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A PLAN FOR POST-GRANT EVALUATION

**Volume I
Executive Summary**

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Prepared for

**Division of
Justice and Crime Prevention
Commonwealth of Virginia**

FOREWORD

This document is the summary report of a project to design and test a program for post-grant evaluation for the Division of Justice and Crime Prevention of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Full project documentation consists of two additional documents containing detailed project history, procedures, findings, and recommendations.

Volume II, *Project History, Findings, and Recommendations*, contains an in-depth description of the conduct of this project, results of test evaluations of completed grant projects, and recommendations for a continuing program of post-grant evaluation.

Volume III, *Procedures Manual*, contains explicit instructions for grant evaluation and includes the structured interview and reporting forms developed for continuing use.

The Systems Science Development Corporation project team members wish to express their appreciation to Mr. Richard N. Harris, Mr. Carl N. Cimino, Miss Carolyn M. Liberti, Mr. Ronald L. Bell, Mr. Joseph N. Tucker, and other DJCP staff members for their cooperation, assistance, and advice, and to the representatives of the regional Planning District Commissions and the sub-grant recipient agencies who contributed time and assistance.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Findings and Recommendations

In March 1971, the Commonwealth of Virginia's Division of Justice and Crime Prevention (DJCP) selected Systems Science Development Corporation (SSDC) to conduct a project to develop and test procedures for the post-grant evaluation of grant-supported projects. The technique developed in this project employs the structured interview as the primary means of information collection. The major findings and recommendations of the project team are:

- The post-grant structured interview technique developed during the project is a practical, economical, and effective evaluation procedure for most of the DJCP's grant-supported projects.
- There are several additional steps that the Division can take to make these procedures even more effective.
- The post-grant structured interview technique should be supported by the selective employment of other evaluative procedures.
- The implementation of a comprehensive post-grant evaluation program based on the interview technique will provide the Council on Criminal Justice and the DJCP useful information for the development of plans and the allocation of funds.
- Interviews conducted during this project indicate that the Council and the DJCP have directed available funds successfully to effective projects.
- The DJCP should proceed to implement a systematic post-grant evaluation program based on the procedures developed in this project.

B. Statement of the Problem

The Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 provided the States with funds to upgrade their criminal justice systems. Since the passage of the Act, over \$800

million has been allocated to the States for grant purposes. A large measure of the responsibility for ensuring that funds allocated are used to best advantage lies with State governments. As of 1968, few States had practical experience in sub-granting large amounts of federal funds, especially in the criminal justice area. As a result, few broad-scale plans or programs were in existence. Staff trained in the complexities of planning and funding criminal justice programs were few in number. In addition, the cooperation required for successful funding and program implementation between various parts of the criminal justice system and various levels of government was contrary to tradition.

In the face of these difficulties, the necessary planning and funding programs were implemented. After 3 years of operation, however, it is evident that a vital factor in the continuing and future success of upgrading the criminal justice system is the process of planning and funding projects. This process must be raised to the highest level of effectiveness possible. To this end the Virginia DJCP, as the agency responsible for Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) funding in the Commonwealth, has undertaken a review and evaluation of the sub-grants made to units of State and local government since August 1968, when the "Safe Streets Act" was passed. The evaluation is not concerned with the problem of fiscal reporting and control; this is provided for by another systematic grant review process. Rather, it is directed toward a determination of the effectiveness of each sub-grant in fulfilling the aims of the recipient agency and the goals of the State Comprehensive Plan for upgrading the criminal justice system in Virginia. Through extension of this program, the DJCP expects to obtain information on the sub-grant areas or programs that are most and least effective. A more complete discussion of the problems of comprehensive planning and grant evaluation is contained in Volume II of this report.

C. Conduct of the Study

The Division of Justice and Crime Prevention is among the first of the States' planning agencies to undertake a project of this type. The lack of related historical documentation for use as a point of reference dictated the development of the project from "scratch". Therefore, products and procedures presented in this report were developed almost entirely from experience within the limits of this project alone.

