

**FINAL PROGRESS REPORT**  
**CENTRAL MIDLANDS REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL**  
**MODEL EVALUATION PROGRAM**

**GRANT NO. 75-NI-99-0100**

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OCT 17 1977

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## ACQUISITIONS

Overall Rationale For The MEP

The Public Safety Planning Staff of the Central Midlands Regional Planning Council provides staff support for the law enforcement and criminal justice planning activities for the Central Midlands of South Carolina, including the Columbia SMSA. Approximately 85-90 percent of staff time is expended in planning and administering LEAA grant programs; consequently, planning and administration leave insufficient time available for criminal justice evaluation. Law enforcement projects and programs require planning, design, and coordination to permit adequate evaluation of the many controversial issues inherent in crime analysis. Such issues must be addressed by federal, state, and regional planners/evaluators to cultivate the appropriate working environment and methodology to counter the fragmented planning efforts, and the general lack of evaluation expertise.

Design of any criminal justice program must facilitate full evaluation of the on-going project and of its results. In the past, criminal justice planning placed little or no emphasis on evaluation design during the planning process. Evaluation has generally been approached on an ex-post facto basis which has imposed unrealistic constraints and near ineffectiveness on the individuals charged with evaluation responsibility. Consequently, most evaluations have been inconclusive as to the effectiveness and efficiency of law enforcement projects. Inclusion of evaluation procedures in the overall planning process is necessary to facilitate accurate assessment of law enforcement strategies.

New LEAA policies now require precise demonstrations rather than the complacent conclusions which prior to the MEP had been the general pattern of project evaluation. To affect this, an administrative evaluator was added to the Central Midlands Public Safety staff whose function was to be the performance of adequate evaluation of every criminal justice project carried out within the region's jurisdiction. Only in this manner was it possible to obtain the feedback information necessary for improving the allocation of resources to the criminal justice community and to identify those actions which prove to have measurable impact on the reduction of crime incidence. Coordinated design and standardization of evaluation guidelines were developed at the State level to insure that sound evaluation components were designated at the inception of the grant application. Future prospects should include supplemental training and technical assistance for the development of supportive evaluative capabilities at local levels. Resolution of specific issues inherent in crime incidence can be realized only through comprehensive, coordinated evaluation on the regional planning level.

## Development of MEP Strategy

The proposed activities were those involved in developing, implementing and utilizing evaluation studies. Through these evaluations, the Central Midlands Regional Planning Council expected to alter the attitude of local government agencies toward evaluation and produce useful evaluation methodologies and results which could be used by local government, the Regional Planning Council and the South Carolina state planning agency.

The project was implemented primarily through the efforts of one full-time professional staff member hired specifically for the grant. The only other budgeted personnel cost was 25 percent of a staff secretary's time.

Funds were available for computer processing of data which was accomplished by the University of South Carolina.

Projects for evaluation were selected from applicants for LEAA funding. They were selected on the basis of the need for the applicant to make future decisions on continued funding; on the adaptability of the performance information in directing project activities; and the expectation of funding requests for similar projects.

The evaluations to be conducted were to be integrated with a "Geographic Base File" available to the Regional Planning Council. Through the use of the file, project performance was to be measured on a regional basis, crime incidence rates used as measures and the effect of demographic and socio-economic factors on violation rates was to be measured.

The MEP project evaluator was to be responsible for drafting measures and data collection and analysis procedures. A major complaint concerning previous Central Midlands Regional Planning Council evaluation attempts was the lack of specification of these items prior to project initiation. The MEP evaluation was to rectify this problem. Data collection was eventually to be performed by project personnel with the evaluator acting primarily as an overseer of the transfer of the data from the project personnel to those who will enter it in the computer.

The evaluations were proposed primarily for use by local project and government officials. It was expected, however, that the Regional Planning Council and the state planning agency would utilize the results in decision-making and the design of future evaluation studies. In order to foster utilization, evaluation results were to be provided periodically to operating project personnel and final reports disseminated to all potential users.

