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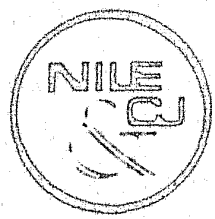
HIGH IMPACT ANTI-CRIME PROGRAM

AN ANALYSIS OF PROJECT-LEVEL EVALUATION PLANS



APRIL 1975

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration
National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice

MTR-6891

NATIONAL IMPACT PROGRAM EVALUATION

AN ANALYSIS OF PROJECT-LEVEL EVALUATION PLANS

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This document has been prepared by The MITRE Corporation, Washington Operations, under Contract F19628-75-C-0001 for the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

MITRE Department
and Project Approval:

ABSTRACT

This document presents an assessment of the quality of project-level evaluation plans (components) produced by the eight Impact cities. Development of the assessment strategy and its application are discussed. Results of this assessment process are presented for the program as a whole, for different project types, and for each of the Impact cities. This document was prepared by The MITRE Corporation in conjunction with the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice as part of the national-level evaluation of the High Impact Anti-Crime Program.

PREFACE

As part of the national-level evaluation of the LEAA's High Impact Anti-Crime Program, The MITRE Corporation and the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice have taken the opportunity provided by the large-scale implementation and evaluation of crime reduction projects in the eight Impact cities to examine the process and techniques of project-level evaluation.

A major area of inquiry for the national-level evaluation is the planning phase in the evaluative process. The importance of the role played by Impact project evaluation components led to the development of a model and a set of review criteria for assessing them. The application of this model and the results of the assessment process are presented here for insights they provide into the evaluation experience of the Impact Program.

The present paper is divided into eight sections. The first (introductory) section describes current issues in criminal justice program evaluation. The second section provides the reader with an understanding of the Impact Program context. This is followed by a discussion of the model and set of review criteria which guided the assessment process. The third section concludes with the development of an overall measure of component quality. Four levels of quality are defined ranging from the virtual lack of an evaluation plan to the rigorous specification of objectives, measures and data and a research methodology capable of linking observed changes to project activities. The application of a planning assessment instrument to the Impact components is presented in the fourth section. The fifth, sixth, and seventh sections present the results of the assessment process for each city and type of project based upon mean quality levels derived from the analysis of overall program component quality. The eighth section presents assessment limitations and summarizes major findings and conclusions.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluation plays a crucial role in providing decision-makers and the public with information concerning the activities and outcomes of government-funded projects. To promote the collection of this information, evaluation plans are necessary prior to project implementation. This document examines the quality of 149 project-level evaluation plans (components) developed in the High Impact Anti-Crime Program during its project planning phase.

Specific areas addressed include:

- a model of project evaluation planning and a corresponding set of review criteria;
- the application of the project evaluation planning review criteria to Impact components;
- the overall quality of 149 Impact Program components;
- the relation of functional area to component quality; and
- the effects of project focus (i.e., crime-reduction vs. recidivism-reduction vs. systems improvements) and city differences upon the quality of Impact components.

Important findings concern the quality of evaluation components, the relationship of functional area to component quality, the relationship of project focus to component quality and the varying overall success of cities in designing evaluation components.

(a) Evaluation Component Quality

Evaluation components were divided into two sets: initial components (i.e., those designed at the beginning of the program) and subsequent components (i.e., those which were either revisions of original components or components designed for continuation grants, thus presumably benefiting from knowledge inputs accrued through program experience).

- of the 130 initial components reviewed, 108 components (83.1%) provided some overall plan for evaluation; however,
- significant quality variation existed among these 108 components;
- of the 19 subsequent components, 15 (79%) provided some overall plan;

- of the initial components, 41 (or nearly 32%) failed to achieve higher quality ratings because of inadequate operational definition of measures (i.e., they did not clearly specify which particular events or behaviors were to be observed);
- only 7 (or 5.4%) of the initial components were judged as providing rigorous evaluation plans; subsequent components did not improve the proportion of top-rated components (only 1 of 19, or 5%, was considered excellent), although the general level was much higher.

(b) Functional Area and Evaluation Component Quality

Using a breakdown of 10 functional criminal justice areas it was found that:

- community project components had the highest quality ratings overall of any functional area;
- court project components did least well of any functional area.

(c) Project Focus and Evaluation Component Quality

Given the rather amorphous and catch-all quality of some of the criminal justice functional areas (for example, the police category includes anti-crime efforts as well as projects to improve police department operations), project focus was also examined in relation to evaluation component quality. Findings were that:

- project focus appears to be a sensitive and useful discriminator of evaluation component quality;
- crime-reduction focused components fared better than recidivism-reduction focused components, and both achieved much higher quality levels than components of system improvement projects;
- of the 41 initial components (discussed above) which suffered from inadequate operational definition, 36 (or 87%) were recidivism-focused;
- while 55% of crime-reduction focused components fell into the two highest assessment levels, only 33% of the recidivism-focused components did; and
- analysis of subsequent components revealed that recidivism- and system-focused components showed improvement.

(d) Impact Cities and Evaluation Component Quality

Given that the crime-reduction focus appeared to produce better evaluation components than did the recidivism or system foci, it then became possible to derive an expected quality level for each city, based on types of project focus in the city, and compare that against actual quality-level achieved. Findings here were that:

- five cities did about as well as they could have been expected to do, based on the kinds of projects targeted;
- three cities, however, diverged significantly from their expected mean: Cleveland and Dallas did much less well than might have been expected, and Denver did much better.

Thus, differences in component quality were observed among projects of differing focus and city of origin. While it appears overall that differences in component quality are more the result of differences in project foci than of city planning differences, it is also true that some cities did better than others, given an expected quality level. However, close analysis of personnel and organizational factors which are unique to a particular city's evaluation planning capability was not possible within the scope of this effort, and thus, observed differences cannot be attributed beyond the general term "city" effects (which subsumes both staffing and organizational patterns).

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Rising crime rates coupled with the occurrence of civil disorders in the 1960's pushed the crime problem into the national spotlight. The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) was established in this atmosphere of citizen fear of crime, with the expectation that its activities would promote a reduction in crime. In spite of these expectations, and in spite of notable efforts to meet them, crime problems persist with few clear-cut solutions in sight. In this context, there is increasing concern about the relative costs and benefits of various anti-crime strategies and tactics. Given this concern, the need for timely, rigorous evaluation is clear.

To date, there have been serious weaknesses in the range and quality of evaluative information produced by anti-crime projects. These weaknesses may be partly the result of the newness of evaluation in this arena, the frequently post-hoc nature of such efforts, and/or a lack of funding commitment. Whatever the reasons, it is generally recognized that social programs require evaluation planning prior to program implementation because such planning can substantially increase the probability of collecting the information needed to adequately assess program activities and outcomes.

This document examines the results of a large-scale effort to incorporate project-level evaluation planning into the LEAA's eight-city High Impact Anti-Crime Program. (All references in this document to Impact evaluation will focus on the project-specific level; where evaluation is discussed in another context such as that of the national-level evaluation, this will be explicitly stated.)

2.0 EVALUATION IN THE IMPACT PROGRAM

The High Impact Anti-Crime Program, initiated by the LEAA, was designed to provide funding (about $20 million in total over three years) to each of eight major U. S. Cities[1] to assist them in developing comprehensive programs to combat street-crime and burglary. In keeping with the spirit of New Federalism, the program channels federal funds through regional and state agencies. While the LEAA established planning and evaluation guidelines, each city was expected to develop a program plan to meet its own crime problems.

From the outset, Impact has had a demonstration and accountability orientation. In addition to its crime reduction objective, the program hoped to demonstrate the utility of a comprehensive crime-oriented planning process as a rational way to select projects, and to emphasize program and project-level evaluation as a means for assessing the extent to which this process was successful in addressing targeted crime problems.

Evaluation has been incorporated into the Impact Program in a number of ways. The broadest perspective addresses the degree of Impact crime reduction experienced in the eight cities during the time frame of the program. Data with which to assess changes in Impact city crime levels and patterns are to be provided by a series of victimization surveys administered with the support of the Bureau of the Census.

This evaluation, with its crime-reduction orientation, is accompanied by another assessment effort: the national-level evaluation of the Impact program. This evaluation focuses on an assessment of the planning, implementation and evaluation activities of the cities.

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[1]Impact cities: Atlanta, Baltimore, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Newark, Portland, St. Louis

Additionally, major program strengths and weaknesses are to be identified to better understand the implications of implementing a multi-city federally funded anti-crime program.