As its first task, the project team initiated a familiarization program that encompassed Federal, State, and local responsibilities as they pertained to the DJCP's action sub-grant procedures. Staff interviews and a review of printed material familiarized team members with DJCP responsibilities, administrative processes, and organization. A general review was conducted of the DJCP action sub-grant master files, which at that time, contained files on approximately 400 grants. The project team also studied carefully the 1969 and 1970 State Comprehensive Plans to gain an understanding of the history, goals, and priorities of projects funded to date. To determine the specific needs of local agencies, a review of available Local Component Plans was undertaken. Personal

interviews and a review of the legislation and requirements of LEAA completed another phase of the orientation task.

The Division staff then selected a set of 1969 and 1970 action sub-grants from which completed projects were selected for testing and evaluation. The project team reviewed in detail the master files for each selected sub-grant. With a complete understanding of the objectives, responsibilities, and requirements of the LEAA program as it related to the Division of Justice and Crime Prevention, the project team then concentrated on the development and application of materials and procedures to be used for collecting useful post-grant evaluative data.

The project team, recognizing the need for an adequate system of classifying grants, expanded the DJCP program category/title already in use. A sub-classification element was added to identify specific activities within grant programs. Evaluative criteria that would identify measurable goals and priorities were developed for the activities encompassed by the project action sub-grants selected earlier.

The development of individual questionnaires for these same activities also was undertaken. In all, a total of 33 original questionnaires were developed. Since this total was not practical for project purposes, the team redesigned the questionnaires and reduced them to a workable number of six, with no loss of effectiveness or information desired. The final six base questionnaires are supplemented by insert questions relating to specific grant activities. Questionnaires are constructed by adding appropriate insert questions to a base questionnaire. To facilitate questionnaire construction, a detailed collating sequence was incorporated into the design. The collating sequence, which appears on each questionnaire page, also serves as a cross reference in the event pages are separated for analysis.

At this stage in the project, the questionnaire design and format were subjected to a thorough review. Questionnaires were examined first by outside consultants (who were not members of the project team or Division staff) recognized for their competence in questionnaire design and in the substantive areas covered by the questionnaire. A second review was performed by the DJCP staff, and the final review was conducted jointly by key Division staff members, the outside experts, and the project team. The recommendations made after each review were incorporated into the questionnaire instruments. A preliminary test of the questionnaires then was conducted with DJCP staff members under conditions simulating an actual interview atmosphere.

The revised evaluation instruments and interview procedures were tested during actual interview experiences. Ten completed (i.e., all funds either expended or obligated and all project work finished) action sub-grants were selected to enable each interview guide to be tested at least twice. These sub-grants also represented the four major urban population centers in the Commonwealth. This field test led to the final refinement of procedures and instruments prior to their use for the actual collection of data.

The completed grants to be evaluated during the data collection task were identified and scheduled. Using previously prepared lists of questions, structured interviews were conducted by eight individuals of differing backgrounds. All interviewers had significant career experience with law enforcement agencies and were prepared thoroughly by the project team. Before field work was begun, all interviewers reviewed the interview guides and survey procedures; familiarized themselves with the organization of the DJCP and related agencies; studied the State Comprehensive Plans; and understood the nature, scope, and purpose of this project. At the end of the first week of field data collection, the interviewers held a critique of their individual experiences. The results of each field interview were discussed, and the questionnaire guides were reviewed for the final time. All materials collected by each interviewer during this task were prepared for analysis.

D. Results

During the course of this effort, 61 completed projects from FY 1969 and FY 1970 sub-grants were evaluated. The 61 grants covered with following five grant-use areas:

- Training
- Planning
- Programs
- Facilities
- Equipment

The evaluations spanned the following six major DJCP program categories:

- Upgrading Law Enforcement Personnel
- Prevention of Crime
- Improvement of Detection and Apprehension of Criminals
- Improvement of Prosecutions and Court Activities and Law Reform
- Increase in Effectiveness of Corrections and Rehabilitation
- Improvement of Community Relations

In addition to the development of procedures and instruments, the significant results of this project include the compilation of useful data on all phases of the 61 grants evaluated, information substantiating the feasibility of using the post-grant interview

technique as a primary method of evaluation, and requirements for implementing a continuing post-grant interview evaluation program.

The survey guides developed for this project require the interviewer to rate the project in three areas:

- The achievement of State goals
- The achievement of agency goals
- The achievement of program goals

In each of these areas, the interviewers were required to assign a rating—a number between 1 and 7—that represents defined levels of goal achievement.

