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ALTERNATIVES — A SERIES

X
"THE ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR IN EVALUATION"

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FEBRUARY 1979

This publication is supported by Grant Number 0734-99-TA-78 awarded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, United States Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions stated in this publication are those of the Pretrial Services Resource Center and do not necessarily represent the official position of the United States Department of Justice.

NCJRS

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MANAGEMENT 1

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide a framework and programmatic guide by which the administrator can manage an evaluation. 1/ Evaluation refers to those research activities that are meant to inform the management of an agency or decision making by other officials. 2/ Evaluation in this context is a potentially valuable tool which has not sufficiently fulfilled its promise because of flaws related to lack of utilization and proper research methods.

Utilization is a problem because many studies do not provide information which has value to administrators and decision makers. 3/ Although a study may contain hundreds of pages of text, it may not be providing answers to key questions being asked about the management of an agency or for decisions by external policy makers. Because many studies are long and complex, they are not read by those whom the study is meant to inform. Too often, the description of the methods employed is complex and employs a terminology that is usually unfamiliar to nonresearchers. Still other studies are well conceived, but are not utilized because decision makers and administrators do not fully understand the need for evaluation. Not only do they hold themselves apart from the study effort, but many administrators have little commitment to listen to the study findings, utilize the data or correct any problems that may have been identified. The study becomes a hollow exercise, which may be displayed on the administrators or decision makers shelf, but is never found as input into the management of an agency or the decisions of a jurisdiction. Although many studies overcome these problems, there are far too many studies which are not utilized.

In addition to utilization problems, the methods employed in many studies are inappropriate for the problem being examined. Many evaluations present an impressive array of statistics and tables. Closer scrutiny may suggest that the methods employed do not support the conclusions that have been reached. An excessive amount of data is gathered as a substitute for appropriate data. Key research decisions are presented in such complex terminology that it is difficult for the nonresearcher to understand practical decisions affect the quality of the information being gathered. Too often, the terminology is taken

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- 1/ Although this bulletin was written specifically for the pretrial administrator, the procedure described is applicable not only to administrators in other fields, but also to decision makers and researchers who want a systematic procedure for intervening in the pre-evaluation process.
 - 2/ The term research and evaluation will be used interchangeably. Both terms will refer to those activities which are meant to inform the management of an agency or decision making by other officials. This bulletin does not make a distinction between research and evaluation, though this distinction is often made in actual practice. Some refer to evaluation as having a policy orientation with a stress on informing decision makers, while research is meant to build theories. In fact both fields would be improved by greater cross fertilization. Academic research informed by an understanding of policy considerations and evaluation research informed by better theory would both be substantially improved.
 - 3/ In this bulletin administrator will refer to the program official who is directly in charge of the management of a pretrial agency. Decision maker(s) refers to those officials external to the agency who make decisions about the agency. Such a distinction does not overlook that the "administrator" is also a decision maker for his/her agency and the criminal justice system as a whole.

by the nonresearcher as an indication that the choice of methods is a ritualistic exercise. The quality of evaluation, from the viewpoint of method, has also been relatively poor. 4/ Complexity in many studies disguises a lack of appropriate procedures necessary to answer key questions. Although there are many fine studies which overcome these problems, there are far too many studies which choose methods that cannot answer the particular questions being asked.

It is also a fair assessment that evaluation has not reached its full potential. If widely and appropriately implemented, evaluation could dramatically improve the quality of management and decision making. Rather than blaming researchers, administrators, or decision makers for this state of affairs, it should be recognized that evaluation in criminal justice is a relatively young discipline which has been experimenting with a variety of evaluation procedures. As these experiences have accumulated, it is now possible to provide a framework to overcome the two problems of lack of utilization and inappropriate methods. This bulletin defines a series of steps which can be executed by the administrator and thus may lead to an improvement in both utilization and method.

This bulletin shifts responsibility for the planning of the study from the researcher to the administrator. A "typical" study involves a contract between the agency and researcher, where the researcher is commissioned to do an evaluation without any clear indication of agency needs. The administrator too often leaves it to the researcher to plan and execute the study based on the dictum "the researcher knows best". The lack of involvement by the administrator means that key questions may not be answered and important methods may be ignored. There is little sense of ownership of the results by the administrator since the study was prepared outside the context of the agency. One of the ways to overcome such problems is to actively involve the administrator in the evaluation process. At the very least this may involve a close interaction between the evaluator and administrator during the conduct of the study. More is called for in this bulletin in that the administrator should plan the evaluation, while the researcher should execute the study. Through the planning process the administrator plays a dominant role in the pre-evaluation by defining the questions that should be examined, the method that should be employed, and the final product that is to be produced.

To give the administrator such a dominant role means that terminology must be simplified and the evaluation process must be "demystified". Research need not be dominated by a complex jargon. It should be understood as a logical method of answering questions dealing with agency impact on defendants and community. Research methods are not an exercise in ritual, but rather have sound reasons

4/ For example see the Phase I reports issued by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) through its National Evaluation Program. A number of articles which reviewed the literature in pretrial alternatives reached similar conclusions. These studies include:

Rovner-Piecozenik, Roberta, Pretrial Intervention Strategies: An Evaluation of Policy Related Research and Policymaker Perceptions, Washington, D.C.: American Bar Association, 1974; Mullen, Joan, Pretrial Services: An Evaluation of Policy Related Research, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Abt Associates, 1974; Toborg, Mary, National Evaluation Program, Phase I Summary Report, Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime (TASC) Project, Washington, D.C.: LEAA, 1976; Kirby, Michael P., Findings I, "Recent Research Findings in Pretrial Release", Washington, D.C.: Pretrial Services Resource Center, 1977; Mahoney, Barry, An Evaluation of Policy Related Research on the Effectiveness of Pretrial Release Programs, Denver, Colorado: National Center for State Courts; Thomas, Wayne H., National Evaluation Program, Phase I Summary Report, Pretrial Release Programs, Washington, D.C.: LEAA, 1977; and, Kirby, Michael P., Point Scale, "The Effectiveness of the Point Scale", Washington, D.C.: Pretrial Services Resource Center, 1977.

for their use. Thus, this bulletin suggests ways to simplify the terminology of evaluation so that administrators can become involved in the planning of an evaluation and decision makers can be expected to make fuller use of the final products.

Since the approach suggested in this bulletin may be faulted on the grounds that in giving the administrator a dominant role, the objectivity of the study may be impaired. In fact, responsible administrators have and will take the necessary measures to avoid this criticism. They know that the "rationalizing" approach, which attempts to justify the project's existence, may produce apparently impressive figures but is of little value. The fact that an administrator defines the problems and method does not mean that objectivity has been removed from evaluation. Rather, there is more objectivity since the methods will better support the conclusions reached and the final report is more apt to be utilized by both administrator and decision makers. Even in the method described below, objectivity is preserved since the researcher is still responsible for data gathering, conclusion formulation, and development of a report.

The purpose of this bulletin is to describe the activities required of the administrator if a good evaluation of the agency is to be produced. The guidelines in this bulletin suggest the ways in which the administrator can become the manager of the study during the pre-evaluation period. The pre-evaluation period extends from the stage at which the research project is conceived to the point at which the researcher begins the technical aspects of the study, such as data gathering and analysis.

This bulletin proposes a format by which the administrator can intervene in the evaluation process in a meaningful way. Specifically, it presents six steps that should produce an effective evaluation. These steps, with the exception of Step 6, should be approached in sequential order:

- Step 1-Understanding the Value and Limitations of Evaluation: the framework by which the administrator develops a realistic conception of the evaluation process.
- Step 2-Developing a Working Paper: an informal document which acts as a plan or road map that the administrator uses in managing the study during the pre-evaluation period. The working paper describes the analytical structure of a study, including the goal statement, questions, assumptions, comparison, and outcomes. It also provides a work plan which includes the data gathering and data analysis activities of the evaluation.
- Step 3-Preparing a Proposal: the structure of a proposal, development of a budget, and sources of funding for evaluations.
- Step 4-Preparing a Request for Proposal (RFP): suggestions for writing an effective RFP. A well-written RFP, which represents the culmination of the previous 3 steps, is crucial to the creation of a well-done evaluation.

- Step 5-Employing a Researcher: Framework for selecting the most effective researcher. This step will also describe the strengths and weaknesses of various types of researchers.
- Step 6-Working with Policymakers and Staff: the way in which the administrator involves local officials in the pre-evaluation period. Since the purpose of an evaluation is to provide information for both management and decision makers, they should be involved in the planning for the evaluation. The staff also can be a valuable adjunct both in defining topics for examination and improving proposed data gathering procedures.

This bulletin is a guide for the administrator either contemplating or actually pursuing an evaluation. In addition to presenting present six structured steps in the evaluation process, it provides many helpful hints and insights which Address the types of questions raised by practitioners when involved in the evaluation of their program. Many practical questions are addressed such as: how can the researcher be held accountable? what are sources of funding? what are some important methods which must be employed? how can cost savings be realized while still completing an effective evaluation? The format has a separate section devoted to each step in the pre-evaluation stage. Each section contains an introduction which summarizes that step; a discussion where the administrator will find specific information for implementing that step; and a conclusion in the form of a checklist of specific procedures. The check list serves both as a summary for the chapter and a list of the specific procedures that can be used in implementing that particular step. Many an administrator who decides to sponsor an evaluation should find it useful to detach or copy the check list, both for checking items as they are completed and for dissemination to others involved in the evaluation such as researchers and staff.

STEP 1

UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE AND LIMITATIONS OF EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION

The first step of the sequence proposed in this bulletin may appear self-evident but is often overlooked. 5/ The administrator should develop a realistic conception of the evaluation process. This framework is necessary for two reasons: the need to convince others and the need to formulate realistic expectations. The administrator must be convincing about the value of evaluation when dealing with others. (S)he must be able to justify the expenditure of funds for the evaluation. Others, such as policymakers, must be convinced that the evaluation is a meaningful exercise upon which to base their decisions. Staff members must be convinced that disruption in activities brought about by data gathering can be justified either by more effective case management or by enhanced credibility of their agency with decision makers.

On the other hand, the administrator favoring an evaluation should also understand its limitations. (S)he should avoid unrealistic expectations of what questions it can answer and its impact on decision making. The administrator who understands the limitations of evaluation can design a study which will overcome or at least limit its problematic features.