In addition to the victimization surveys across the cities and the national-level evaluation, there is a city-level evaluation which includes project-specific evaluations as well as city-wide assessments of the effectiveness of broad strategies selected by each city to address its crime problems. These project evaluation efforts were intended to provide information about the activities and outcomes of specific anti-crime tactics. City evaluators were responsible for developing project-level evaluation plans (components) and for implementing these plans in order to determine the extent to which crime problems targeted by a specific project improve in the manner originally anticipated. This latter aspect of the Impact evaluation concept is the focal point for this document which provides an assessment of the quality of the project-level evaluation planning efforts of Impact city evaluators. The approach used in this assessment process is outlined in the following section.

3.0 IMPACT PROJECT-LEVEL EVALUATION

The importance of project-level evaluation is underscored by the LEAA requirement that each Impact-funded project be evaluated concurrently with project operations. To help insure the completeness and adequacy of the mandated evaluations, the LEAA further required that specific evaluation plans (components) be submitted prior to project implementation. The LEAA expected these components to provide the foundation for evaluation by furnishing:

- a delineation of project objectives;
- evaluation measures;
- data requirements;
- a data collection approach; and
- an evaluation reporting schedule.

Thus, these project-level components were intended to serve as "blueprints" for subsequent evaluation efforts.

An assessment of evaluation component adequacy entails more than substantiating the presence of these elements as a general indication of the seriousness given to evaluation planning. The assessment strategy reflected in this document attempts to move beyond the basic structural elements into the realm of adequacy and quality, and more importantly, into linkages and relationships among elements. These latter qualities are most important in determining whether any specific component plan is a sufficient vehicle for defining, collecting and analyzing the data needed to assess the value of a particular anti-crime effort.

3.1 The Assessment of Evaluation Components

The review of Impact evaluation components is based upon a model and a set of criteria which were developed from the process of evaluation planning. While the model was developed within the context of the LEAA's

High Impact Anti-Crime Program, its composition is based upon the fundamentals of evaluation in social programs generally.[2] This section will present the model of the evaluation planning process and trace the development of a planning assessment instrument based upon the model.

3.2 The Evaluation Planning Model

The real starting point in the evaluation planning process (depicted in Figure 1) is the identification of a specific crime problem. The nature and extent of this problem drive the remaining steps in the process. Project activities develop from the need to implement a particular strategy believed to combat the pre-identified crime problem. These activities must therefore be logically linked to project outcome goals and objectives which, in turn, reflect the desired changes in the identified crime problem. The remaining interdependent steps in the evaluation planning process include: the delineation of activity, intermediate, and outcome objectives through the specification of measures, data collection and analysis procedures. These steps constitute the basic foundation for assembling evidence to support subsequent inferences about linkages among project activities and outcomes.

Based upon this conceptualization of the evaluation planning process, the measurement instrument (Evaluation Component Review Form) is subdivided into five basic sections: (1) Project Objectives; (2) Measures; (3) Research Design/Methodology; (4) Data Collection; and (5) Reporting Schedule. Each of the above sub-divisions contains questions which are designed to incrementally assess a stage in the project-level evaluation planning process. A discussion of each of these sections in detail follows.

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[2] See "A Framework for Assessing Project-Level Evaluation Plans," The MITRE Corporation, G. Kupersmith, February 1975, MTR-6845.

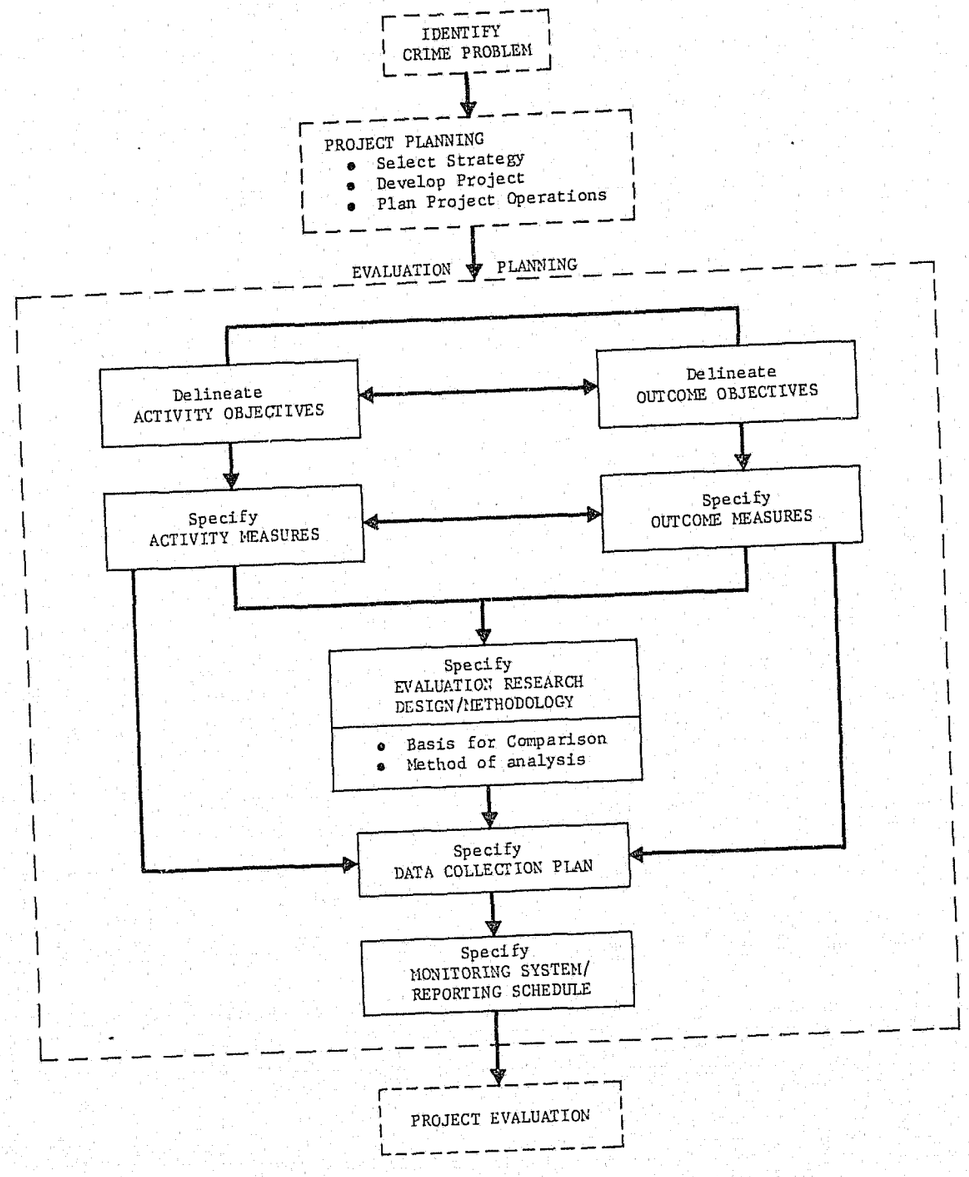


FIGURE 1
A MODEL DEPICTING KEY STEPS IN THE PROJECT-LEVEL EVALUATION PLANNING PROCESS

3.3 Project Objectives

An important step in evaluation planning involves determining what the project expects to accomplish not only in terms of its outcomes or effectiveness, but also in terms of its activities. Outcome objectives indicate the kind and extent of improvement anticipated vis-à-vis the identified crime problem. Activity objectives specify the type, range, and amount of services to be delivered, the target area/target population which will receive these services, and the manner in which these services are to be delivered. Additionally, these objectives need to specify in quantitative terms the precise level of improvement expected, as well as the amount of time deemed necessary to achieve the outcome objectives.

In some cases where the ultimate outcome of a project is not measurable on a short-term basis, interim or intermediate information is necessary to gauge how well a project is progressing in terms of its stated aims. In these cases intermediate objectives should be specified and logically linked to the ultimate outcome of the project. Such objectives specify a set of outcomes which are assumed to facilitate or reflect the achievement of the desired long-term improvements in the targeted problem.

