. One major update that needs to take place is to expand the technology into the patrol vehicles. Presently, officers must physically be in the office, and sitting at a computer to run their searches. Only at the office can they print up the updated warrants. This poses a clear disadvantage to retrieval of immediate information. In addition, there is presently no way to avoid false arrests, or those cases that have been immediately cleared.

Moreover, there is still data entry required on the mainframe because the court still operates the system. In approximately five years, they anticipate a statewide court system. In 2011, they expect a fully homogenized system.

### **What aspects of the project could be evaluated for outcome?**

A true experiment that utilizes randomization would not be appropriate for this technology. Moreover, it would be nearly impossible to generate a comparable group for comparison to San Diego Sheriff's Office. It is, however, recommended that this technology be evaluated in a site that has not yet implemented the warrant sharing technology. For a select jurisdiction (s) that has not yet participated in warrant sharing, a time-series approach would provide a before and after snapshot of outcomes; the selected jurisdictions must have adequate levels of data pre-measurement, and continued levels of data collection efforts post-implementation to track the changes in the likely outcomes.

### **What would the outcome measures be?**

If an evaluation was conducted, the primary outcome measure would be the number of warrants shared across jurisdictions, and the number of warrants that are cleared or closed.

### **How could an appropriate comparison group be created?**

It would be especially difficult, if not impossible to create a comparison group. Because of this, a time-series approach is recommended for a jurisdiction that does not yet share warrants.

### **Are the sample sizes statistically significant?**

We recommend that at least 2 jurisdictions are chosen for an evaluation of pre-post design. Because the technology heavily weighs on factors unique to police departments (computer technology, staffing, crime in area, etc.), these factors would need to be included in any analysis and held constant, in order to recognize any real effect on outcomes as a result of warrant sharing.

### **Is random assignment possible?**

No.

### **Recommended Approach**

It is not recommended that NIJ support a study of warrant sharing technologies in San Diego. San Diego represents a mature system of this technology. However, an evaluation (s) is recommended for sites that have not yet implemented the warrant sharing technology. For a select jurisdiction (s) that has not yet participated in warrant sharing, a time-series approach would provide a before and after snapshot of outcomes; the selected jurisdictions must have adequate levels of data pre-measurement, and continued levels of data collection efforts post-implementation to track the changes in the likely outcomes. To control for factors that inherently affect individual jurisdictions and police departments, it may be necessary to evaluate more than one site, and collect administrative and other data relevant to the department.

## **7. Measurement Model**

Potential outcomes are presented in the logic model.

## **8. Data**

### **Comment on the quality and availability of project-generated data to support these measures.**

The San Diego County Sheriff's Office maintains extensive and sophisticated electronic databases that can be easily accessed for evaluation purposes. Much of this data is accessible to the public, via the ARJIS web site: [www.arjis.org](http://www.arjis.org). The San Diego and Imperial counties have shared access to this data management system.

### **Would an evaluation have to generate new or additional data?**

An evaluation can be conducted in jurisdictions that already collect sufficient levels of data, so that pre-and post-measurement would easily be conducted.

## **9. Summary Remarks**

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### **Recommendation for evaluation**

It is recommended, that although San Diego is certainly not a site for this type of study, this technology should be evaluated in a site that has not yet implemented the warrant sharing technology, and whose level and method of data collection is at a mature level.

## Selected References

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