The two following sections will describe the advantages and limitations of evaluation and provide a realistic conception of the evaluation enterprise. 6/

THE VALUE OF RESEARCH

Some administrators see research as disruptive to routine services to clients and courts. They may feel that research is lacking in value because it does not support the primary mission of the agency. However, research can be a valuable adjunct to program management, decision making, and in developing

5/ A prior step implicit in this discussion is the identification of the evaluation study. Many times research and evaluation is not systematically developed, but rather arises from a process of serendipity. Research conceived in this way can be highly valuable, but all too often becomes a "one-shot" study, not followed up by any systematic research strategy. A preferable state of affairs is to view research as part of the planning process of an agency, providing empirical data when key decisions must be made.

6/ There are many works available on the advantages and disadvantages of evaluation. Among the most useful discussions are:

Cook, Thomas and Pollard, William, "Guidelines: How to Recognize and Avoid Some Common Problems and Mis-Utilization of Evaluation Research Findings", Evaluation, IV, 1977, pp.161-4; Cox, Gary, "Managerial Style", Evaluation Quarterly, I, August 1977, pp.499-508; Chelimsky, Eleanor, "Improving the Use of Evaluation: An Agency Perspective", Washington, D.C.: National Conference on Evaluation, 1977; Weidman, Donald, et. al., Intensive Evaluation for Criminal Justice Planning Agencies, Washington, D.C.: LEAA, 1975; Adams, Stuart, Evaluation Research in Corrections, Washington, D.C.: LEAA, 1975.

support for the larger pretrial field. As long as the evaluator sees its purpose as informing management and decision making, there will be little doubt about the value of research.

This section describes the arguments which support the value of research in a pretrial agency. These considerations are grouped into three major topics referring to the general acceptance of evaluation, and the importance of research in informing both management and decision making.

There appears to be an increasing general acceptance of evaluation, not only among methodologists, but also among administrators and decision makers. Evaluation, as a discipline in criminal justice, has progressed through the identification of more appropriate methods. These methods have also been more clearly communicated to the lay audience which must be the consumer of the evaluation. As these changes take place, evaluation is becoming a more effective tool in management and decision making. There are two reasons for this view.

- If a program is operating effectively, impact evaluation provides a quantitative definition of program success. 7/ It can also identify the procedures which are responsible for the successful operation of the agency.
- Quantitative information provides an objective analysis of the impact of an agency or a program. This view has been cogently discussed by Glaser: "(S)ubjective impressions are based on private feelings rather than externally observed events....By their very nature subjective evaluations tend to be biased, no matter whether people try to be unbiased."
8/

Evaluation is of paramount importance in effectively and accurately informing decision makers of the impact of a pretrial program. This is important not only to the local decision makers, but also to national decision makers who must disseminate criminal justice innovations. From this perspective, evaluation has the following advantages:

- Evaluation is often required when funding decisions are made about programs. Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) funds usually terminate after a three year period, with the expectation that the local community will provide permanent funding for a program. If the county or city has a finite number of new programs it can support, especially in this age of scarce fiscal resources, then programs must demonstrate their effectiveness before permanent local funding is provided.

7/ Impact evaluation is defined in Step 2.

8/ Glaser, Daniel, Routinizing Evaluation, Rockville, Maryland: National Institute of Mental Health, 1973, pp. 17 and 16.

- Lack of research validating innovations and new practices in the criminal justice system can be a handicap to the dissemination of those innovations. Such validation is required in a number of sites before the long-term existence of an innovation is guaranteed.
- Pretrial agencies can be "crippled" if a sensational event involving one of its clients is publicized. A series of newspaper articles or a political campaign by a candidate for public office stressing community protection can be destructive to the political support of any pretrial agency. One way to overcome such events is to provide research which demonstrates that the program has a positive impact on clients and community.
- Agencies that can supply data on the characteristics of defendants as well as the performance of other actors in the criminal justice system may have an influence on policy far beyond what their size would indicate.

Evaluation is also valuable in improving the management practices of an agency. Among the reasons for this perspective are:

- If an agency is not operating up to expectations or if the quality of the operations is limited, then evaluation can be a useful diagnostic tool. Evaluation can define problems in the agency and suggest solutions.
- Research allows the program to make more sophisticated and informed program decisions. Many important decisions, based upon conventional wisdom, may not be supported where there is a systematic analysis of a problem. When ineffective agency processes are identified through research, they can either be altered or funds can be diverted to more effective procedures. Such procedures can improve the overall service delivery system of any agency.
- Many pretrial programs face constraints by courts and prosecutors on the types of defendants they can accept as clients. Too often jurisdictions allow release or diversion of defendants charged only with minor offenses. Specialized research can be used to examine the impact that pretrial has, or can have, on more serious offenders.

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

There are many good reasons for undertaking evaluation. Unfortunately, many evaluations are incomplete, improperly done, or of limited utility. In order to avoid these pitfalls, the administrator should be aware of the problems and

limitations of evaluation. Many of these problems are caused by the improper implementation of evaluation, rather than by the limitations of the evaluation concept.

This section describes the three major limitations in research and evaluation: quality of execution, skepticism of evaluation, and implementation difficulties.

Evaluation is often criticized because of its poor execution. This problem has been chronicled in many reviews of the literature. Among the more startling indictments was one provided by the LEAA's National Evaluation Program (NEP) which found that evaluations answered few of the important questions for criminal justice decision makers. "A startling and frequent NEP finding is that many researchers and government officials at all levels are simply unable to design or conduct a field evaluation, or even to comprehend completely the tasks involved." 9/ Fortunately, many execution problems can be overcome with careful evaluation planning. The problems to be avoided include:

- Allowing the evaluation to address the wrong questions and overlook the type of information requested by decision makers.
- Completing an evaluation after a decision has already been made.
- Inadequately communicating evaluation findings. For example Vojtecky argues "There's a place for the 125 page evaluation complete with computer printouts and statistical tables. However, the place is not the District Association of Government meetings or the County Commission or the State Planning Council. Evaluations must talk to decision makers in their own language. Not 'the Chi-Square of burglary arrests is not significant at the .05 level'. But, 'with six more officers they made ~~less~~ arrests than before'." 10/
- Over-utilization of relatively weak findings. Improperly done research in evaluation can be worse than not having any information at all. Kelly has argued that there are "numerous instances of well known evaluations of major programs which were methodologically or conceptually unsound. In some instances decisions to terminate or reduce programs have been justified on the basis of those evaluations. It is a clear lesson that concern over utilization must emphasize appropriate use rather than just greater use." 11/

9/ Barnes, Richard, et. al., "Purchasing Evaluation and Research in a Federal Block Grant Program: LEAA's National Evaluation Program", Evaluation, IV, 1977, p.199.

10/ Vojtecky, Steve, Evaluation for Decision Makers, Utah: Utah Council on Criminal Justice Administration, February 1977, p.5.

11/ Kelly, Rita Mae, "Utilization of Evaluation Research in the Federal Decision to Fund Local Programs", Washington, D.C.: Annual Meeting of American Political Science Association, 1977, p.2.

Whether or not evaluation can answer important questions is a matter of skepticism for some. The administrator should anticipate these arguments and be prepared to diffuse their potential impact on the evaluation and its utilization. Among the arguments for such an approach are the following:

- Some administrators and local decision makers do not believe the effectiveness of agencies can be measured. They may not understand the contribution of evaluation to increasing program effectiveness and are suspicious of the results of program evaluation.
- Some claim that evaluation as a method has not attained the degree of sophistication necessary to demonstrate that it can identify the "causal" effects of programs on clients.^{12/}
- Some are skeptical that evaluation reports can have any impact on decisions. ^{13/}
- Many claim that program objectives are difficult to identify and still more difficult to quantify. Broad-based programs may have multiple goals and objectives, many of them conflicting.

There are also implementation difficulties in evaluation:

- Evaluations can be expensive. If neither staff time nor funds are readily available, outside funding must be used.
- Bureaucracies do not provide incentives for undertaking evaluation. Administrators receive support for most of their activities with the exception of examining the impact of their work. There are rewards for spending money properly, starting new programs, and maintaining good relationships with the public and funding agencies. Few organizations are rewarded for using evaluation to improve agency effectiveness.
- Program evaluations are often misused. As an example, opponents may use an evaluation as a tool against continuing a program. Evaluation becomes threatening rather than a valuable instrument in management and decision making.

^{12/} Proper use of comparison can overcome this problem (see Step 2).

^{13/} This is a misunderstanding of the utilization of evaluation which takes place in a political context. Evaluation does not automatically translate itself into public policy, but must be used by proponents and opponents of various political views.

CHECKLIST FOR
STEP 1

The key advantages of evaluation are:

- ☐ General Acceptance
- ☐ Informs Decision Making
- ☐ Informs Management

The key limitations of evaluation should also be reviewed, including developing counter arguments and designing procedures to eliminate the more problematic aspects of evaluation:

- ☐ Execution Problems
- ☐ Skepticism of Evaluation
- ☐ Implementation Difficulties

STEP 2

DEVELOPING A WORKING DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

The second step proposes the administrator translate his/her conceptual and technical understanding into a written description of the evaluation project. The working description is a document produced by the administrator which defines the analytical structure of a study. It also describes the key technical issues relating to data gathering, analysis, and dissemination. The document is produced by the administrator for his/her sole use. This phase is a roadmap assisting the administrator in managing the evaluation.

The working description need not be a complex document. It is no more than an outline which sketches the key decisions in the evaluation process. A more refined document will be created when the working description is translated into a formal proposal or RFP. If the administrator attempts to make the working description too formal and thus more time consuming, there is always the possibility that (s)he will bypass Step 2.

In approaching this task, the administrator should first develop an understanding of the nature of evaluation. (S)he should do considerable reading and thinking so (s)he can conceptualize the key analytical and technical elements in the evaluation process. It must not be assumed that outside evaluators know more about the evaluation process than the administrator. Many administrators have a better intuitive understanding (though they may not necessarily be able to articulate it fully) of evaluation questions and processes than researchers. Often, the administrator assumes that the researcher is the only one who understands the evaluation process and, therefore, allows him/her to proceed without any direction.

These comments about the researcher lead to a series of considerations that should frame the administrator's role in this step:

- The administrator will have to interpret research to nonresearchers. If (s)he does not understand the project (s)he will not be able to explain the evaluation findings to others.
- Evaluation is a logical and not a statistical system. Complex statistical notation does nothing more than provide a shorthand way for researchers to interpret study results. For purposes of decision makers, these complexities should be eliminated.