Given the need for timely evaluative information it is therefore necessary to delineate a logical set of activity, intermediate, and outcome objectives, keeping in mind the tenuous nature of the linkages among them. When these objectives are in fact logically linked together they provide a coherent conceptual framework for the development of internally consistent evaluation methods, instruments, and tools. This internal consistency and the confidence it generates in the method of evaluation helps the evaluator to better assess the soundness of the assumptions underlying the project's objectives as well as the extent to which these objectives are being met. The questions in the project objectives section of the Evaluation Component Review Form which will provide a basis for assessing the extent to which objectives have been adequately specified are presented in Table I.

TABLE I

EVALUATION PLANNING ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT:

PROJECT OBJECTIVES SECTION

1. Are the basic ideas of the project adequately translated into measurable goals and objectives?
2. Are activity objectives delineated?
3. Do the activity objectives delineated specify:
   - type of services to be provided; and
   - service recipients (e.g. target population, target area)?
4. Are intermediate objectives specified?
5. Are intermediate objectives logically linked to project outcome objectives?
6. Do the intermediate objectives delineated specify:
   - the kind (type) of improvement or change anticipated;
   - the extent of the anticipated improvement or change;
   - a quantified level of expected achievement; and
   - the period of time deemed necessary to achieve intermediate objectives?
7. Are outcome goals/objectives delineated?
8. Do the outcome objectives delineated specify:
   - the kind and extent of improvement anticipated vis-à-vis the identified crime problem;
   - a quantified level of expected achievement, and
   - the period of time needed to achieve goals/objectives?
9. Are activity objectives, intermediate objectives, and outcome goal objectives logically linked together?
10. Do these objectives (activity, intermediate, outcome) appear to be realistic?

3.4 Measures

Once activity, intermediate and outcome objectives are defined, measures are needed. Measures bridge the gap between an objective and the data required to assess the degree of its attainment. That is, they define the observable behaviors or criteria which support conclusions or inferences about project/objective achievement. Measures are discussed here in terms of three characteristics:

- validity,
- operational definition, and
- sensitivity.

3.4.1 Validity

Criteria which can bridge the gap between objectives and data collection need not only to be measurable, but demonstrably valid in that they effectively measure achievement of project objectives. The basic ideas of the project, its aims, and important side-effects (such as crime displacement) need to be captured and accounted for in the proposed measures in order that a comprehensive assessment of project achievements can take place. For example, if a project's chief objective is to reduce crime in a particular geographic area, an observed reduction may not be the result of an absolute decrease in the number of crimes committed but rather of a change in the area, time or environment of their commission. Thus if crime rates are utilized as a measure, it is necessary to examine rates in both the target area and in adjacent areas to which crime may be displaced. Measures must therefore be valid indicators of the concepts, aims, and side-effects they are designed to reflect, and the key question here is whether the proposed measures really measure what they are intended to measure.

3.4.2 Operational Definition

Measures must also be operationally defined in the evaluation plan. These operational definitions specify the set of conditions or events which signal the presence or absence of the activity or outcome being

measured. Operational definitions are extremely important because they define the parameters within which the outcomes of the project may be interpreted. For example, knowledge of decreased recidivism tells us little, unless we know more specifically how recidivism is defined (i.e., rearrests vs. minor technical violations).

3.4.3 Sensitivity

Also of importance is the sensitivity of the evaluation measures and their corresponding operational definitions. Proposed measures may be too crude to reveal the nature and extent of changes which the project may create both in terms of its activities and outcomes. That is, the specified unit of measure must be able to reflect changes which may be occurring relative to the targeted problem.

Thus, the validity of the proposed measures and the sensitivity of their corresponding operational definitions are critical to the evaluation effort. In concert, they allow the evaluator to assemble evidence to support conclusions about the extent to which project objectives have been met. Questions dealing with Measures are specified in Table II.

TABLE II

EVALUATION PLANNING ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT:

PROJECT MEASURES SECTION

1. Are the basic ideas (key aspects/dimensions) of project goals/objectives tapped by the proposed measures?
2. Are important side-effects (such as crime displacement) captured and accounted for?
3. Do major outcome measures appear to be valid indicators of key project concepts and objectives? In other words, do the measures really measure what they are intended to measure?
4. Are the major outcome measures adequately operationally defined?
5. Are these proposed measures sensitive enough to show the nature and extent of changes which the project is expected to create both in terms of activities and outcomes? That is, can the specified unit of measure reveal changes which may be occurring in the targeted problem?

3.5 Evaluation Research Design/Methodology

Once measures have been defined, an evaluation research design needs to be developed to provide a method for identifying changes in the targeted problem and, at the same time, allow the evaluator to determine whether these observed changes in outcome measures can reasonably be attributed to the project's activities rather than to external factors or to chance (random fluctuations).

In order to identify changes or differences in the targeted problem, some basis for comparison is essential. Ideally, the evaluator would like to use outcome measures taken from a randomly selected control area/group during the period of project operations as the basis for comparison. This type of comparison guarantees that the effects of outside influences will not systematically bias observed changes in the outcome measures.

When control through randomization is not feasible, other approaches must be used to examine the relative impact of the project and of other influences upon the observed changes in the measures. Examples of such approaches would be (1) the use of comparison areas/groups matched to the targeted area/group on the basis of selected characteristics and (2) the use of statistical techniques to factor out estimated influences which are expected to affect outcome measures during the project period. When these alternatives are used, the validity of the findings obtained will be directly related to the evaluator's ability to identify and discriminate among those characteristics or factors unrelated to project activities which may influence the outcome measures being examined. Thus, the extent to which the evaluator can identify significant characteristics or factors greatly affects the degree to which observed changes are indeed attributable to project activities.

Given the limited state of knowledge about the dynamics of complex social problems such as crime, the evaluator's ability to identify significant factors is likely to be rather modest. This knowledge, nonetheless,

provides a basis for examining the validity of assumptions underlying the selection and use of a particular basis of comparison in the evaluation effort. Questions dealing with Evaluation Research Design/Methodology are specified in Table III.

TABLE III

EVALUATION PLANNING ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT:

PROJECT EVALUATION RESEARCH DESIGN/METHODOLOGY SECTION

1. Is some basis for comparison specified in the evaluation component?

2. Is the basis for comparison sufficiently described to permit a critical assessment of its adequacy?

3. Does the evaluation research design/methodology provide controls (either through the treatment assignment process or through the collection and analysis of data) for:

   - selection biases;
   - inappropriate treatment selection criteria;
   - impact of natural phenomena:
     - seasonal variation
     - maturation
     - long-term trends
   - impact of events outside the project which could blunt or exaggerate measures of project outcomes?

4. Does the component indicate the use of a particular statistical technique (e.g., regression, analysis of variance, Chi (χ^2) square)?

3.6 Data Collection

Project objectives, measures, and the research design together make data collection a meaningful operation: they define the kinds of data which are needed and the manner in which they will subsequently be aggregated and analyzed to provide information about project activities and outcomes. Developing a mechanism for obtaining reliable data is therefore a vital step in the evaluation planning process.

Basically two types of data are needed for the evaluation effort. The first includes those data elements needed to construct project activity and outcome measures. The second type consists of those data elements needed to implement the control feature of the research design (that is, data on selected characteristics or factors which will be controlled for through either a matching process or some method of analysis). These data elements, identified in the process of selecting a basis for comparison, are crucial to the evaluator's efforts to determine whether observed changes in outcome measures can reasonably be attributed to the project's activities. In conjunction with one another, these two types of data provide the raw ingredients needed to assess project impacts on the targeted problem.

Developing a data collection approach involves identifying potential data sources, constructing data collection instruments, and in some cases, specifying the sampling approach and the population from which data will be collected. The early identification of data sources provides the opportunity to gauge whether or not the data elements needed to develop the measures and implement the research design will in fact be available. When data gaps are identified at an early stage in the process, necessary modifications in the evaluation plan can be made prior to its full implementation. This helps to insure that the subsequent collection of data will be useful and will result in a proper execution of the evaluation design.

Data collection instruments are constructed to provide a method for recording and categorizing needed data. It is important to develop data collection procedures and forms which specify categories that are mutually exclusive. Additionally, data collection procedures and forms should clearly correspond to the range and level of data required for the evaluation effort.

When it is infeasible to collect data from the entire population of interest, plans for evaluation may include the collection of data from a sample or sub-group of the population. Here, the criteria guiding the selection and size of the sample must be carefully considered in terms of their ability to generate an unbiased, representative sample which is large enough to justify making conclusions about the population as a whole. Biases or lack of representation can most easily be avoided by randomly selecting the sample. Other approaches, such as a stratified sampling approach, are acceptable when the criteria or characteristics used to stratify the sample appear to be reasonable.

