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NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

MEMORANDUM

TO: City Representatives

FROM: Gordon Raley
Nancy Loving
Criminal Justice Project

SUBJECT: Local Evaluation Survey Results

DATE: October 10, 1974

The issue of local involvement in the evaluation of LEAA projects has been prominent in recent months. It has become more important in light of Guideline interpretations by many SPA's which would make it the sole function of the State.

With this issue in mind, the Criminal Justice Project of the National League of Cities and U.S. Conference of Mayors conducted a survey of large city planning units during the month of October. The results support the conclusion that local planning units feel the need for local evaluation and believe they have the capability to conduct it if adequate resources are available. Numerous cities mentioned that when evaluation was done by their SPA, it was usually an ex post facto investigation of a project's life. Many reported no feedback at all from their SPA about the results of evaluations. Time lags in feedback were also reported. Since local planning units need to decide how to modify existing projects for better performance and whether or not to continue projects, their need for timely feedback is immediate.

It is important to point out that none of the City representatives contacted felt that the SPA had no role in the evaluation process. Rather, they saw the need for compatible but different roles between State and local planning units. Since the SPA role is one of quality control and standard setting, it has very different information and planning needs from local planners who must decide how to improve local grantee performance and whether to continue or discontinue projects. Since local officials must bear the final responsibility for re-funding and institutionalization decisions, the need for substantive programmatic information at the local level is implicit.

In light of all survey data, it does seem conclusive that LEAA should acknowledge the importance and legitimacy of the local role in evaluation through local funding and technical assistance programs.

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Survey Data

During the first week of October, project staff conducted a telephone survey of thirty-eight (38) large-city criminal justice planning units. Staff members were instructed to talk to either the director of a project or one of his immediate assistants. The following six (6) questions were asked of each city representative:

1. Is formal evaluation being conducted on LEAA projects in your city?
2. Is it done at the state or local level?
3. Is it done at the end of the project or on an on-going basis? If on-going, is it qualitative or only fiscal monitoring?
4. Are any funds specifically designated for local evaluation?
5. Are any staff assigned specifically for evaluation? If so, how many?
6. Is there satisfaction with present levels of evaluation? If not, what changes are desired?

The sample included a total of thirty-eight (38) of the fifty-five (55) largest city representatives. Almost all respondents said some form of evaluation was done on local LEAA projects. Only five answered negatively. Eighty-seven per cent (87%) said some formal evaluation took place, although in some cases it was fiscal monitoring only. Twenty (20) of the thirty-three (33) who responded positively to the first question said that project by project, evaluation was done primarily at the local level. Thirteen (13) of the twenty (20) who had primary responsibility for evaluation said some money was designated for local use. Five (5) of these cities were Impact Cities and listed this as their source of funds. Several said a certain percentage of each grant approved had to be designated for evaluation. One city said they had money set aside from Part C but that within recent months, their SPA had demanded that this money not be used for local evaluation since evaluation was a "State function." Another state said that a portion of their Part C had been held by their SPA "to do evaluation for them."

Thirteen (13) representatives, including those of Impact Cities, said they had some staff designated specifically for local evaluation. The number ranged from one (1) to ten (10) staff members with an average of 3.5 staff. The average for all cities was 1.2 staff. Twenty-one of the thirty-eight cities had no staff at all specified for local evaluation.

Only six (6) of those interviewed expressed satisfaction with the present level of evaluation in their cities. Six (6) felt unable to respond. Five (5) of those had reported having no formal project evaluation.

Most of those who had reservations about the present level of evaluation were concerned with recent guideline interpretations by their SPA's, which defined evaluation as solely a State function. Fifteen (15) cities mentioned this as an area of dissatisfaction. Five (5) of these cities reported an abrupt change in recent months in their SPA's attitude toward local evaluation. Two cities reported being specifically prohibited to conduct any evaluation activity. The need for more money locally to conduct evaluation was the second most often mentioned concern. Others included the need for more evaluation and the lack of feedback from SPA evaluations. A complete list follows:

Evaluation Concern	Referrals by City Rep.
Need for local role in evaluation	15
Need for more money locally for evaluation	8
Need to do more evaluation	5
Lack of SPA feedback	4
Need for more staff	2
SPA evaluations too vague	2
Hard to pinpoint crime impact	1
Need evaluation institutionalized	1
Need for national data base	1
Need for State to do evaluation	1
Need evaluation of Part C programs as well as Impact Programs	1
Sub-grantee's should not evaluate themselves	1
Evaluation plan should be completed before a project is funded	1

* Cities where interviews were conducted included: Atlanta, Birmingham, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Ft. Worth, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Jersey City, Kansas City, Louisville, Miami, Minneapolis, Nashville, Newark, New Orleans, New York, Norfolk, Oakland, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburg, Rochester, St. Louis, St. Paul, San Antonio, Toledo, Tulsa, Washington, D. C. and Wichita.



NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES



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CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROJECT

PRESS RELEASE

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Cities Say Local Evaluation of LEAA

Projects Necessary

A recent survey of thirty-eight of the nation's largest cities revealed a heavy dissatisfaction with current LEAA evaluation policies. Eighty-seven percent of the cities surveyed reported doing some form of project evaluation locally. A majority of the cities stated that evaluation was most meaningful when done at the local level. The cities felt local evaluation provided a more timely and dependable management tool and could better impact project performance. Many cities complained that they were never informed of the results of state evaluations.

Five cities surveyed noted an abrupt change in State Planning Agency policy towards local evaluations in recent months. Some cities were actually forbidden to perform any evaluation. "How the hell can I tell whether or not to continue a project when I can't evaluate it?" one city planner asked.

The need for local evaluation was rated as the top concern of the cities responding to the survey, more than doubling the rating of the next most frequently cited concern.

The survey was conducted by the Criminal Justice Project of the National League of Cities and the United States Conference of Mayors.

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