- The logic and problems addressed are familiar to all administrators: outcome variables such as failure-to-appear (FTA) and recidivism; risk level of defendants; impact of practices such as notification; etc.
- Administrators must be willing to learn the key concepts in evaluation. There is a lot of nontechnical material on research and evaluation written for administrators in all fields of criminal justice. Administrators should avail themselves of a variety of literature and workshops on this topic. 14/
- The administrator must be assertive rather than submissive in dealing with researchers. If the administrator does not understand the key research concepts, (s)he should demand that research procedures be explained in simple terms. Nothing should be accepted on "faith" (e.g., the researcher knows best). If a procedure cannot be traced by the administrator, it should be discarded from the study.
- Evaluation is meant to inform management and decision making. To "inform" means that the "information" being transmitted must be understood. In preparation for their subsequent working relationship, the administrator must learn some research terminology, and the researcher must learn to communicate in a language more attuned to nonresearchers.
- Regular and accepted procedures should be employed. New and innovative procedures, more appropriate for journal articles and not understood by most evaluation consumers, should be eliminated.

When drafting the working description, the administrator needs to consider two major areas: analytical issues and technical issues.

14/ There are a number of works on evaluation methods which have been prepared for non researchers. For example see:

Performance Standards and Goals for Pretrial Diversion, Washington, D.C.: National Association of Pretrial Services Agencies, 1978, pp.117-130; Mahoney, Barry, An Evaluation of Policy Related Research on the Effectiveness of Pretrial Release Programs; Kirby, Michael, "Suggested Research Practices in Pretrial Release" (and Pretrial Diversion), unpublished paper, Washington, D.C.: Pretrial Services Resource Center, 1978; Kirby, Michael P., "Design Considerations in Evaluation", Bellringer, March 1978, Issue #5, pp.10-14; Weidman, et. al., Intensive Evaluation for Criminal Justice Planning Agencies; Adams, Evaluation Research in Corrections; Fitz-Gibbon, Carol Taylor and Morris, Lynn Lyons, How to Design a Program Evaluation. How to Deal with Goals and Objectives. How to Present an Evaluation Report, Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1978.

ANALYTICAL ISSUES

This section briefly discusses the following key elements of the analytical structure of an evaluation: ^{15/} goal specification, problem, assumptions, type of evaluation, type of design and the outcome variables. This analytical model suggests that once the problem is defined, then the last elements become self-evident. An example, depicted in Chart I, will be used to illustrate each of the elements. ^{16/}

CHART I
KEY ANALYTICAL ELEMENTS IN EVALUATION

ANALYTICAL ELEMENTS	EXAMPLE
Goal Specification	Reduce the rearrest rate for defendants during the pretrial period.
Problem	Do the agency's services to defendants actually reduce their rearrest rate?
Assumptions	1. The agency works with defendants to reduce rearrest during the pretrial period. 2. The rearrest rate of defendants would be higher if they were not receiving agency services.
Type of Evaluation	Impact Evaluation
Comparison	Experimental or quasi-experimental design
Outcome(s)	Rearrest rates of defendants

Goal specification, the first analytical element, involves identifying the intended consequences of a program's activity. Unless the agency's goals are defined, evaluation is difficult since it is not known what the agency intends to accomplish. Goals are often defined in such general and global terms as to make them useless for evaluative purposes. Goals must be measurable, specific and delimited by time. They should also define the group or institution upon which the program is supposed to have an impact. ^{17/} Examples of hopelessly

^{15/} This discussion is only introductory. Another bulletin being prepared by the Resource Center, "Suggested Research Practices", deals with the logic more fully.

^{16/} The example is equally applicable to pretrial release and diversion agencies.

^{17/} The more specific descriptions of goals are often referred to as objectives or subgoals.

general goal statements include: decreasing recidivism; improving the courts; making defendants productive members of society; and reducing needless pretrial detention in the United States. The example in Chart I is a useful goal since it is 1) measurable (rearrest); 2) defines a target population (defendants) ^{18/}; 3) has time perspective (pretrial period); 4) is specific (reduced more than if not in program).

Once the goals of the agency are identified, the administrator can more effectively define the particular problem to be examined in the evaluation. The problem is a clear and precise definition of what the research is to examine. In the example, the problem is in the form of a question. "Do the agency's services to defendants actually reduce their rearrest rate?" A multitude of other possible questions could be raised about the agency: is the agency cost effective? are its management practices sound? are there other internal procedures that could produce lower rearrest rates? Unless the problem can be stated precisely, the researcher will not be able to produce a study which answers the important concerns of the agency. The researcher is not a mind reader. In the absence of explicit cues, the researcher will examine problems that (s)he feels are important. These may or may not be the concerns of the agency administrator. Though many studies end up being judged irrelevant to the agency's needs, the researcher is not always to blame where the agency has not precisely defined its concerns.

The assumption underlying the problem must also be explicitly examined. The examination of assumptions often requires tracing through the project logic or the way an agency affects defendants. The above example includes two assumptions. First, the agency works with defendants during the pretrial period. For a release agency this involves notification and supervision of defendants. For a diversion agency, it involves counseling and referral to other community services. Both sets of procedures are aimed at reduction of rearrest rates. The second assumption is that the defendants' rearrest rates would be higher if they were not receiving agency services.

The next element, based on the prior analytical elements, is the type of evaluation. For the type of problem defined in the example, an impact evaluation is most appropriate. By definition an impact evaluation can determine the effect that an agency is having on defendants. ^{19/}

Depending upon the type of evaluation chosen, a particular type of comparison will also be required. Comparison is another name for research design. The findings of an evaluation have to be applied to some standard (e.g., goal statements, Standards and Goals, good management practices, or control groups). Comparison is especially important in impact evaluation. To gather data solely on agency clients does not suffice for impact evaluation. Many agencies report low recidivism rates for client groups (e.g., 10 percent for diversion clients). However, such information is of little value since the agency may be taking low-risk defendants (called "creaming") who would have low recidivism rates even

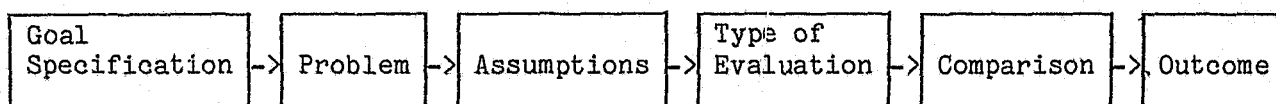
^{18/} Clients and defendants are being used interchangeably in this bulletin.

^{19/} Impact evaluation (often called impact assessment) is viewed by many as the only form of evaluation. There are a number of other forms of evaluation such as process evaluation, monitoring, specialized research, etc.

if they were not in the program. Thus, the results for agency clients must be compared to another group with similar characteristics (except for program participation) in order to determine actual program impact. If randomization is used, this other group is called a control group and an experimental design. If non-random procedures are used to select the second group, the design is called quasi-experimental with a comparison group. 20/

Outcomes are those client characteristics which the researcher is examining (e.g., recidivism and failure-to-appear). Given the problem statement, the choice of an outcome will be self-evident. Measuring the outcome will be more problematic. The administrator should be aware of some of the nuances (e.g., arrest or conviction to measure recidivism) involved in measurement. In the example, rearrest is the outcome and would have to be defined more precisely for research purposes.

In summary, the analytical structure of an evaluation can be illustrated by the following diagram:



The placement of the elements in a logical chain means that they are both related and must be approached sequentially for a proper evaluation format.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

The technical issues in evaluation refer to data gathering, processing/ analysis and report preparation/dissemination. These are the steps which are to be executed by the researcher. The administrator should have some understanding of these issues, so (s)he can prepare an adequate budget and choose a capable researcher. The following lists items for each set of issues.

Data Gathering: 21/ Although data gathering will be the responsibility of the researcher, the administrator will be called upon to assist the researcher in obtaining information from his files and gaining access to data in other offices. The administrator should be aware of some of the key issues so that an accurate estimate can be made of the costs and time involved in this phase. There are a number of texts which further discuss this topic. 22/

- Select data gathering technique (e.g. court records).
- Are data available?
- Are data complete?

20/ There are numerous works written for non-researchers and administrators on this important topic which are identified in Footnote 14.

21/ This list is based on a work plan developed by the Criminal Justice Evaluation Training Center program on evaluation funded by LEAA.

22/ Two of the best works are: Miller, Delbert, Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement, New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1977, and Babbie, Earl, The Practice of Social Research, Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1975.

- Who will obtain the data?
- What time periods will be examined?
- What type of sample will be used?
- When are data needed?
- Will data be verified (determine if accurate)?
- What are the major problems foreseen in data gathering?
- Develop code book (the system for gathering data).
- Develop data gathering forms.

Data Processing and Analysis: The administrator will not have involvement in this phase of the evaluation project. This is the phase during which the raw data collected earlier is key punched, processed through the use of a computer and the results examined by the researcher. 23/

- Data coding (move raw data from forms to coding sheet).
- Key punch.
- Cleaning data (make sure key punched data is accurate).
- Prepare data for statistical analysis (combining data, creating an index, etc.).
- Statistical analysis by computer or hand calculation (figures, charts, tables, statistics, etc.).

Conclusion Formulation: This phase is solely the task of the researcher, although the administrator should have the right to comment on a report and to be informed of any negative findings as soon as possible. Administrators should not tamper with a report's conclusions, unless they are clearly erroneous and not supported by the data. The administrator should also insist that the researcher produce a set of recommendations based on the findings.

- Analysis of statistical results.
- Drawing conclusions from data.
- Formulating recommendations.
- Obtaining commentary on report.

Report Preparation/Dissemination: 24/ The administrator will reinvolve himself in the project once the conclusions have been formulated and the report has been prepared by the researcher. Although the administrator should not tamper with the findings, (s)he can insist that the report will communicate findings in a clear and concise manner. The administrator should also understand that other forms of disseminating a report are not only effective, but should also be part of the planning for the evaluation. Although the report itself is the final part of the researcher's activities, it involves a number of mechanical, but time-consuming steps to make it an effective document. Too often, insufficient time is given to report preparation, so that much earlier hard work is negated by not completing this crucial task in an effective manner.

23/ One of the best descriptions of computer usage for the non-researcher is Hy, Ron, Using the Computer in the Social Sciences: A Nontechnical Approach, New York: Elsevier, 1977.