A major objective of the CMRPC project was to develop a positive opinion among local criminal justice personnel concerning evaluation and have them adopt evaluation approaches developed through the MEP. To motivate the positive attitudes and actions, the CMRPC planned to prepare a summary project report which would document the evaluation methodologies, research methods, measuring instruments, analysis procedures and model designs for use by other criminal justice agencies.

During the first year of the program certain changes took place which altered the original strategy of the MEP. Some of these changes were to be expected, based on the knowledge gained in attempting to implement the original objectives, while others were a result of events which took place outside the control of the Regional Planning Council.

Most notable among the latter type of change is the fact that the state Office of Criminal Justice Programs (OCJP) now has developed minimum performance criteria for all program areas funded by LEAA funds in South Carolina which must be met by any potential applicant for funding. Since the baseline data to support the specified measurable objective and the record-keeping required to report on these minimum performance criteria is considerable, a regional council of governments like our own found it impossible to enforce additional standards for our applicants than those already required by the state, when it was evident that these additional requirements were not being required of applicants from other regions in the state. Therefore, our role in developing minimum performance criteria had to change to one of interpreting those already laid out by the state OCJP for our regional applicants and providing technical assistance to them in meeting these requirements. This activity constitutes a test of the state minimum criteria, since in many program areas there have never been projects funded using these criteria.

In revising the MEP, the strategies were reduced to accomplishing two major objectives:

- (1) changing the attitude of project and local government personnel toward evaluation; and
- (2) testing state minimum evaluation criteria through adaptation and implementation of evaluation methodologies to meet the specific local project needs and dissemination of the approach to local governments as an input into the decision-making process.

The strategy used in accomplishing the first objective was to involve the criminal justice personnel in the initial process of program development; adopting the minimum evaluation criteria to meet the project objectives; and providing them with timely and understandable information. If this were accomplished, it was expected that the negative attitudes toward evaluation would be changed. Evaluation results would then become a useful tool in deciding future operations.

At present the state planning agency has established minimum evaluation criteria for all project proposals. In the view of many local officials the measures are inappropriate and doom a project to being judged a failure. In general, the main complaint appears to be that criteria are too broad and not likely to be affected by the project (e.g. convictions on law enforcement projects). It was hoped (in addressing the second) that precise criteria could be developed from these minimums that were more closely related to actual project activities and its immediate effects. Attempts were made to include measures which provide for political and management needs of local officials which provide the basis for determining if a project is considered successful.

The MEP project was to adapt and apply evaluation methodologies to demonstrate that evaluation could assist local decision makers as well as meet the State Planning Agency's minimum requirements for evaluation information. The evaluations conducted through the MEP projects were also expected to assist local government personnel and the CMRPC develop better project proposals with "objectives" and "activities" stated in quantitative terms that have been tested and changes made based on experience in order that they can be used to make proposals for similar projects more precise.

#### Selection of Projects to be Evaluated

The Regional Planning Council intended to evaluate seven projects selected from those being funded through the LEAA program. Four projects were to be evaluated as a condition of the grant agreed upon by the local units of government receiving the action grants for FY 75. These four projects were:

1. Patrol Action Team
2. Central Business District Patrol
3. Robbery Prevention and Apprehension Team
4. Cadet Action Team.

The grants for the Central Business District Patrol were cancelled by the state on October 1975, and for the Robbery Prevention and Apprehension Team on February 1976. Therefore, no evaluation was conducted on either of these projects.

In FY 76, the following local action grants were funded:

1. Columbia Police Athletic League
2. Lexington County Family Court
3. Cayce Crime Prevention Office
4. Fairfield County Communication Equipment

The communications equipment grant was not considered for evaluation because it was purchased to address a state requirement for communications rather than a program with a specific goal. Evaluation was performed on the other three projects.