To further insure the collection of needed data, responsibilities for data collection and validation must be clearly specified prior to the implementation of the evaluation plan. Failure to check data for inconsistencies in the recording of information have thwarted otherwise well-designed evaluation efforts. The data collection approach developed in the evaluation plan must also include the identification of the sources, instruments, and sample approach which will be used to collect needed data. Questions for the Data Collection section are specified in Table IV.

TABLE IV

EVALUATION PLANNING ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT:
DATA COLLECTION SECTION

1. Are mechanisms for collecting required data clearly specified in terms of:
   - sampling approach;
   - sample size;
   - data collection forms;
   - data sources;
   - responsibility for data collection;
   - procedures for data validation?
2. Are the data collection forms adequate for collecting the range and level of data required to implement the research/methodology (e.g., mutually exclusive categories, all data elements listed in form(s))?

3.7 Project Monitoring and Evaluation Reporting Schedules

An evaluation plan must also specify a system for monitoring project activities and reporting project outcomes. Project monitoring during the life of the project provides a mechanism for identifying operational weaknesses which may ultimately affect project outcomes and/or preclude the collection of information needed for interim evaluation reports. These reports provide important feedback to evaluators who can then test their original evaluation plan and make modifications which will facilitate the subsequent production of information useful for decision-making purposes. To insure the existence of this self-correcting process, each evaluation plan should discuss the monitoring system, and the frequency with which evaluation reports will be written and disseminated. For these reasons, the following two questions were posed in the reporting section of the evaluation component review form:

(a) Is an evaluation reporting schedule included in the plan?

(b) Is the schedule reasonable in light of the duration and nature of the project?

3.8 A Measure of Overall Quality

The above sections address each of the aspects necessary for the specification and hence the assessment, of project-level evaluation plans. To achieve a single value measure of the "quality" of an evaluation plan, a number of approaches are possible. These range from a simple summation of the number of elements present (acceptable, good, or other indication of element quality), to the consideration of combinations of elements. The approach used in this study starts by defining levels of comprehensiveness — and therefore achievement -- for evaluation plans, and relates these levels to combinations of data elements in the data collection instrument.

The typology developed allows for classification of the components based upon four levels of "quality." Listed in ascending order they are:

- Level 1: provides no overall plan;
- Level 2: answers the question "what";
- Level 3: further answers the question "how";
- Level 4: speaks to the "what" and the "how" and provides linkages.

Level 1 components do not present the basic ideas of the project in terms of measurable goals and objectives. Level 2 is achieved when the component is judged to provide a definitive statement of <u>what</u> the project seeks to accomplish. This statement must contain a specification of activity and outcome objectives as well as provide valid corresponding measures. Level 3 labels components which in addition to the attributes of Level 2, specify <u>how</u> they intend to collect the data necessary

to employ the specified measures. Finally, Level 4 is achieved by further providing a mechanism for logically linking observed changes in measures to project activities.

Table V displays the data elements that were utilized in the determination of the overall levels of quality. Additionally, the table indicates those elements which are minimally necessary to classify a component in each of the proposed levels. The process is cumulative in that each level is characterized by the possession of unique data elements in addition to those elements contained in the preceding level.

Only data elements felt to be absolutely critical to the overall project-level evaluation planning process (based upon the model previously discussed) were used in developing the typology. For instance, as indicated in Table V, data elements dealing with outcome objectives are considered essential and therefore included; elements dealing with intermediate objectives were not, as reflected by their absence from the table. The reason for this is that outcome objectives more directly indicate the kind and extent of improvement anticipated by a project vis-à-vis an identified crime problem and thus were more crucial in determining relative quality among evaluation plans.

The actual application of this framework to the assessment of evaluation component quality is discussed in the next section and is followed by an analysis of assessment findings.

TABLE V

ELEMENTS REQUIRED FOR EACH LEVEL OF ASSESSMENT QUALITY

EVALUATION ASSESSMENT ELEMENTS	NO PLAN (1)	WHAT (2)	HOW (3)	LOGICAL LINKAGES (4)
BASIC IDEAS IN TERMS OF GOAL/OBJECTIVES				
SPECIFIED ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES SPECIFIED OUTCOME OBJECTIVES SPECIFIED KIND OF OUTCOME SPECIFIED EXTENT OF OUTCOME — REQUIRED TO HAVE 3 OF 4				
BASIC IDEAS MEASURED				
SPECIFIED VALID OUTCOME MEASURE				
OPERATIONALLY DEFINED OUTCOME MEASURE				
SPECIFIED COMPARISON BASE				
COMPARISON BASE SUFFICIENTLY DESCRIBED				
PROVISION OF CONTROLS				
INDICATES DATA SOURCES				
ACCOUNTS FOR DATA VALIDATION				
PROVIDES A REPORTING SCHEDULE				

LEVEL OF ASSESSMENT QUALITY

4.0 ASSESSING PROJECT-LEVEL EVALUATION COMPONENTS

4.1 Application of the Data Collection Instrument to Components

The present assessment of the 149 project-level evaluation components was conducted by three members of MITRE's technical staff. The set of evaluation components represent those components which have been forwarded to MITRE either by the Impact city staff or by the LEAA as of February 1975. While these do not represent the total universe of Impact Program components, it is believed, however, that those reviewed do comprise the great majority of existing components and provide an adequate sample from which an assessment of evaluation planning in the Impact Program can be made. The exact number of distinct projects and therefore possible components is difficult to determine. Regional Office figures identify 220 distinct projects while CAT offices list only 182. One possible explanation for this variation is the practice of grouping projects undertaken by one agency/project director at the city level.

The evaluation components were not distributed for review in any systematic fashion. Each reviewer contributed to the assessment process by reviewing components at his/her particular pace. Largely due to resource limitations it was decided that this approach would allow for the most expeditious completion of the review process. Therefore, reviewers did not complete pre-determined or equal numbers of components.

Several precautions and procedures were employed in an attempt to minimize the effects of using multiple reviewers. Principal among these were frequent conferences among reviewers to clarify issues, problems, and confusion over rating techniques. An example of an issue discussed at a conference concerned the information that would be necessary for a component to be judged as having a reporting schedule. One reviewer felt that a time-table detailed with specific dates and

products constituted a reporting schedule. On the other hand, another reviewer indicated that the simple affirmation in the component that quarterly reports would be prepared sufficed as a reporting schedule. In this case the latter, less stringent interpretation was used.

Differences in rating techniques were monitored by assigning about 10% of the components to all reviewers. In this fashion, problems of interpretation and in assessment technique would be quickly identified and hopefully be minimized. It was realized that despite these efforts absolute uniformity could never be obtained.

4.2 The Analysis Approach

The evaluation component analysis presented in Section 5.0 is based on the overall assessment measure discussed above (see page 16). This analysis centers upon the distribution of components among quality levels and the reasons that components failed to achieve higher ratings.

Component distributions among levels are initially presented and discussed for the subset of components which were developed at the time of project development and implementation. This first set of components comprises the vast majority of those components reviewed (130 out of 149). They are analyzed separately to more accurately reflect the type of components Impact cities developed when faced with the joint demands of project planning/implementation and project evaluation planning. The remaining subset of components represent those which were revised by city evaluators during the course of project operations or were revised for inclusion in a continuation grant application for the project. In both cases, it is felt that the additional time and perhaps, added experience in project evaluation planning, may make this set of components less representative of the overall Impact project-level evaluation planning experience. Thus, the two subsets will be treated as distinct component samples, with the bulk of the analysis directed

toward original components. A supplementary analysis presented provides an overview of the general quality of those components which were revisions or follow-ups.

Focusing upon those 130 components prepared in conjunction with project development and implementation, the analysis is presented in three major stages. First, an overview of the component distribution among all four assessment levels is presented for the program as a whole. Secondly, an analysis of the quality-level assessment process is made to identify and examine those criteria which actually served to differentiate among components at the various levels. Thirdly, component distributions among levels of quality are compared according to the focus of the project for which the component was developed. This comparison, which is based on the overall quality measure, explores the relationship between component quality and project focus. Based on project focus norms derived from this comparison, further analyses regarding variations in quality level distributions are provided by examining project focus distributions for each Impact city.