24/ Fitzgibbon and Morris, How to Present an Evaluation Report, provides a description of key issues in preparing a report.

-Select target population.

-Select forms of communication:

- Continual Interaction (e.g., informal discussions during the evaluation).
- Written reports.
- Oral presentations (television, radio, newspapers, legislative hearings).

-Mechanics of the Report:

- Determine report structure.
- Write report.
- Design report brochure.
- Type report.
- Proofread.
- Print.

-Disseminate to target audience.

CHECKLIST FOR
STEP 2

An informal working description of the proposed evaluation is based on the following criteria:

☐ Analytical Issues:

- ☐ Goal Specification
- ☐ Problem
- ☐ Assumptions
- ☐ Type of Evaluation
- ☐ Type of Comparison
- ☐ Outcomes

☐ Technical issues:

- ☐ Data Gathering
- ☐ Data Processing and Analysis
- ☐ Conclusion Formulation
- ☐ Report Preparation/Dissemination

STEP 3 PREPARING A PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION

A proposal is a formal statement requesting funding for an evaluation. It sets forth a statement of the problem to be examined, justification for the funding, the analytical structure, and budget for the evaluation. If the funds are not already available or a research unit does not exist in-house, a proposal for funds will have to be made to an external agency or foundation.

In writing a proposal, the administrator should rely heavily on Step 2: Developing a Working Paper. The final proposal is nothing more than a clearly written (and edited) version of the earlier step. The administrator who has informed himself/herself about evaluation procedures and developed the working paper, should be able to write the proposal with minimal assistance. Though some administrators seek outside help to prepare the proposal, it might be more beneficial to obtain that assistance in Step 2. Whatever assistance is obtained, it should include collaboration with the administrator so (s)he continues to learn about evaluation.

The following sections discuss various aspects of the proposal. These include: 1) Guidelines for writing a proposal; 2) The application; 3) The budget; and 4) Sources of evaluation funds.

GUIDELINES

Since funding sources vary in the procedures they employ, the administrator should frame the proposal to meet particular stylistic and substantive requirements. General guidelines suggested here should be viewed in the context of the needs, style and requirements of the particular funding source. Specifically, four areas must be considered in drafting the proposal: content issues, tenor of the proposal, mechanics, and external factors.

Content issues, dealing with substantive considerations, are understandably the most crucial aspect of a proposal. Since the administrator will have prepared a working paper, (s)he will be familiar with the key substantive issues. These should be reflected in the proposal in the following ways:

- A single theme should provide a framework for the study. The single theme should limit the propensity of many proposals to examine a number of unrelated topics.
- A proposal should demonstrate an understanding of the major analytical issues (e.g., design type, outcomes to be employed). These should be stated as explicitly and simply as possible.
- Technical issues involving access to data, research facilities, and confidentiality should be addressed.

- Key statements should be completely documented. For example, if a statement is made that overcrowding of local jails is a problem, the proposal should footnote studies, newspaper clippings, and empirical data to demonstrate the point.

The tenor of the proposal deals with providing a realistic description of the research project.

- The proposal should be as specific as possible, avoiding broad generalizations and grandiose statements.
- The study should not promise more than it can deliver. Funders quickly recognize what cannot be accomplished with the funds being requested.
- The budget should be realistic in terms of the tasks, but not larger than that which the funding agency can make available.
- Supporting evidence of the need for the study is crucial. If, for example, a cost evaluation is necessary because the local jurisdiction will not institutionalize the program, this should be documented with newspaper clippings, letters from decision makers, and copies of City Council minutes. A sense of documented urgency provides the proposal with a greater chance for obtaining funding.

Concern with the mechanics produces a more attractive and readable document, which reflects on the professionalism of the administrator. The typical review committee will be simultaneously reading a number of other proposals. The more readable a proposal, the greater chance it will be singled out by these reviewers. The following guidelines can assist in preparing a more attractive document.

- The proposal should be well written, and undergo several drafts.
- The proposal should be relatively concise, clearly written, and well organized, yet it should not be overly brief. If a proposal is too brief, the reviewer may feel that the issues were not adequately discussed or understood. A good proposal is able to strike a balance between conciseness and completeness.
- The use of devices, such as tables, charts, and subheadings, should be employed to make the proposal appear as professionally finished as possible.
- The proposal should contain a minimum of jargon. Misuse of terminology will create skepticism about the administrator's knowledge of the topic.

- Despite the need for documentation, the tendency to footnote every sentence should be avoided. Only the most important statements need to be footnoted.
- An abstract, not to exceed one page, should be attached to the beginning of the proposal. The abstract should clearly state what the evaluation intends to accomplish. Many proposals are unsuccessful because the reviewers are not presented with a simple explication of the study's essence.

Working with external sources can also improve the quality and funding chances of the proposal.

- The proposal should be circulated for comments to both administrators and researchers before submission. Sources of commentary include local decision makers, university professors at local institutions, research specialists of national organizations, and local planning agencies.
- Contacts should be made with the funding agency both before and after submission of the proposal. After submission, phone calls and face-to-face meetings can be used to deal with questions and provide further information and clarification.
- The administrator should consult closely with the research specialist of the funding agency to determine not only what is required in an application, but also the preferred format. Whenever possible the administrator should attempt to obtain copies of other proposals which have been funded by that source.

THE APPLICATION

A funding agency provides either a standard form or allows the administrator to use his/her own format. Whatever the format, some generally accepted topics should be addressed in a proposal. ^{25/} The following defines each of these topics. Appendix I contains a more complete description of how each of the topics might be addressed. These topics include:

- A. The Problem Statement: There should be a clear but brief statement of the topic to be examined. The author should also indicate the rationale for the evaluation study.

^{25/} There are a number of works on preparing a proposal. Among the most useful are Krathwohl, David, How to Prepare a Research Proposal, Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University, 1965; Miller, Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement, pp. 461-83; Fitzgerald, Delores, Money '78, "Funding Resources and the Pretrial Field - 1978"; Washington, D.C.: Pretrial Services Resource Center, 1978.

- B. Literature Review: This describes the field, some of the research problems and questions, and the more important findings.
- C. Methodology: The analytical structure of the study should be described (see Step 2). It should include goal specification, problem, assumptions, type of evaluation, design and outcomes.
- D. Research Procedure: The technical issues of data gathering and data analysis should be described here (see Step 2). Though the evaluator will be responsible for this aspect of the project, there should still be some indication in the proposal on how the study will proceed.
- E. Final Report: The preparation and dissemination of the final report should be reviewed.
- F. Working Guide: This should include the project schedule.
- G. Budget: The budget should state both a listing and justification of various expenses.
- H. Choosing an Evaluator: The method of selecting the evaluator should be discussed.
- I. Supporting Evidence: Letters from key officials documenting the need for study should be appended.

THE BUDGET

The budget is a difficult document to prepare. At the very best, a budget involves an "informed guess" of what the project will cost. At the very worst the budget can seriously underestimate the total amount of costs and difficulties involved in the execution of the study. The ability of the evaluator to complete his/her job efficiently and effectively is unknown. The reaction of the funder to the quality of the proposal and the size of the budget is highly problematic.

The budget is also a "game" involving strategic considerations by both funding agencies and those preparing proposals. The administrator will often prepare a proposal requesting funds for the most elegant study. The funding agency has the choice of accepting, rejecting or scaling down the proposal. If the latter is chosen, the administrator making the request must have an understanding of the funding level at which (s)he can no longer properly implement a viable study.

The budget is based upon a number of factors including the type of evaluation (an impact evaluation costs more than other forms of evaluation); data problems to be encountered (hand-written dockets are more difficult to gather data from than computerized data); sample size; and the type of consultant to be employed. The size of the evaluation budget may also be affected by the size and importance of the pretrial agency itself.

The same project can be awarded widely varying budget amounts depending upon what the funding source wants to make available. An impact evaluation for example, can be done for \$8,000 or \$40,000. The \$40,000 proposal means that the agency will: employ a higher quality evaluator (or at least not take a chance on an unknown person); have more applicants for the RFP; examine more problems; and put more effort into the final report. A smaller proposal will require the administrator to assist the evaluator in the implementation of the study and perhaps to involve the project staff in data gathering.

Given these constraints and strategies, this section will describe some key features in budgetary procedures: 1) ways to lower the budget; 2) specific costs; and 3) working with the funding source.

Administrators are often looking for procedures to lower the cost of conducting an evaluation. The size of the award may be lower than expected or the administrator may prefer to examine a larger number of problems than normally possible with available resources. A number of procedures can be employed to maximize available funding:

- Research procedures can be selected with lower cost as a goal, while still maintaining an acceptable level of validity. These include the use of a smaller sample, and limiting the number of outcomes and cost.
- The size of the budget can be reduced substantially if some services are provided by the program staff or student interns. In addition, such costs as printing and computer time can be absorbed by the county/city, local universities or donations from private firms.
- The budget should not be overloaded with senior advisors and peripheral consultants. These items consume evaluation resources which could be better used in paying a competent project director and employing more clerical personnel. However, such advisors can be helpful if used periodically in assisting on key decisions for the evaluation or assisting the project director when (s)he has difficulties.
- The administrator should have a full-time evaluation director for the period of the study or, at the very least, for the data-gathering phase.
- The cost of various types of consultants will vary widely. If the administrator is able to prepare an effective RFP, then a less prestigious (and less costly) consultant can be employed.
- The cost of publication will be substantial. It is suggested that a relatively short eight- to ten-page summary of the evaluation project be prepared for dissemination. The publication function might also be kept with the agency rather than with the evaluator. The project can probably obtain a lower cost by printing either in-house or by requiring bids.

- Depending on the amount of data and analysis, computer time can also be substantial. The administrator may find it advisable to negotiate a job rate rather than per hour fee.
- If the amount of available grant monies is limited by the funding sources, there may be ways of expanding the funds available. One way is to tie together a number of activities, which individually are eligible for funding. 26/

When initially preparing the budget, the administrator should anticipate a number of specific costs:

- The administrator should try to anticipate data gathering problems. Outside of the salary for the project director, the data gathering activities will consume the largest portion of the budget. There may be thorny problems such as the need to verify records in a series of different offices, and the need to trace cases through handwritten dockets.
- If data is being gathered for computer processing, then key punch facilities will be required. The researcher will have to hire a firm to do the key punching; he may have to key punch using his own facilities; or perhaps the agency itself can defer some of the costs of the evaluation by using its clerical staff to do the key punching.
- If a private consulting firm is used, it will require a profit margin. A university, on the other hand, will have an overhead cost figure. The profit and overhead figures must be computed into the budget request. Failure to do so will mean that later substantive work will have to be deferred in order to pay for the overhead or profit margin.
- When developing the personnel items, the fringe benefits for the employees should be included. A rule of thumb is to include a 15 to 20 percent margin for fringe benefits.
- In some jurisdictions a consultant can be chosen at the time that the budget is written. The consultant may be willing to sign a contract committing himself/herself to that budgeted amount. Where this cannot be done because of legal requirements concerning bidding procedures, the project administrator should approach a variety of consultants in the community to determine what they would charge for the project.