In FY 77, only two new projects were funded in this region. They were:

1. West Columbia Crime Prevention Officer
  2. Lexington County Sheriff's Department, Increased Personnel.
- Preaward evaluation assistance was provided to both of these grants.

### Major Substantive Findings From Evaluation

Several important findings were derived from the MEP. Some of these findings were not necessarily of the same nature as the anticipated results in meeting the objectives of the program. They were, in effect, side benefits.

One of the major findings is that evaluation must be designed into a program before the program begins. The Cadet Action Team project, which started in July 1975, was developed prior to the MEP. As a result, the project did not have an evaluable format or objective. The records that were to be maintained were those necessary for basic monitoring only. Before evaluation could be conducted, considerable changes had to be made in the project. The Patrol Action Team was delayed in getting started which gave the evaluator an opportunity to modify the objectives to insure that they were measurable. The FY 76 projects received input from their inception, prior to funding, from the evaluation specialist in developing meaningful and measureable objectives.

The first finding leads into the second, the lack of adequate record keeping by the local agencies. In attempting to evaluate the Cadet Action Team and the Patrol Action Team projects, it was quickly evident that the data collection and reporting activities of the agency were nonexistent. As discussed in the previous paragraph, evaluation for these projects was designed after grant award. When the evaluation program was developed and the agency learned of the record-keeping necessary to support evaluation, there was resistance. If adequate records had been maintained prior to the requirement for evaluation, evaluation would not have had as much resistance. In preparing the subsequent projects for evaluation, it was evident that the baseline data was not available because of inadequate recordkeeping in most agencies. This resulted in a program within the region to upgrade the recordkeeping capability of all agencies.

A third finding was that the Geographic Base File can be, and is now, a very useful tool in providing a quick analysis of criminal activities to be used for manpower allocation. The use is, however, limited to the urbanized area. The City of Columbia, at first reluctant to use the computer system, now has assumed complete responsibility for inhouse key punching and printout. The police department will soon have a terminal for direct input to the system.

Another important finding resulting from the demonstration MEP was that the two year program was not sufficient time to accomplish the objectives. While evaluation assistance was provided for all phases of a project, (designing the project, data collection, and analysis) no single project had assistance from the beginning through to completion. Two projects were started before the MEP, and the remaining projects were not complete by the time the MEP was terminated. In addition, because of the limitation in funding LEAA projects in this region, there was very little variety in the types of projects to be evaluated. There really was no choice in the selection of projects to include in this program.