5.0 PROGRAM-WIDE ASSESSMENT

5.1 Overview

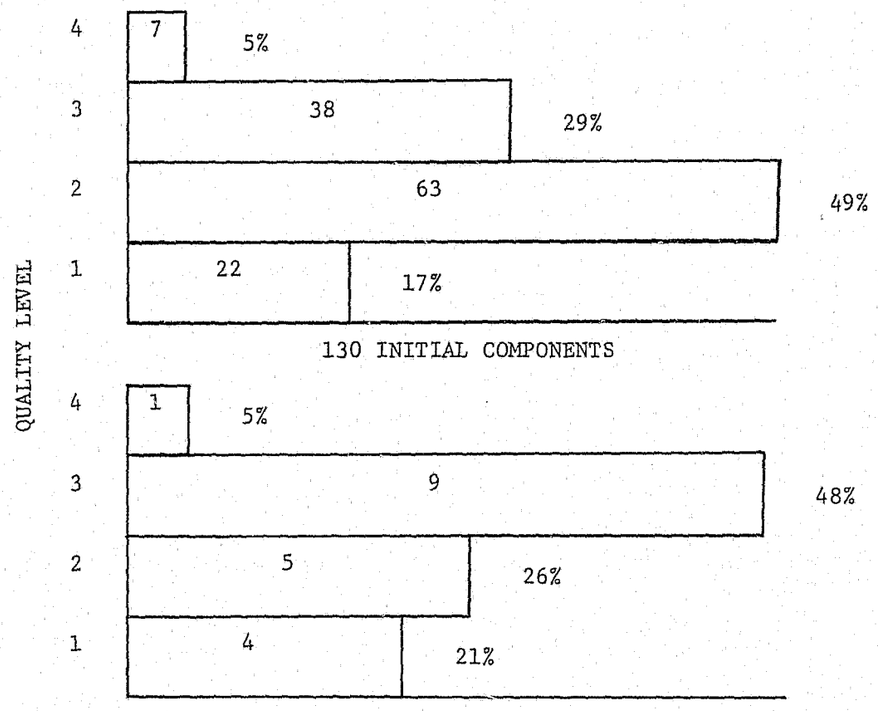
The quality of project-level evaluation components differed widely. Table VI shows the distribution of component quality found for the 130 initial Impact project-level components and the 19 subsequent components assessed. For the initial 130 components, 22 components (16.9% of total) were in quality Level 1 which includes those components which did not present an overall, coherent plan for subsequent project evaluation. While a number of these components specified some type of outcome objective, logical linkages between these objectives and the basic ideas of the project were generally absent. Additionally, specified objectives were not translated into measurable outcomes essential for project evaluation. Correspondingly, a similar percentage (21%) of the subsequent components fell in Level 1.

The greatest proportion of initial components fell into the second quality level (63, or 48.5% of the total). This group of components, which comprises almost half of the sample, presented information which was basically limited to a description of the objectives and measures which would be used to guide the evaluation process. That is, they described what would be looked at to gauge project success but did not address the question of how these objectives and measures would actually be used for project evaluation. Subsequent components fared somewhat better with only 26% falling into Level 2.

Almost one-third of the initial components fell into quality Level 3 (38, or 29.2% of total). These components exhibited a higher degree of comprehensiveness than their Level 2 counterparts. This comprehensiveness was indicated by a more detailed description of the overall evaluation approach in terms of how the objectives and measures would be linked together to provide information on project activities and outcomes. Thus,

TABLE VI

DISTRIBUTION OF THE QUALITY OF EVALUATION COMPONENTS



components in this group specified not only measurable objectives and operationally defined measures but indicated the type of comparison base which would be used to link them together. Almost one-half (48%) of the subsequent components achieved this level.

Exhibiting the highest level of evaluation planning sophistication were the handful of initial components falling into quality level 4 (7, or 5.4% of the total). This small subset of components provided a plan for evaluation which would not only provide information on observed outcome changes, but if fully implemented, could provide additional information on the extent to which observed outcomes may be attributed to the project. Subsequent components fail to achieve a higher percentage judged at this level. A listing of the totality of these components is provided in Appendix I.

This distribution among assessed quality levels is not surprising. One would have expected only a few really sophisticated components, given the previously described set of criteria which guided the development of this typology and the action-orientation of the Impact Program. In an action program, the primary emphasis is the provision of services. Evaluation, while viewed as a means for obtaining information about the impact these services have on targeted problems, must nonetheless be a secondary focus. Evaluations must be planned and conducted within the constraints imposed by the project. These constraints may hinder the development of the carefully planned, rigorous evaluation design which defines the highest level in our assessment measure.

The following section will examine the results of the evaluation component assessment process in terms of those criteria which differentiated components among quality levels.

5.2 Analysis of Quality Level Determination

Given the observed variations in evaluation planning quality level, an examination of the criteria (data elements) which were responsible for discriminating among the 130 initial components might reveal a pattern of causes for the failure of components to achieve higher quality levels. Such an examination would provide a better understanding of the specific strengths and weaknesses of the components in the Impact Program. Figure 2 details the process by which the initial 130 components were classified among quality levels.

The number of components which "fell out" at each successive stage are presented. As a result of this flow analysis two major findings about the quality of components are highlighted. The first is that a large number of components (41) did not receive higher ratings because of a lack of operational definitions for measures. In fact two-thirds of the components reaching Level 2 failed to achieve higher quality levels because of this factor. As alluded to in the evaluation planning model, operational definitions are critical to the planning process because they specify the set of conditions or events which will signal the presence or absence of the activity or outcome being measured. For example, in a police project increased "crime solutions" may be used as a measure of success. Without a specification of what is meant by a "solution" (in terms of arrest, conviction, clearances, time frames, necessity for solution for all or one of the offenders and so forth) the data necessary to determine the number of solutions achieved is not specified and the validity or usefulness of the measure cannot be evaluated. Thus, the provision of operational definitions in the evaluation component suggests that the evaluator has a better idea of how project success or failure will be determined.

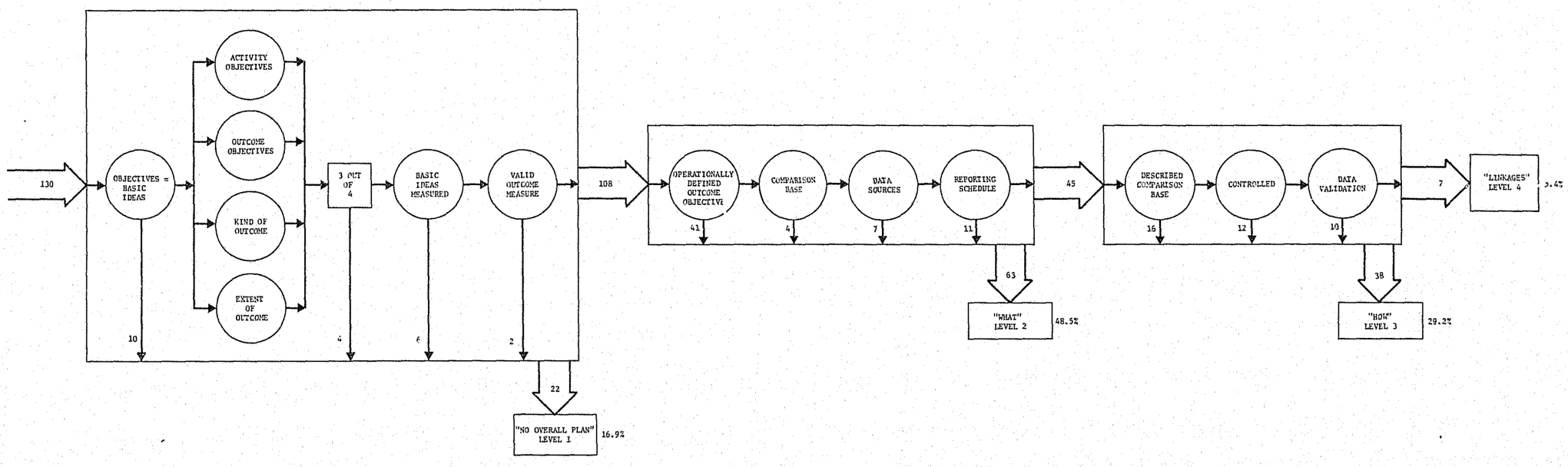


FIGURE 2
DETERMINANTS OF COMPONENT QUALITY

The second finding is that each of the criteria developed for the assessment process did in fact play a role in preventing components from achieving higher levels and thus discriminating among components. This suggests that with the exception of operational definitions, none of the other key aspects included in the model of evaluation planning were consistently problematic in the formulation of evaluation plans. They are nevertheless all important considerations in the review of evaluation plans.