26/ For example, information might be concurrently gathered on pretrial procedures, court dispositions, and characteristics of detainees. Because the funding source may want the additional information, it may also be willing to provide additional funding. Another way of accomplishing the same thing is to develop a "model evaluation" which can be used by other jurisdictions around the state or country. The funding source may be willing to allocate additional resources to develop this model. However, such a commitment means that the project will have to prepare a document which is more general in content and has implications beyond the jurisdiction.

- If an on-site evaluator is not used, funding must be included for travel, room and per diem costs.

Close consultation with the staff of the funding source is important. This should take the form of at least one face-to-face meeting and numerous phone calls. Follow-up should also take place after the submission of the budget. During this process, important issues need to be considered, such as:

- If the funding source is a State Planning Agency, the state plan should be examined to determine the total budget amount and specific project awards (including the types of evaluations funded).
- The budget should be examined by those in the local community who regularly deal with the funding source. These may include the local law enforcement planning agency, intergovernmental grants office and a grants officer for the city or county.
- There should be some conception of what the funding source's auditors will accept in terms of expense documentation. The budget should be developed so that difficult fiscal documentation problems are not faced at a later date.

The actual procedure used in constructing a budget is not difficult. A budget chart is the first item which should be prepared. An example of a budget chart is presented in Appendix II. The budget chart first identifies all of the functions to be performed in the evaluation (e.g., professional staff, data gathering, report writing). Then, the methods by which each of these functions will be carried out need to be specified (e.g., data gathering will involve part-time clerical assistants). Finally, a cost is appended to each method (e.g., 500 hours of clerical time at \$3.00 per hour plus 10 percent fringe benefits). Once the budget chart is completed, it should be shared with others and compared with similar proposals to determine if it is both complete and adequately covers all the necessary functions. The budget chart will probably not appear in the final proposal. Rather, it will be used to prepare a summary budget. The summary budget organizes the items by categories.

Rather than requiring that a consultant stay within the budgeted categories the administrator might only use the budget to justify the amount of money being requested from the funding agency. The grant funds could be used to sign a "direct cost" consulting contract with the evaluator. The evaluator would then be responsible for the payment of all costs including supplies, materials, and personnel. 27/ The agency would not have to monitor and document individual expenditures. However, the agency would still be responsible for awarding the contract using proper procedures. And the disbursement of fees would have to be based on actual work products. 28/

27/ This bulletin argues that the researcher should be judged and paid by the quality of his performance and not solely on his/her ability to document expenditures.

28/ LEAA makes a distinction between a contract (which has agency stipulations on activities) and a grant (where the researcher has control over the planning and work activities). In most circumstances, the former is preferable.

If this option is chosen, a payment schedule should be included in the proposal. The consultant will incur expenses during the course of the project. At the very least, (s)he must pay for supplies and personnel. To leave the consultant without any funds for this purpose would be unrealistic. However, to make payment without any work products means that there will be no fiscal controls on the quality of the consultant's activities. Therefore, a procedure should be devised for payment of the consultant at various points in the project. This might involve payment of actual expenses only (e.g., supplies and personnel); or it might involve paying the consultant a percentage of the total contract at various time periods, based on work products. 29/

SOURCES OF EVALUATION FUNDS

Sources of evaluation funds described in this section include: State Planning Agencies, Federal agencies, foundations, and local government. The summary is a description of the factors which must be taken into account when dealing with those particular sources.

The most fertile source of funds for evaluation purposes of the local jurisdiction is the State Planning Agency which has been set up by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA). The proposed reorganization of LEAA "may" result in some changes in the structure of the State Planning Agency and LEAA's support of evaluation. State Planning Agencies operate under a number of names such as: SPA, Governor's Crime Commission, and Law Enforcement Planning Agency. The State Planning Agency may provide funds for either an outside consultant or a staff member of the agency to conduct the evaluation. An examination of the state plan will offer insights into the amount of funds available. State Planning Agencies normally operate on a funding cycle, so funds cannot be expected for at least a year after application. Often the State Planning Agency requires an evaluation component if they fund a particular agency. State Planning Agencies may fund evaluations ranging from \$7,000 to \$50,000 depending on the size of the evaluation and their own inclination. 30/ The size of the award will be much larger in states with very large urban communities and complex criminal justice systems and considerably lower in rural states.

Evaluation funds may be provided by the local jurisdiction. However, municipal and county governments are not usually inclined towards funding a research or evaluation project, with the exception of the provision of matching funds for those projects funded by external sources. Local governments generally prefer to set up their own policy analysis units which are responsible to the local government rather than to the agency being evaluated. Such policy-analysis units cannot be expected to carry on extensive evaluations of pretrial agencies, but they can be useful sources of advice when the pretrial agency is executing an evaluation.

29/ For example, if the contract is for a one-year study, then 25 percent of the total contract could be paid every three months, minus a retention fee (usually 10 percent). The retention fee is paid at the satisfactory completion of the total project. Another possibility is the payment of percentages of the total fee as various work products are completed. However, the problem with this option is that the consultant will incur greater costs at the beginning of data gathering. An initial payment may have to be larger once the consultant has demonstrated that the data gathering has taken place.

30/ Although State Planning Agencies provide some large amounts, most continue to be in the \$12,000 to \$15,000 range.

Foundations may also fund small research projects with a public policy focus. However, foundations seldom are fertile sources for evaluation funds. Personal contact with members of the board of directors of the foundation and a direct appearance is helpful and may be required. Unless the budget of the proposed evaluation is very small or other funding sources are unavailable, it is not advisable to invest time in trying to obtain foundation funding. In addition, foundations generally feel that they should not fund projects for which governmental funding is normally available.

Federal agencies also provide research funds. ^{31/} However, Federal agencies do not provide research and evaluation monies to aid the locality in management or decision making (though this may be one by-product of the study). Rather, they may be interested in: theoretical concerns affecting human behavior; policy considerations that have nationwide implications; and studies that help determine if innovative practices have an impact on defendants. The administrator who hopes to obtain federal funds must use a far different funding strategy than with other funding sources. Specific types of proposals which Federal agencies tend to view favorably include those which:

- Reflect programs that are controversial, innovative or have wide application. ^{32/}
- Use either a highly innovative or a rigorous methodology. ^{33/}
- Employ a researcher with credibility based on reputation, knowledge, specialized skills, or objectivity.
- Examine programs or methods with a potential for widespread utilization or replication.

Another means of obtaining assistance from Federal agencies is through those consultants who have already been awarded national contracts to study the kinds of topics described above. The special requirements of these studies may mean

^{31/} Federal agencies include the following: The LEAA and its research arm the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (NILE), the National Institute of Corrections (NIC), the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), Department of Labor (DOL), Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), and the National Science Foundation (NSF). There are numerous sources of information on Federal agencies. Each of the agencies alluded to has a bidder's list for which a researcher and/or program is eligible. There are national publications, such as the Commerce Business Daily, which regularly announce RFP's, awards, and contractors. Newsletters in various fields make announcements about sources of funds. These include the Criminal Justice Newsletter, The Pretrial Reporter, and the NILE Research Bulletin. For a more extensive discussion of this topic see, Fitzgerald, Money '78.

^{32/} The wider the nature of the program and the more extensive its effect on the criminal justice system, the greater the chance that it may receive funding for an evaluation. An example of this is a new statewide program in pretrial release or pretrial diversion. If the project has an innovative practice (such as restitution in a diversion program) or if there is a great deal of controversy as to whether the type of program is effective (such as the controversy over the impact of diversion), an evaluation project will have a better chance of being funded.

^{33/} If the method being used to obtain the data is highly innovative, then the evaluation project may have a much higher chance of being funded. For example, the project may want to do a point scale validation, which by itself may not be funded. However, if the point scale validation is put in the context of testing various statistical methods, it may be funded by the national source. The proposal should be framed in terms of a method which is rigorous. As an example, quasi-experimental designs are the least which will be accepted, but experimental designs would be especially welcome by these funding sources.

that pretrial agencies can obtain effective and useful evaluations without cost. 34/ Since such a study is attempting to answer national questions and produce a broad analysis, the program administrator may have to negotiate with the consultant to obtain the specific information needed by the pretrial agency. 35/

CHECKLIST FOR
STEP 3

- ☐ The working paper prepared in step 2 is the basis for the proposal.
- ☐ A proposal is based on the following criteria:
 - ☐ Content issues
 - ☐ Tenor of the proposal
 - ☐ Mechanics
 - ☐ External Sources
- ☐ The application has standard questions which must be addressed.
- ☐ Construction of the budget includes the following concerns:
 - ☐ Specific cost.
 - ☐ Ways to lower the budget, if necessary, without compromising the integrity of the study.
 - ☐ Working closely with funding sources.
- ☐ A variety of funding sources are available, each requiring different strategies.
 - ☐ State Planning Agencies will be most likely to fund an evaluation.
 - ☐ Federal agencies often fund research projects which will provide local services.
 - ☐ The local jurisdiction and foundations are far less apt to fund an evaluation.

34/ There are numerous examples of these national studies: On-site visits can provide management and evaluation information for the local community and provide a comparison between the local program and programs in other jurisdictions. Extensive data gathering can prove to be the basis of a sophisticated evaluation. Many times contractors are asked to study the same community in a variety of different projects to maximize the amount of knowledge and information gained from that particular jurisdiction. Therefore, an extensive profile of the community can be obtained from the number of studies. There are numerous special programs that provide funds for evaluative type of activities. An example is the jail overcrowding problem. The jail overcrowding project includes funds for planning and implementing a data base which can be used to answer evaluation-type questions.