### Schedule of Activities For The MEP Effort

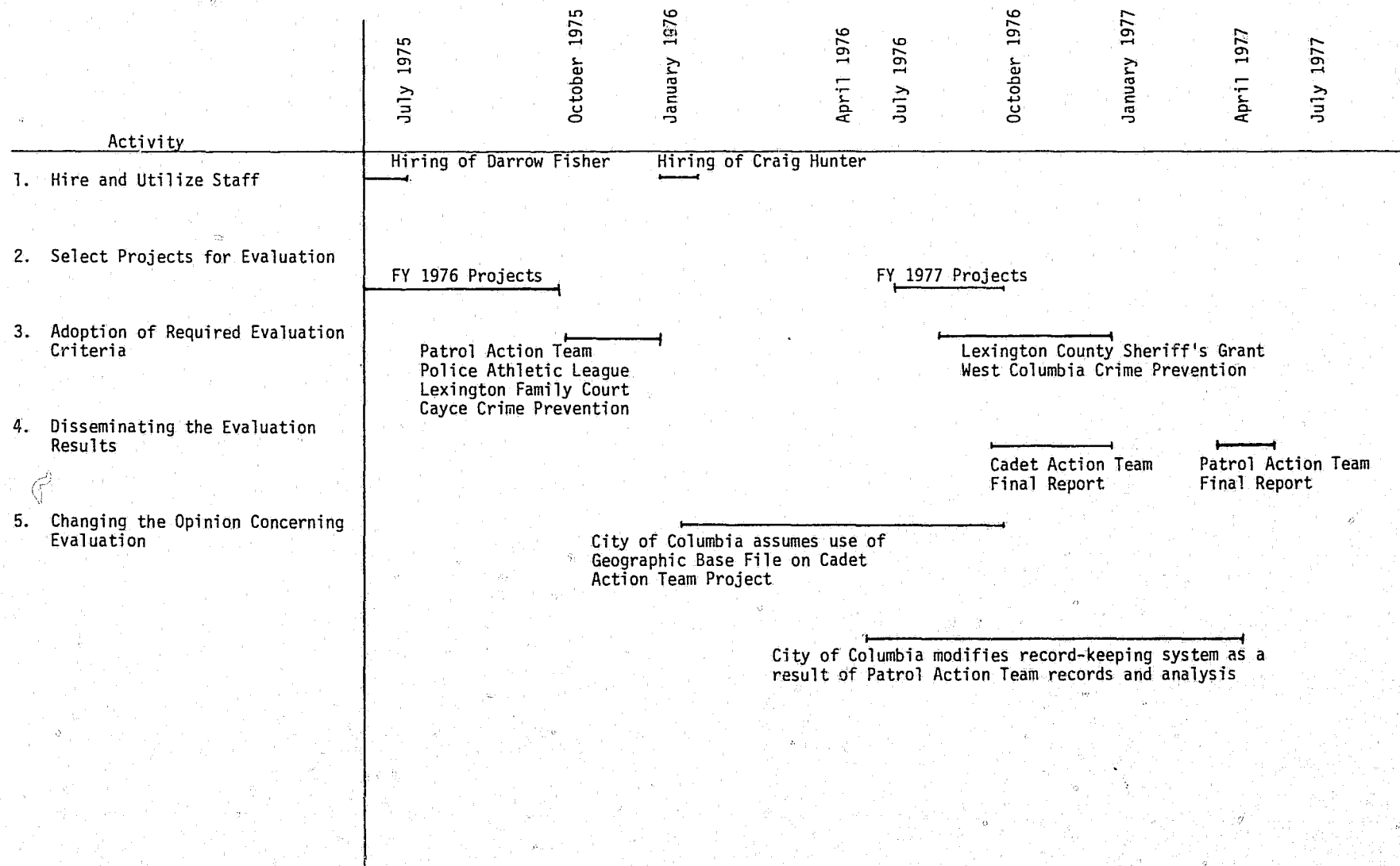
See attachment 1 for the schedule of activities as they occurred during the MEP.

### Assessment of MEP Strategy by Staff and Local Decisionmakers

One of the original objectives of the MEP was to develop and apply evaluation methodologies which were of value to both local government and the state planning agency. As explained previously, this objective had to be modified when, during the program, the state imposed minimum performance criteria to all projects. Our role then had to change from that of developing and testing performance criteria to that of providing technical assistance in interpreting and applying the state's criteria. The criteria were selected by the state with no background as to their feasibility or performance measurability. Adding the requirement for record-keeping to support, in some instances, meaningless performance criteria inhibited the accomplishment of our other objective, to change the attitude toward evaluation.

Despite these obstacles the MEP did point out some deficiencies in the existing system which resulted in improved methods of operation. One of these deficiencies was in record-keeping. A major emphasis was placed on improvements in this area throughout the region. With better records several agencies found the advantages of crime analysis which is directly related to the evaluation effort of the Patrol Action Team project.

The City of Columbia also found that record-keeping and analysis could be accomplished more quickly and efficiently, using the computer and the Geographic Base File. This equipment and operation is being conducted solely by the city now with no assistance from the Regional Planning Council or the University of South Carolina. This is proof of the accomplishment of the objective to improve the attitude toward evaluation.







**END**