6.0 EVALUATION PLANNING QUALITY AND PROJECT TYPE

Evaluation components were grouped according to functional area categories used by MITRE in other assessments of the Impact Program*. Mean quality levels were calculated for each functional area. A breakdown by functional area (Table VII) shows that the scores for quality of evaluation planning received by projects involving community support were the highest while court projects had the lowest mean.

TABLE VII

PROJECT TYPE AND LEVEL OF EVALUATION PLANNING QUALITY

FUNCTIONAL AREA	N	% IN EACH QUALITY LEVEL				MEAN QUALITY $\bar{X}$
		1	2	3	4	
COMMUNITY	13	8	15	69	8	2.77
DRUGS	5	20	0	80	0	2.60
TARGET-HARDENING	7	0	57	29	14	2.57
JUVENILE CORRECTIONS	20	10	50	40	0	2.30
PREVENTION	21	10	57	28	5	2.28
RESEARCH/INFORMATION	4	50	0	25	25	2.25
ADULT CORRECTIONS	30	13	73	7	7	2.08
POLICE	18	28	44	22	6	2.06
OTHER	5	40	20	40	0	2.00
COURTS	7	43	57	0	0	1.57
TOTAL	130					2.23

The mean quality ($\bar{X}$) is equal to the arithmetic average of quality ratings for projects in a given functional area. Using a frequency or group computation procedure, the mean quality is calculated as follows:

$$X = \sum_{i=1}^{4} (\%\ \text{projects receiving a rating of } i) \times i$$

e.g., for prevention $2.86 = (.10 \times 1) + (.57 \times 2) + (.28 \times 3) + (.05 \times 4)$

*See "A Description of Implementation Activities Across the Eight Cities of the High Impact Anti-Crime Program," The MITRE Corporation, L. Greenfeld and C. Weis, April 1975, MTR 6881.

Due to the heterogeneous nature of projects within some of these functional categories it was felt that these categories might be insensitive to real and important differences among projects in terms of their suitability for evaluation. For example, the police category includes projects which are directly aimed at reducing crime. The category also includes projects which are more directly related to achieving internal improvements in police department operations. Thus, it was reasonable to believe that these two kinds of police projects might differ significantly in their susceptibility to the type of evaluation approach represented by the evaluation model previously discussed. Similarly, while community projects for the most part focused on direct crime reduction through property identification programs, a number of these projects were directed toward reducing recidivism or improving the functioning of the criminal justice system through citizen initiatives. Only two of the functional area categories had projects which were all of the same ilk: drugs and juvenile corrections, both of which focused exclusively on recidivism reduction.

Due to the limitations involved in using the functional area breakdown as a basis for an analysis, it was decided to recategorize the components to more accurately represent the different approaches or foci among Impact projects. Projects generally approached the Impact crime problem from one of three perspectives: (1) a client or offender perspective; (2) an area-specific perspective; and (3) a criminal justice systems perspective. Based on these different approaches, projects were divided into the following three groups:

(a) Recidivism Reduction:

Those projects whose activities deal directly with affecting offenders and potential offenders (i.e., rehabilitation projects) in the hope of reducing recidivism levels among offender groups.

(b) Crime Reduction:

Those projects whose activities deal directly with the prevention and control of crime in specific geographical areas (i.e., street lighting, foot patrol projects).

(c) Systems/Other:

Those projects whose activities deal with the crime problem indirectly through improvements in various aspects of the criminal justice system (i.e., court improvements, information systems).

These three groupings and their respective foci provided a basis for further examining (quality) variations among Impact project evaluation components.

Table VIII provides a breakdown of quality levels found by project focus. This breakdown provides the basis for comparisons among the three groups as well as between each group and the overall component distribution previously discussed. The table indicates a strong relationship between project focus and component quality. As one might expect, those projects which dealt with the crime problem indirectly (systems/other category) clearly had the greatest proportion of their components receiving the lowest quality assessments. This suggests that projects of this type did not fit into a model of evaluation planning which was developed with outcome evaluation in mind.

It should be noted, however, that the Impact Program placed a strong emphasis upon projects which could be shown to have a direct impact upon crime reduction rather than those which were aimed at affecting crime rates indirectly through systems improvements. Thus while the evaluation model developed is consistent with the philosophy of the Impact Program, it might nonetheless be unfair to consider components in this "systems/other" category as being of low quality without detailed project-by-project analysis.

TABLE VIII

PROJECT FOCUS AND LEVEL OF EVALUATION PLANNING QUALITY - INITIAL COMPONENTS

PROJECT FOCUS	N	% FOR EACH LEVEL OF QUALITY				MEAN QUALITY ($\bar{X}$)
		1	2	3	4	
RECIDIVISM	76	10	57	29	4	2.3
CRIME REDUCTION	31	3	42	45	10	2.6
SYSTEM AND OTHER	23	57	30	13	0	1.6
TOTAL	130	17	49	29	5	2.22

Crime-focused projects ($\bar{X}$ = 2.6) fared better than recidivism-focused projects ($\bar{X}$ = 2.3) based on comparison of the mean quality level. The means above reflect the fact that while 55% of the components for crime-focused projects fell into the two highest assessment levels, only 33% of the recidivism-focused projects did. These quality differences between components developed for crime-reduction projects and recidivism projects are not surprising. Referring back to Figure 2, 41 evaluation components were not assessed at a higher level because they did not include an operational definition for the major outcome measure of the project. Of these 41 component plans, 36 or 87% were developed for recidivism projects. The difficulty and lack of consensus regarding the measurement of recidivism might explain this finding. Crime reduction projects most often utilize a crime rate as the major outcome measure - a measure which because of its wide standard usage requires little further clarification. On the other hand, the measurement of recidivism requires careful specification of types of behavior (i.e., parole technical violation, arrest, conviction) and time frames (i.e., while in program, post program) which constitute project-unique definitions of recidivism.

Table IX presents a breakdown of quality levels for project-level components by project focus for "subsequent" components. It is significant to note the improvement in the more difficult recidivism and systems/other categories. The overall mean for this set of components is also somewhat higher.

To further substantiate and clarify the relationship observed above, other factors which may have influenced evaluation component development must be examined. Chief among these factors may be the city in which the component was developed. Since each Impact city had primary responsibility for planning and conducting its own project-level evaluations,

TABLE IX

PROJECT FOCUS AND LEVEL OF EVALUATION PLANNING QUALITY-SUBSEQUENT COMPONENTS

PROJECT FOCUS	N	PERCENT LEVEL OF QUALITY				MEAN QUALITY ($\bar{X}$)
		1	2	3	4	
CRIME REDUCTION	6	33	0	67	0	2.3
RECIDIVISM	8	0	37.5	50	12.5	2.75
SYSTEM/OTHER	5	40	40	20	0	1.8
TOTAL	19					2.35

one might expect variations in component quality to exist among the eight cities. Thus, the relationship observed between project focus and component quality may simply be a reflection of city differences.

This question will be explored in the next section using the initial component distributions for each project focus to adjust for differences in the number of projects of each type funded by the cities. A comparison of city levels of quality will then be made. "Subsequent" components are of insufficient number to perform this type of analysis.

7.0 CITY-BY-CITY ANALYSIS

It would have been valuable to examine more closely factors that inherently make cities different in their capability to plan and conduct evaluations. For instance, it might be expected that characteristics of the staff recruited for evaluation as well as the locus of evaluation responsibilities and decision-making would affect the overall conduct and quality of evaluation planning. While it would have been valuable to look at these factors, the lack of readily available information made this approach infeasible at this time. Thus any observable "city" effect cannot be attributed further to specific causes or characteristics.

Because of the differences in the project mix observed among the Impact cities (see Table X) it is necessary to make an adjustment before comparing their evaluation planning quality assessments to remove the effect of project focus upon the level of quality. Making such an adjustment will allow for a direct unbiased comparison of city differences by accounting for differences in project focus distributions.