35/ There are a number of techniques which can be employed to obtain this assistance. The contractor may be asked to design and implement a management information system. If information is being gathered for a more general predictor study, the contractor should develop a point scale validation with local implications. Even though a more general report will be prepared for national dissemination, the national contractor might agree to prepare a special report which could be used by the local jurisdiction. The national contractor might also be willing to return to the community to speak to decision makers on the findings.

STEP 4 PREPARING THE RFP

INTRODUCTION

The RFP (Request for Proposal) is normally used to solicit bids from consultants for a research or evaluation project. ^{36/} It sets forth the specifications for the project, including expectations, limitations, schedule, and work products. The RFP is prepared from both the earlier working paper (Step 2) and the proposal (Step 3). Though the RFP is normally used to solicit a funded researcher, it is equally applicable to other types of researchers (e.g., volunteers, students, in-house unit). Even when no funds are provided to the researcher, the RFP or contract can explicitly define the relationships and expectations between researcher and administrator.

The RFP is a meaningful standard against which the agency may gauge the progress and quality of the final report. This has led one author to describe it as the most important item in the evaluation process: "It is often possible to predict the ultimate success of an evaluation by reading the RFP - before the contractor is selected and without any other knowledge of the program." ^{37/}

If the program administrator follows the prior steps, the RFP will be prepared as part of this process. The administrator will be knowledgeable about evaluation and able to explicitly state his/her needs. The administrator who is unwilling to go through these steps would do well to consider employing a consultant to write the RFP. This could be either a researcher or a program official who is familiar with research considerations. One day of consulting time could be used to examine the overall needs of the program. Two additional days of consulting could be given to the actual preparation of an RFP for the program. For the cost of three days consulting fees, plane and hotel costs, the program will have developed an RFP for a more successful evaluation project.

In addition, there are national and state resource centers, technical assistance units, and clearinghouses which can provide assistance in preparing an RFP without cost. ^{38/} This may involve on-site activities, critiques of RFP's and provision of source materials. These organizations will also provide advice for the duration of the study.

^{36/} Contractor and consultant will be used interchangeably in this section.

^{37/} Weidman, Donald, "Writing a Better RFP", Public Administration Review, XXXVII, September, 1977, p.714. There are a number of reasons for this statement: A good RFP is a culmination of the previous steps. Since a great deal of thought has already been given to the study, little is left to chance. A good RFP also requires that an evaluator use proper methodology (no matter how difficult) and produce management-oriented documents. Evaluators can take a "weak" RFP and complete the requirements of the contract with relatively little effort. Many a contractor uses a weak RFP to justify issuing only a "preliminary report", or to suggest having a second study commissioned. An explicit RFP provides criteria which can be used to withhold payment from contractors who have not provided a satisfactory evaluation. This knowledge can encourage more effective performance by the contractor.

^{38/} For example, the Pretrial Services Resource Center provides this assistance when pretrial topics are involved. The Criminal Justice Training Centers provide assistance for those who have participated in the evaluation workshops.

HINTS FOR AN RFP 39/

This section offers 18 hints for producing an effective RFP. The reader should remember that these are a culmination of the prior steps in this bulletin.

Hint 1-Explicitly state the questions to be examined. It is not enough to request that an evaluation be performed to show whether the agency is effective. There are many possible ways to examine this question. Many methods are available, ranging in level of rigor and acceptability. Many different outcomes can be used, including some which are of only passing interest to the program. In the absence of specific cues, the researcher will have the flexibility to examine those questions which are of interest to him/her, rather than those which are important to the agency.

Step 2 of this bulletin provides a method by which the administrator can explicitly define the questions to be examined. This analytical structure includes goal specification, problem, assumptions, evaluation type, design and outcome. A separate chart should be prepared for each question. If this structure is employed in the RFP the researcher will be given accurate and understandable information on the conduct of the study.

Hint 2-Keep the problems few in number and establish priorities. 40/

A study cannot do a good job of answering more than two or three major questions. Information is not free. If a large number of questions are to be examined, then more funds must be provided. If not, lower quality analysis may result or the evaluator must use his own funds to answer the additional questions. Even if a small number of questions are identified, fiscal and time constraints may preclude examining all of the questions. Setting a priority on the questions will mean that the most important problems will be examined. The most effort and most rigorous methods will also be applied by the researcher to the higher priority items.

Hint 3-Be careful when several kinds of studies are being contemplated. Some argue that if various studies are required, different teams ought to be funded for that purpose. 41/ According to this view, the skills required for management evaluation as opposed to an impact assessment are considerably different.

Many agencies do not have funds to undertake two or three separate projects. As a result, they may try to integrate the numerous questions and data gathering activities. For example,

39/ The format in this section was first used by Weidman, "Writing a Better RFP", although this bulletin has added numerous suggestions and differs from Weidman on a few key points.

40/ Weidman, "Writing a Better RFP", p.716.

41/ Ibid.

programs often want both an impact assessment and a cost evaluation. Viewed as different enterprises, these require different levels of expertise. However, there are areas where the two types of evaluation overlap. A cost evaluation must have an impact evaluation using a research design to determine what would happen to agency clients if the program were not in existence. ^{42/} It could be most useful to have the two studies performed simultaneously.

This illustrates the concept of "sunk costs" in a research project. Sunk costs include learning about the particular agency, developing familiarity with court records, and gathering data which could be valuable for other purposes. In order to take maximum advantage of sunk costs (not to repeat them in a new project with a new study team), combining a number of different studies into one can be a useful approach. Despite this suggestion, the comingling of various studies does have dangers. Procedures should be stated to make each aspect of the study a separate report and to maximize the quality of each aspect of the study. ^{43/}

Hint 4-Be explicit about important constraints. ^{44/} Limitations in the analysis or access to the data should be clearly stated. There are a number of problems which will affect both the validity of the study and the costs incurred by consultants. The researcher may have to gather rearrest data, but will not be allowed direct access to police department records. (S)he may not be given direct access to clients, judges, and district attorneys. The use of experimental design may be the best way to evaluate the impact of the program on the client, but the administrator may object to experimental design because of legal or ethical considerations.

Hint 5-Point out major data gathering difficulties and availability. Agency, court, and law enforcement records are often lacking in quality, and can be misleading and incomplete. Researchers often have to work with handwritten dockets which have illegible handwriting making the gathering of information difficult. These problems should be pointed out in the RFP. The additional time required to gather and verify this data should be estimated.

^{42/} For a discussion of cost evaluation see: Kirby, Michael P., and Corum, David, "Cost Effectiveness Analysis: A Case Study", The Bellringer, III, November 1977, pp.6-8; and Pryor, Donald, et. al., Pretrial Diversion Program in Monroe County, New York: An Evaluation, Rochester, New York: Center for Governmental Research, Inc., 1977.

^{43/} There should be separate reports for each study. The evaluator should use a consultant (or an additional person on the study team) to supplement those areas with which he is unfamiliar. The various studies should be approached systematically. The project should not become so large and grandiose that it cannot be completed.

^{44/} Weidman, "Writing a Better RFP", p.714.

Hint 6-Ask for the use of standard evaluation procedures. ^{45/} RFP's often curb the use of tested methods and encourage greater creativity by a contractor. Not only is the reliability of such methods questionable, but practitioners and evaluators alike will have more difficulty interpreting the results obtained by new methodologies. It is unfortunate that the use of "new methodologies" often involves the use of more complex statistical techniques (whose value is unknown or controversial).

The proposed contractor should be allowed to depart from generally used methods only when standard methods are clearly inappropriate. The justification for such a change should be understandable and convincing to the administrator. The RFP should note that changes will not be readily accepted and will require substantial explanation and documentation.

Hint 7-Keep the analysis simple. Evaluations are often a "mish-mash" of complex statistical analysis. Given the audience for which the evaluation is intended, this ought to be avoided. For example, the RFP should indicate that the data will be presented in a readable form. The contractor should be expected to prepare a small number of simple tables. Other forms of display such as pie charts and bar graphs should be encouraged. Cross-tabulation tables should be the most complex form of analysis allowed. ^{46/} Too often, evaluators use complex statistical analysis under the guise of a "high level of sophistication". These techniques cannot be understood by most people who make decisions about a project. Additionally, complex analysis does not allow the administrator to check the figures and thus understand how they were derived.

Hint 8-Specify and require comparison. Step 2 indicates that for many questions, experimental or quasi-experimental design is required. ^{47/} Without design considerations, many studies are of little value. In addition, when doing quasi-experimental design, the comparison group must be validated for equivalence. The RFP should clearly state that payment will not be made unless a properly drawn comparison or control group has been selected.

Hint 9-Use attitudinal data with care. A number of studies have purported to examine the clients of a release or diversion agency through an interview. This procedure should be discouraged, or at least the limitations should be recognized. Defendants are a highly mobile group who are relatively difficult to locate after their release from a program. If client interviews are used, it

^{45/} Ibid, p.715.

^{46/} Cross tabulation tables describe the relationship between two variables or types of information (e.g., age and rearrest).

^{47/} Step 2 discusses research design in greater depth. Research design involves comparing agency clients with another group. If the two groups are selected by random procedures, the study uses experimental design and the second group is called a control group. If the two groups are selected by non-random (paper and pencil) procedures, the study is using quasi-experimental design and the second group is called a comparison group.

should be expected that there will be a high percentage of defendants refusing to respond to either an interviewer or a mail questionnaire. In other instances defendants may distort their opinions fearing further criminal prosecution.

Other studies have attributed great reliability to statements made by decision makers, judges, and program personnel. Conclusions on the effectiveness of administrative practices cannot be made solely on the basis of such interviews. The conventional wisdom of actors in the criminal justice system can be misleading. Such opinions may be defined by a "halo" effect where respondents see their actions from a very positive perspective. Attitudinal data should only supplement objective data and the evaluator's observations.

Hint 10-Require a clear separation between the results of the analysis and the evaluator's judgement and intuition. There is no such thing as an "objective opinion". 48/ Attempts to discredit the evaluation with decision makers will be successful when the evaluator's opinion becomes intertwined with the data. The RFP should clearly state that these aspects of the report will be separated. The objectivity of the evaluator should not only be welcomed, but it should also be encouraged. Many fine studies have been tainted because the author became an avid supporter of the agency. This is not to suggest that the evaluator should refuse to make judgements. The evaluator was partially chosen because (s)he was removed enough from the project to make sound judgements.