A rating of "1" represents virtually a complete failure (not, in fact, assigned to any grant in the 61 evaluations carried out); a rating of "7" represents a correspondingly outstanding success. A project that worked out essentially as anticipated with no outstanding elements of success or failure is given a rating of 4 in terms of goal achievement. In this project the State plan goal achievement is regarded as primary in importance, the agency goal achievement is regarded as the second, and the program goal achievement of tertiary importance. A typical rating of a project might therefore be 4, 5, 4.

Ratings in the three areas of goal attainment tended to be similar. Grants that were assigned high ratings on State goal achievement also tended to have high ratings on agency goal and program goal attainment. Similarly, grants that failed to achieve State goals also were likely to fail with respect to agency and program goals.

Of the 61 evaluations, 52 rated better than 4,4,4; only five of the 61 grants were rated less than 4 on the achievement of State goals. Based on this sample, the Council and DJCP programs have achieved a high rate of success in terms of their stated purposes.

Table 1, below, shows the number and percent of grants as they were rated (1 through 7) on the attainment of State goals in this project.

The five grants that were rated less than 4 on the achievement of State goals are in a sense problem grants. Two of these grants involved equipment, two involved training, and one involved the development of a program for "Prevention of Crime." The two equipment grants received low ratings because of equipment malfunction. One of the training projects received a low rating because the trained personnel left the parent agency, thus defeating the grant purpose. The second training grant received a low rating because the course, which was a new offering, proved to be inappropriate for those receiving the training. The final problem grant received a low rating in part because of a

Table 1. State Program Goal Achievement Ratings

Rating*	Number Receiving this Rating	Percent Receiving this Rating	Number Receiving this Rating or Better	Percent Receiving this Rating or Better
1*	0	0	61	100
2	3	5	61	100
3	2	3	58	95
4	12	20	56	92
5	23	38	44	72
6	19	31	21	34
7	2	3	2	3

*1=Lowest rating possible
7=Highest rating possible

change in project direction and in part because of the potential long-range impact of the project.

Generally, the problems that have arisen are those that can be avoided only through experience. The three grants with problems resulting from the purchase of unsatisfactory equipment or services all involved reputable vendors who had demonstrated in other projects their capacity to deliver satisfactory products. The specific unsatisfactory products can be noted and avoided in the future.

Ten grants received ratings of 6, 6, 6 or better. Each of these grant-supported projects had features that made it unusually effective. In most respects these can be considered as model projects for agencies undertaking similar tasks. These outstanding grants span the program categories in which adequate experience with completed grants has been obtained.

To a surprising extent, the outstanding grants involve some form of training. Of the ten outstanding projects, two involved the purchase of equipment, one involved the development of a State-level plan, and the remaining seven involved training.

The outstanding grants involved some or all of the following elements:

- Good problem identification
- Selection of effective goods or services

- Institution of operational changes as a direct result of the grant, or substantial operational usage of purchased goods or services

Thus, the outstanding grants generally are associated with strong planning, management, and administration.

During the course of the project each interviewer studied and reviewed the other interviewers' reports. By the end of the field work, the required consistency in rating had been achieved. The interviewers reported that good rapport was readily established with recipient agency personnel. To the extent that they can be checked—objectively by comparing answers from more than one source or from questions that sought parallel information in a single interview, or subjectively by the interviewer—the responses are consistently reliable and frank, subject to the perception and experience of the personnel interviewed. One important fact emerged from the interviews. Many grant projects involved new or unexpectedly effective uses of grant-supported goods and services that could not be anticipated.

The structured interview technique is ideal for capturing this kind of information, which is essential to full project evaluation. Thus, whatever other methods of project and program evaluation are developed, a post-project interview also will be required for the full evaluation of both costs and results. The post-grant interview technique, carefully and objectively used, appears at this time to be the most cost-effective single evaluative technique for this type of data gathering. The technique should be supported by guidelines, standards, and plans where they exist and are relevant, and by other procedures such as formal studies, where required. The interview technique did identify projects requiring additional in-depth study to produce a more factual evaluation than the interview technique itself can achieve.

The DJCP should plan to expend at least one man-year of effort over the next year in implementing the post-grant evaluation procedure. This effort will increase in direct proportion to the rate at which action sub-grants are completed.

The DJCP also should plan to install alternative and additional evaluative procedures on a systematic basis.

END