A traditional method for adjusting for different focus distributions among cities utilizes the program-wide mean quality assessment score for each project focus to calculate expectations. That is, the city expectations are arrived at by taking the percent of a city's projects of a particular focus and weighting this percentage by the program-wide mean for that focus. Summing over the three foci gives an expected adjusted quality level (EAQL). The formula for this calculation is:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{EAQL (City i)} = {} & \%\ \text{R (City i)} \cdot \bar{X}_R \\ & + \%\ \text{CR (City i)} \cdot \bar{X}_{CR} \\ & + \%\ \text{S/O (City i)} \cdot \bar{X}_{S/O} \end{aligned}$$

where % R (City i) = percent of recidivism projects in City i similarly, CR = crime reduction, and S/O = systems/other and X_R = program-wide mean for recidivism projects X_{CR} = crime reduction, $\bar{X}_{S/O}$ = systems/other

TABLE X

NUMBER OF PROJECTS BY FOCUS BY IMPACT CITY

CITY	CRIME REDUCTION	RECIDIVISM	SYSTEM AND OTHER	TOTAL
ATLANTA	5	6	1	12
BALTIMORE	2	7	3	12
CLEVELAND	1	17	4	22
DALLAS	4	5	3	12
DENVER	5	18	4	27
NEWARK	6	8	2	16
PORTLAND	3	5	1	9
ST. LOUIS	5	10	5	20
ALL CITIES	31	76	23	130

The results of these calculations for each Impact city are presented in Table XI.

Table XII compares actual mean quality to expected mean quality for each city (adjusted for the effects of project focus). Three cities, Cleveland, Dallas, and Denver performed differently than expected. Denver's evaluation components were assessed more favorably than would be expected given the relatively large number of recidivism-oriented projects undertaken. On the other hand, Dallas and Cleveland performed at a lower overall quality level than would be expected from their project mix.

Other than these three cities, substantial differences between actual and expected quality levels are not evident from Table XII. Furthermore, Table XIII summarizes actual city performances for those components developed for each project focus. From this table, it can be seen that within cities, crime-focused components tended to be rated higher than recidivism-focused components and both fared better than systems-focused components. This rank order among project-focus quality levels corresponds to that observed program-wide; this consistency, exhibited within the cities, further strengthens this earlier finding.

TABLE XI

CALCULATION OF EXPECTED CITY QUALITY LEVELS

CITY	N	PROJECT FOCUS			EXPECTED QUALITY
		% CRIME REDUCTION	% RECIDIVISM	% SYSTEM AND OTHER	
ATLANTA	12	41.7%	50.0%	8.3%	2.4
BALTIMORE	12	16.7%	58.3%	25.0%	2.2
CLEVELAND	22	4.5%	77.3%	18.2%	2.2
DALLAS	12	33.3%	41.7%	25.0%	2.2
DENVER	27	18.5%	66.7%	14.8%	2.25
NEWARK	16	37.5%	50.0%	12.5%	2.3
PORTLAND	9	33.3%	55.6%	11.1%	2.3
ST. LOUIS	20	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	2.2
TOTAL	130				

Note: The expected quality is calculated by multiplying column entries by the program-wide mean for each of the 3 project foci (crime reduction multiplier = 2.6, recidivism = 2.3, systems/other = 1.6)

TABLE XII

COMPARISON OF EXPECTED MEAN QUALITY LEVEL AND ACTUAL MEAN QUALITY LEVEL

CITY	MEAN ACTUAL	EXPECTED MEAN
ATLANTA	2.3	2.4
BALTIMORE	2.3	2.2
CLEVELAND	1.7	2.2
DALLAS	1.8	2.2
DENVER	2.7	2.25
NEWARK	2.2	2.3
PORTLAND	2.4	2.3
ST. LOUIS	2.25	2.2

TABLE XIII

COMPONENT QUALITY BY PROJECT FOCUS AND CITY

CITY	N	% IN EACH LEVEL				MEAN QUALITY
		1	2	3	4	
ATLANTA						
CRIME REDUCTION	5	0.0	80.0	0.0	20.0	2.4
RECIDIVISM	6	0.0	66.7	33.3	0.0	2.3
SYSTEM/OTHER	1	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	2.0
TOTAL	12	0.0	75.0	16.0	9.0	2.3
BALTIMORE						
CRIME REDUCTION	2	0.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	2.5
RECIDIVISM	7	0.0	57.1	28.6	14.3	2.6
SYSTEM/OTHER	3	66.7	0.0	33.3	0.0	1.7
TOTAL	12	16.7	41.7	33.3	8.3	2.3
CLEVELAND						
CRIME REDUCTION	1	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	3.0
RECIDIVISM	17	17.6	82.4	0.0	0.0	1.8
SYSTEM/OTHER	4	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
TOTAL	22	31.8	63.6	4.6	0.0	1.7
DALLAS						
CRIME REDUCTION	4	25.0	50.0	25.0	0.0	2.0
RECIDIVISM	5	0.0	80.0	20.0	0.0	2.2
SYSTEM/OTHER	3	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
TOTAL	12	33.3	50.0	16.7	0.0	1.8
DENVER						
CRIME REDUCTION	5	0.0	40.0	60.0	0.0	2.7
RECIDIVISM	18	0.0	38.9	50.0	11.1	2.7
SYSTEM/OTHER	4	0.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	2.5
TOTAL	27	0.0	40.7	51.9	7.4	2.7

TABLE XIII (CONTINUED)

COMPONENT QUALITY BY PROJECT FOCUS AND CITY

CITY	N	% IN EACH LEVEL				MEAN QUALITY
		1	2	3	4	
NEWARK						
CRIME REDUCTION	6	0.0	66.6	16.7	16.7	2.5
RECIDIVISM	8	25.0	50.0	25.0	0.0	2.0
SYSTEM/OTHER	2	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	2.0
TOTAL	16	12.5	62.5	18.8	6.2	2.2
PORTLAND						
CRIME REDUCTION	3	0.0	0.0	66.7	33.3	3.3
RECIDIVISM	5	20.0	60.0	0.0	20.0	2.2
SYSTEM/OTHER	1	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
TOTAL	9	22.2	33.4	22.2	22.2	2.4
ST. LOUIS						
CRIME REDUCTION	5	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	3.0
RECIDIVISM	10	20.0	30.0	50.0	0.0	2.3
SYSTEM/OTHER	5	60.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	1.4
TOTAL	20	25.0	25.0	50.0	0.0	2.25

8.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Limitations of the Assessment Process

The evaluation component ideally is the result of a dynamic, on-going, planning process. The evaluation planning instrument developed here was designed so that this process would be assessed by viewing specific elements derived from a model of the evaluation planning process. This incrementalism, however, tended to reduce the sensitivity of the instrument in capturing the overall quality of project-level evaluation planning. The assessment process tended to be more sensitive to the presence or absence of key elements identified in the model of evaluation planning, rather than to their interactions.

An additional problem with the assessment is closely related to the above question of sensitivity. In developing the framework upon which the instrument is based, MITRE analysts went beyond the LEAA requirements for project-level evaluation components. Whereas the LEAA provided guidelines regarding the elements to be included in a project evaluation plan, it was felt that these elements alone were insufficient to insure quality evaluation planning. Because of this, the model and set of review criteria were developed with the intent of more adequately addressing the question of quality in evaluation planning. By doing so, however, project-level evaluation components have been reviewed on the basis of criteria which neither the LEAA nor city evaluators necessarily foresaw.

Further, as mentioned earlier, the assessment was conducted by three individuals and while every effort was made to insure uniformity, unfound biases may exist.

Assessment of evaluation components was also somewhat limited by the form and presentation quality of many of the components. Far from

uniform, these differences inherently limited the uniformity of assessments. This was especially true in determining the existence of some of the key elements. Ideally each project level evaluation component was supposed to be viewed independently of its corresponding grant application. However, the assessment of a substantial number of components required extensive search through the associated grant application for identification or clarification of particular items. Grant applications are usually lengthier and often more complex than the component itself. In cases where grant application review was necessary, the lack of a unified assessable component may have significantly affected the ratings. While the review staff did attempt to prevent this by supplementing the assessment with information from the grant application, this more complex process still provided a greater risk of rator error.

As indicated earlier it was not possible to look more closely at individual factors that might make cities different in terms of an evaluation planning capability. It is recognized, however, that observed differences among cities reflect those human and organizational characteristics so critical to this process.

While these limitations should be considered in reading our findings and conclusions they should be viewed in the context of the difficulty of the assessment task. In our opinion these considerations do not significantly detract from the validity of the overall conclusions.