Hint 11-Identify expected work products. All of the work products should be explicitly described. If it means the production of a pamphlet or a report, this should be stated. On the other hand, it may involve convincing decision makers about the effectiveness of the program. These accomplishments should be stated in empirical terms. If the goal is to communicate research findings to decision makers, this can be stated in quantitative terms (e.g., meet with City Council Budget Committee three times, meet with county budget officials twice, and give three interviews on television).

Hint 12-Make the prospective contractor provide guarantees on confidentiality. The confidentiality issue is important to administrators and researchers alike because of state and Federal legislation. Information will be made available to the researcher which includes client names and identifiers. The researcher should provide an indication in his/her response to the RFP on how the confidentiality of defendants will be maintained. This should involve assurance for both the research director and his employees. Provisions for either the

48/ Weidman, "Writing a Better RFP", p.716.

destruction of the data or elimination of all identifiers at the earliest time should be discussed. Safeguards for the computer-stored data should also be provided. 49/

However, the demands for confidentiality should not be so great so as to "cripple" the evaluation project. 50/ If, for example, the researcher is told that names or other identifiers will not be available, then information cannot be gathered from other sources (e.g., rearrest information), nor can the accuracy of the agency data be verified.

Hint 13-Have the evaluator demonstrate his/her competence.

Evaluators are frequently asked to perform tasks for which they do not have the necessary competence or required experience. It would be inappropriate to ask an anthropologist who is familiar with qualitative analysis to do an impact evaluation or to ask an educational evaluator to conduct a study of a criminal justice agency. The less background or experience the evaluator has in either technique or subject matter, the more time the program administrator will have to spend teaching him/her about the specific evaluation type, the criminal justice system, and court records.

If an evaluator from the local community is used, a specialist in evaluating pretrial agencies using the methods prescribed above may not be available. Therefore, the response to the RFP should be written in such a way that the evaluator can indicate why (s)he will be able to handle the procedures with which (s)he is not familiar. Experience can be an important requisite. The evaluator who has worked with court records and has a track record of doing previous evaluations, can be of great value to the agency. Technical competence may not be quite as important as an understanding of the criminal justice system.

The RFP should state that the evaluator is expected to provide references and copies of prior work. If the evaluator does not have extensive prior work, examples of his/her writing for other purposes should be examined. Some indication should be sought that the inexperienced evaluator understands policy issues.

Hint 14-Keep the publication of the report with the agency. Funds should be allocated so the agency can publish the report itself. The agency may have access through the county or city to inexpensive printing facilities. This procedure provides the

49/ Performance Standards and Goals in Pretrial Diversion, p.103-116. National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, Criminal Justice Research and Development, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976, pp.38-43.

50/ This statement reveals the classic conflict between protection of the defendant's privacy and society's right to accountability from public programs.

agency with the ability to publish those parts of the report which it finds to be most valuable. (The program may want to publish a short summary document.) Other parts can be available in a smaller number of photocopies, making mass distribution of more valuable aspects of the study possible. If the report is of unsatisfactory quality, this enables the project to rewrite the document, which would not be possible were it published on a massive scale. However, the basic objectivity of the report should not be tampered with by ordering changes in data and interpretation.

Hint 15-Curb the tendency of contractors to suggest extensive analysis and subsequent studies to gain another contract. Monies for a study are sometimes spent to suggest why the study cannot be executed with the funds available. More extensive analysis and methodologies are proposed to be implemented at a later time with additional study. The RFP should state explicitly that the contractor is expected to conduct the study as described.

Hint 16-State explicitly what is to be included in the proposal from the consultant. The agency should be explicit in what it expects from the proposed contractors in the response. The information which is required should be relatively brief and easy to extract. If it is too difficult to prepare a response to the RFP, many consultants will not respond because they have other time constraints. These constraints are more important with smaller evaluation contracts because the contractor cannot expect a large financial gain.

The items that might be included in the proposal should be described. The length of presentation for each topic should also be stated (e.g., no more than two pages on qualifications). In addition, the proposed contractors should not have to guess the amount of money which is available. The contractors should be encouraged to bid the maximum amount, unless there are county or city guidelines to the contrary.

Hint 17-Consider using a fixed cost contract. The RFP should require a fixed cost contract from which the consultant pays all the expenses out of the fee. This saves time for the agency since it does not have to keep detailed expenditure records on hourly wages paid, number of pencils used, etc. It also precludes the anxiety of justifying specific expenditures to an auditor. However, the agency is still responsible for the proper conduct of the study. 51/

Hint 18-Describe the penalty for non-performance of the contract. The best way to ensure appropriate work products from the researcher is to be willing to withhold payment or make partial payments. In order to be legally binding, the criteria for performance must be explicit (see hints 1 through 16) and the

51/ See Step 5, "Budget", for a more extensive discussion of this point.

penalties must be described. A provision should also be made for cancellation at any time for unsatisfactory performance. An explicit schedule of when work products are due can be an effective criterion to define non-compliance. The administrator should consult an attorney to create provisions which are legally enforceable.

Not only should the RFP indicate the penalties, but it should indicate that the administrator will enforce the procedures if satisfactory products are not provided. The payment to the evaluator should be based on performance and work products and not on documentation of expenditures for the evaluation. This accountability is necessary if evaluation is to substantially improve.

CHECKLIST FOR
STEP 4

- ☐ An RFP should be prepared since it is a strong predictor of the quality of the final study.
- ☐ An RFP can be prepared by the administrator using the prior three steps or through the use of a consultant.
- ☐ The following topics are addressed in an RFP:
 - ☐ Questions to be examined
 - ☐ Kind of studies contemplated
 - ☐ Constraints
 - ☐ Data gathering problems
 - ☐ Standard evaluation methodologies
 - ☐ Simple analysis
 - ☐ Specific design
 - ☐ Careful use of attitudinal data
 - ☐ Separation of analysis and judgement
 - ☐ Confidentiality
 - ☐ Sources of accomplishment
 - ☐ Competence of evaluator
 - ☐ Publication of report
 - ☐ Completion of contract
 - ☐ Content of proposal
 - ☐ Type of contract
 - ☐ Non-compliance

STEP 5 SELECTING A RESEARCHER

INTRODUCTION

This section will discuss topics related to the selection of a researcher. This includes sending the RFP to a broad range of evaluators so that there is sufficient choice in selection. Once the responses are received, the administrator should develop explicit criteria that will be used to select the researcher for the evaluation project. Finally, the administrator should realize that researchers come from a variety of organizational backgrounds, each of which has its advantages and disadvantages. Each of these organization types will be discussed to provide an understanding of the procedures that will have to be implemented to maximize the strengths of each type.

WHERE TO SEND THE RFP

One of the more frustrating aspects of selecting a researcher is to not have anyone to choose from. An administrator is not able to find anyone suited to the particular project in the community and selection of an appropriate researcher from outside the community or state may not be possible because of the greater costs involved or local requirements. The problem of finding researchers to respond can be solved by using the procedures described below. To maximize the number of researchers responding, the difficulties of writing the document must be minimized.

There are many sources which can provide information of evaluators in the community. These include:

- The local criminal justice planning agency.
- The research specialist at the State Planning Agency.
- Other administrators whose agencies were evaluated.
- The grants officer at the local university.
- Telephone book - yellow pages.
- The local office of the Small Business Administration.
- Newspaper reporters
- The city or county budget office.
- Directories of organizations that do policy research. 52/

52/ These are available from college or public libraries.

Based on this search of materials, the RFP should be sent to a broad range of persons. Although not everyone will respond, some will pass the document to colleagues and friends interested in the topic. Among the persons who should receive the document are:

- Local evaluators identified by the above procedure.
- Departments in the local universities who might have some interest in the topic: Political Science; Public Administration; Public Affairs; Criminal Justice; Sociology; Psychology; Social Work; Economics; Education; Urban Affairs; etc.
- National resource centers and clearinghouses.
- Universities in adjacent communities.
- Advertisement in the local legal newspaper.
- Announced as newspaper article in local newspaper.

SELECTION CRITERIA

This section discusses the criteria used in selecting a researcher. The criteria are defined on the basis of quality of response to the RFP, prior work, and the interview.

The act of selecting a researcher must be understood in the context of the earlier discussion, e.g., the administrator chooses the researcher to execute, not to plan the evaluation. Decisions are made by administrators and public officials. The job of the evaluator is to provide high quality data and carefully formulated recommendations based on the research format first identified in Step 2. The administrator has already provided a precise standard of his/her expectations in the RFP. It is up to the administrator to insist upon the execution of the RFP as written. The administrator must be willing to enforce the contract, even if it means that an evaluator will not be paid for unfinished work. Finally, the administrator should have some understanding of the criteria (s)he will use in selecting a researcher. This requires the preparation of a check list based on the elements discussed below.

The quality of the response to the RFP can be used as one of the major criteria in selection of an evaluator, or to narrow the list of potential evaluators who would be examined more intensively. The criteria which can be used to judge the response to a RFP include:

- The knowledge of research, criminal justice, and data gathering issues.
- The amount of thought and insight evident in the proposal.
- The completeness of the proposal in discussing the important issues. An unwillingness to respond to the information requested may portend a later unwillingness to complete the research as requested.

- Prior work experience is an indication of familiarity with the activities in the upcoming evaluation. However, prior experience should not be considered without an assessment of the quality of the work.
- Ability to communicate to the administrator, as evidenced by the writing style of the response.
- The manner in which the response describes research issues and procedures. The willingness and ability of the researcher to communicate will be most evident when highly technical issues are addressed.
- The way in which the researcher intends to study those procedures or methods with which (s)he is not directly familiar.

The above describes ways of judging the researcher's competence in order to make some initial judgements about whether to further examine credentials. However, the RFP should state that the response is limited to a particular number of pages. The response should never be judged on length.

Prior work should be used as a basis for making a decision on the particular researcher. This means that the administrator must contact the various agencies that have used a particular researcher. The following methods should help in assessing the experience offered by the researcher:

- The general reputation of the researcher should be discussed with users. Not only should research ability be discussed, but the contribution to research utilization is important.
- The ability of the researcher to complete the study for the amount agreed upon in previous contracts is important. If additional work was requested by the agency, a reasonable additional fee should have been negotiated.
- Follow-up services, especially when related to the study, are crucial. Some researchers may offer follow-up services without additional cost. 53/
- The extent to which the general staff was competent and easy to work with is crucial. This is especially important in the case of data gathering staff that spends considerable time with the agency.
- Was the extent of work completed in keeping with the researcher's contractual obligations?