.2 Findings and Recommendations

This assessment and analysis of Impact project-level evaluation components has provided several useful insights. While the existence of evaluation plans does not ensure the performance of useful evaluations, they do indicate a growing awareness that evaluation is an integral aspect of program planning and management.

Our findings suggest that a substantial number (149 of approximately 200) of the LEAA Impact-funded projects participated in project-level evaluation planning by submitting evaluation component plans. However, these component plans varied widely in quality. Among the initial components, 16.9%, although submitting some documentation, did not provide information sufficient to indicate the existence of some overall plan or approach to project-level evaluation. At the other extreme, 5.4% of the components proceeded well beyond the more elementary evaluation planning steps to provide a relatively rigorous indication not only of their overall plan for evaluation, but also specific strategies for logically linking project activities and anticipated outcomes. The remaining 77.7% of the component plans were distributed between these two extremes.

The findings also indicate that there is a strong relationship program-wide between the quality of the evaluation components and the focus of the project to be evaluated. When viewing the quality level of the evaluation components among the 8 Impact cities, it was found that variation in quality among components in 5 of the 8 cities could be attributed to the type of projects for which evaluations were planned rather than to city differences. This suggests that difficulties encountered by Impact cities in conceptualizing and preparing evaluation components are more related to the state of the art in evaluating different types of criminal justice projects than to the particular context in which the projects are undertaken. In this sense, the findings of the previous analysis are encouraging, in that many of the problems appear to be clearly remediable. For example, problems in operationally defining measures and establishing logical linkages between activities and outcomes may be resolved through increased familiarity with and utilization of evaluation at the project level. Like most endeavors, expertise in evaluation is likely to be a function of time and experience.

Several observations are in order based upon these findings and the experience gained in reviewing Impact evaluation components. Most importantly, guidelines for project-level evaluation planning should no longer stop at a comprehensive listing of the elements to be included in such plans. Such listings do not provide the necessary tools for adequate and uniformly consistent evaluation plans. Project evaluation planners need to receive model frameworks for evaluation plan designs that incorporate and address differences in project focus and thereby promote greater project conformity to the criteria in the evaluation planning model. These frameworks must also take into account differences in professional capability among planners in order that the eventual evaluations of similar activities are both of high quality and are of a comparable nature.

Additionally, mechanisms should be established to provide evaluators with timely feedback regarding the adequacy of their evaluation components as blueprints for evaluation. Such feedback is needed to supplement model frameworks and insure their applicability to specific projects and contexts. In conjunction with one another, feedback mechanisms and model frameworks should favorably affect the quality of future project evaluation efforts.

APPENDIX I

PROJECT EVALUATION COMPONENTS REVIEWED

TABLE XIV

PROJECT EVALUATION COMPONENTS REVIEWED
BY IMPACT CITY

ATLANTA

Anti-Robbery/Burglary
Atlanta Street Academy
Coordinated Juvenile Work Release/Business League Work Release
Helicopter Patrol
High Crime Foot Patrol
Overtime Patrol
Special Prosecution Squad
Street Lighting
Therapeutic Community Rehabilitation
High Risk Juvenile Parole
Intensive Adult Probation Counseling of Burglary/Robbery Offenders
Intensive Outreach Probation Project

BALTIMORE

Baltimore City Intensive Probation
Civilian Employees for Supportive Services
Classification, Diagnostic and Treatment System
Court-Referred Addict Treatment (CRAT)
Diversion of Impact Offenders
Helicopter Patrol
High Impact Courts Program
Intensive Differentiated Supervision of Parolees & Probationers
Jail Security Project
On-Line Jail System
Pre-Trial Release Jail Bail Review
Pre-Trial Release of Narcotics Offenders
Residential Facilities
Sixty-Four Foot Patrolmen
Target Hardening - High Rise Security
Target Hardening - Street Lighting

TABLE XIV (CONTINUED)

PROJECT EVALUATION COMPONENTS REVIEWED
BY IMPACT CITY

CLEVELAND

Alternative Education (Street Academy)
Big Brothers/Project Friendship
Cleveland Drug Abuse Program
Cleveland Offender Rehabilitation Project
Cleveland Police Detection, Deterrence & Apprehension Program
Community Based Supplemental Service
Comprehensive Corrections Unit
Group Homes
Intervention and Development Centers
Juvenile Court Development
Police Athletic League
Post Release Follow-up
    Institutional Post-Release After Follow-up
    Probationary Post-Release Case Follow-up
    Adult Parole - Post Release Follow-up
Public Information
Pre-Trial Delay Program
Summer Recreation
Youth Assistance
Youth Neighborhood Coordinators
Youth Outreach
Vocational/Educational Project

DALLAS

Crime Investigation Pilot Study
Dallas County Juvenile Dept. Court Action Processing Unit
Dallas County Juvenile Dept. Court Action Processing Unit (Continuation)
Expand Crime Lab and Increase Training of Police Personnel
Expansion of Tactical Deployment
Expansion of Tactical Deployment (Continuation)
Impact Halfway House -
Increase Adult Probation
Legal Aides for Police
Legal Aides for Police (Continuation)
Police Artist Program
Police Data Base Expansion
Real Time Tactical Deployment (Continuation)
Special Court Processing of Impact Cases - (Two Temporary Courts)
Youth Services Program

TABLE XIV (CONTINUED)

PROJECT EVALUATION COMPONENTS REVIEWED
BY IMPACT CITY

DENVER

Community Health Victim Support
Community Outreach Probation Experiment
Denver Community Work Release Center
Denver Courts Diagnostic Center
Employee-Ex
Employee-Ex (Continuation)
Horace Blanton Pre-Release Center
Intensive Probation and Parole Supervision Program
Neighborhood Crime Prevention Education Program
New Pride
Northeast Denver Youth Services Bureau
Northwest Denver Group Home
Northwest Denver Youth Service Bureau
Operation Identification
Operation Identification (Continuation)
Police-to-Partners Program
Police-to-Partners (Continuation)
Police Data Center
Priority Prosecution Program
Project Escort
Project Intercept
Project Intercept (Continuation)
Project Street Lighting
Rape Prevention
Southeast Neighborhood Services Bureau (Continuation)
Southwest Youth Employment Services
Southwest Youth Employment Services (Continuation)
Special Crime Attack Team (SCAT) I
Special Crime Attack Team (SCAT) II
Treatment Alternative to Street Crime (TASC) Phase 1 & Study
Youth Recidivist Reduction Program
Westside Youth Development Project Crime Prevention Training

TABLE XIV (CONTINUED)

PROJECT EVALUATION COMPONENTS REVIEWED
BY CITY

NEWARK

Auxiliary Police
Bergen Street Merchants' Crime Reduction
Essex County Correction Center (ECCC) Project
Essex County Correctional Center (ECCC) Vocational and Legal Services
Independence High School Alternative School
Man-to-Man/Woman-to-Woman
Newark School Residential Treatment Center
Northward Community Youth Project
Outward Bound
Parole Aides
Public Housing Security/24-Hour Security Patrol
Rape Analysis Unit
Rutgers Juvenile Delinquency Technical Assistance Project
Special Case Processing for Impact Offenders (Continuation)
Street Lighting
Supported Work Program
Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime
Team Policing/Citizen Anti-Crime Effort

PORTLAND

Case Management Corrections Service
Client Resources and Services
Corrections Division Training and Information
Crime Prevention Bureau - Public Information and Education
Field Services
Portland Police High Impact Project
Portland Public Schools Pilot Program to Reduce Burglary
Project Picture (2 components)
Project Transition
Research, Advocacy, Prevention and Education (RAPE) Program
Youth Progress Association

ST. LOUIS

Circuit Court Diagnostic Treatment Center
Criminal Courts Improvement Project
Expand Burglary Prevention Unit Project I
Expand Burglary Prevention Unit Phase II
Expand Evidence Technician Unit

TABLE XIV (CONCLUDED)

PROJECT EVALUATION COMPONENTS REVIEWED
BY IMPACT CITY

ST. LOUIS (Continued)

Expand Mounted Patrol Unit
Expansion of Police Youth Corps
Foot Patrol - Phase II
Foot Patrol - Phase III
Intensive Aftercare
Juvenile Supervision Assistance
Operation Identification
Pre-Trial Release
Probation and Parole Service
Project to Increase School Attendance
Providence Educational Center
Residential Crisis Unit
Security Uplift
Special Supervision Unit
St. Louis Court Improvement
Student Work Assistance Program (SWAP)
Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime (TASC)

END