53/ Although this seems unrealistic, many researchers, especially those in small firms or universities, will provide follow-up at no or small cost to the agency. This is especially true of researchers who are attempting to "make a name for themselves" or are using an agency contact for other purposes (e.g., sources of internships).

- What was the quality of the final report? Was the work of practical value to the agency?
- Did the researcher meet deadlines?
- Did the researcher adroitly manage his/her staff?

Once the response to the RFP and the prior work have been examined, the administrator should schedule interviews with the two or three strongest candidates. The interview can be used to:

- Discuss key points not covered adequately in the proposal.
- Discuss some of the key criteria presented above under response to the RFP.
- Judge whether the researcher can verbally communicate to the administrator or selection committee. The researcher should be presented with issues which require spontaneous response, rather than a rehash of the response to the proposal.
- Describe the participation of particular evaluation staff. Often, the contract is awarded because of the special expertise of a staff member. If this is the case, his/her participation should be explicitly discussed and entered as a clause in the contract.
- Any final questions about cost (form of payment, retention fees, and overhead) need to be thoroughly reviewed.

TYPES OF RESEARCHERS

In most situations several types of researchers are available to the administrator. Each system brings its own advantages and disadvantages. These options include the in-house unit, private firm, university researchers, and students.

No study exists which demonstrates that one form of researcher is superior to another. However, there are more than subtle differences in the style and performance of the different types. This section will attempt to define these differences, based on the literature that exists and personal observations of the author. Certainly, there are numerous exceptions to the trends described below. Rather than excluding anyone based on the description below, the administrator awarding an evaluation contract should be aware of possible problems which could be created by employing a particular type of evaluator. Procedures can be developed to limit the more problematic characteristics.

The In-house Research Unit uses the agency's staff for conducting research. Not only is this unit involved in research and evaluation, but it may also be in charge of statistical reporting and the general computer operations of the

agency. This unit is probably less involved in actual evaluation and more in monitoring, statistical reporting, and specialized research (mini-studies).^{54/}

The in-house research unit is not only an often-used alternative in the criminal justice field, but is highly regarded for the quality of its work. A recent study of the utilization of research indicated that in-house research units were top ranked by consumers. ^{55/} Among the advantages of the in-house research unit are the following:

- The in-house staff is familiar with the activities and operations of the agency so that a socialization process is not necessary before beginning a project.
- Since information about the program is already being collected, the cost of additional research will be relatively small. There is a greater efficiency since data can be simultaneously gathered for a number of projects.
- Utilization may be more apt to occur since the researcher and program administrator have day-to-day contact.
- The researcher is a staff member rather than an outsider. There can be greater contact and trust in working with the staff to create more usable research.
- Since the in-house staff may supervise the computer system of the agency, data from the management information system can be easily adapted to research purposes.
- There is greater continuity since the researcher is at the project for a lengthy period of time. ^{56/}

As with any form of research, the in-house unit has a number of problems. These include:

- The credibility of in-house research units in terms of objective results is more apt to be questioned. The potential for producing only favorable results is viewed by many as a problem since the researcher is a member of that organization.

^{54/} There are three major types of in-house research units: large in-house units that may also have other data-based activities (e.g., New York City Criminal Justice Agency); a small agency that occasionally directs staff time into research; and statewide units (Florida diversion and Kentucky release systems).

^{55/} Adams, Stuart, "Impacting Criminal Justice Through Research", University of Cincinnati Law Review, 45, 1976.

^{56/} As an example, the Pretrial Services Agency was able to conduct an experimental study of the impact of supervision on defendant outcomes. Though the researcher had to wait two years for the cases to be disposed, this was not a problem because he remained on staff working on other research and data-based projects.

- Too often in-house research staffs gather immense amounts of data at great cost to the organization. If data gathering procedures are not thought through, they will not be cost-effective. If the line staff is required to gather the data, this may also unnecessarily intrude into their day-to-day activities with defendants.
- The in-house staff may not have the necessary continuity if it is disbanded when a Federal grant expires. Cities and counties appear to be reluctant to include a research staff position when providing the permanent funding for a program.
- Because in-house staff are oriented toward the management of an agency, their reports, often of an internal nature, are less elegant and complete. If the consumer is a program director, nothing more than a memorandum is usually provided. The description of the findings may only take place in a staff meeting. This may preclude the development of documents for external consumers.
- If staff members are civil service employees, removal for low quality work may be difficult.
- Many problems result from the in-house research staff's relationship to the organization. It can prove very difficult to inform agency administrators of problems in the organization. And, if part of the research involves rating the line staff, a great deal of discomfort may occur in interpersonal relationships between researcher and staff members.

The private consulting firm offers another type of researcher. The private consulting firm's staff can range from one person who is "moonlighting" from his/her regular job to a very large professional organization with dozens of employees. Consulting firms can be either not-for-profit or profit making concerns. 57/

There are a number of advantages to the private consulting firms:

- Normally, they contain a number of employees with programmatic and methodological sophistication.
- The private consultant has the flexibility to subcontract more difficult aspects of the evaluation. This firm can act as a broker, and thus search for and select the best researchers in the field.

57/ In the latter case the firm operates as a private business, extracting profits from the contracts. The profit margin may mean that it may have to charge higher fees. The not-for-profit organization operates under more stringent regulations, and is not allowed to distribute profits among owners or shareholders. Overhead funds may be used to embellish the organization (purchase a computer, provide better working facilities) and provide benefits (health, life insurance) for the employees.

- Private consultants do their work in a businesslike fashion and are more apt than other types of researchers to complete the project on schedule.
- Private consultants, especially accounting firms, have credibility with local decision makers, especially local legislators who themselves are businessmen.

Among the disadvantages of the private consultant are the following:

- Once a contract is completed, the experience and knowledge gained by the consultant is only available through further contracting.
- Consulting firms often conduct "boiler plate" evaluations, where they use the same format for every study. This provides a document, which may not be especially suited for the needs of the client.
- The private firm may be susceptible to a conflict of interest when subsequent evaluation monies are to be made available.
- The private consultant may have a jargon that is complex and difficult to understand.

University professors are a major source as evaluators of the pretrial release and diversion agencies. They represent a variety of disciplines including sociology, psychology, political science, criminal justice, public administration, public affairs, and even in some cases anthropology and economics. There are three types of consultants with an academic background: the "individual", the research institute, and the consulting firm.

Advantages in using a university professor as a consultant include the following:

- The university professor may have fewer pressures in terms of conflict of interest. The university is his/her source of employment and objective research is the major value of the university.
- University researchers are usually skilled in methodological techniques such as statistical analysis, research design, and data gathering.
- Universities contain computer systems and "statistical packages" especially developed for the analysis of data.
- Since the university professor receives a salary from that institution, (s)he can do a research project at a much lower fee than the private firm or the in-house research unit. Some professors may even do a project gratis for the

exposure or for access to the data. Public universities proclaim a public commitment and may be willing to undertake research and evaluation projects without charge or at a very low cost.

- University instructors are more apt to continue working with a project after the completion of the contract. This is especially true since the professor may continue to use the data for either classes or for journal articles.
- Benefits other than the research project may accrue as a result of using the university. A good relationship with the faculty members may mean that the agency can later gain access to student research projects and internships.

Despite numerous advantages to the use of university professors, there is not widespread admiration of their work products. According to a recent survey, consumers have a relatively low opinion of university professors. 58/ Some of the disadvantages of contracting with university professors are:

- Some university professors find it difficult to communicate to real-world decision makers. They may use a tortured academic jargon and rely on highly sophisticated statistical techniques. Unfortunately, too many evaluation reports by academicians are long and contain extraneous data.
- University researchers are often described as paying little attention to the needs of the organization.
- University researchers may turn the evaluation research into their own academic research interest. Far too often a research project is more attuned toward gathering data for a journal article than "informing" decision makers.
- Academic researchers are not aware of the time and action constraints under which the administrator operates.

University students are a fourth source of research assistance. Students trained in a variety of academic disciplines can be useful sources of research and evaluation assistance. Students are available at both the graduate and undergraduate level, with the former having more credibility and advanced training. Students come to the evaluation through an internship, a research project in a course, master's thesis or honors paper, or as volunteers after academic graduation or during the summer.

There are a number of advantages to using students:

- They serve without cost.
- Students tend to be interested, enthusiastic, and committed to the agency with which they work.

58/ Adams, "Impacting Criminal Justice Through Research".

- Not only do students have a knowledge about the techniques of evaluation, but they have access to professors who can guide them and provide advice throughout the project.
- If a masters thesis, dissertation, or honors project is being used, the amount of time spent on the project can be as long as a year.
- The use of students means that computer time and other resources may be available without cost.
- In addition to the research, using a student opens up other internship possibilities for a program which is short of staff.

Among the disadvantages of using students are the following:

- Continuity is probably the biggest problem with using students since projects may not be completed. Student activities cease at the end of the academic term. Since reports are the last element of a project, they may be done haphazardly.
- The work of students tends to be of lower quality than the other sources of assistance. This requires more supervision from the administrator in monitoring the work of students.
- Students have not had their academic learning tempered by practical experience.
- Students may have problems in writing and organizing their ideas.
- A research or evaluation project done by students is apt to have less credibility with decision makers. For the same reason a research project by students may not be readily used and accepted by the agency itself. The lack of stature means that student suggestions may not be heeded.
- Because the student is not paid for the work, administrators have less control in obtaining the final work products.

The use of students is an attractive option for many programs because of the cost factor. A number of procedures can help improve the quality of student research and evaluation. These include developing schedules, working with professors, focusing research projects, giving students access to data and immersing the student in the agency. These are discussed at length in Appendix III.

CHECKLIST FOR
STEP 5

- ☐ The criteria for selecting a researcher include:
 - ☐ Quality of response to the RFP
 - ☐ Prior work
 - ☐ Interviews
- ☐ The advantages and disadvantages of each type of researcher should be examined so the more problematic aspects can be eliminated. The types of researchers include the:
 - ☐ In-house unit
 - ☐ Private consultant
 - ☐ University professor
 - ☐ Student
- ☐ If students are used, procedures must be developed to guarantee proper completion of the project.

STEP 6 WORKING WITH DECISION MAKERS AND STAFF

INTRODUCTION

Working with decision makers and staff, one of the most important and least recognized steps, takes place throughout the previous five steps. ^{59/} Decision makers should be prepared for the execution of the evaluation. An evaluation document is of little value unless it is utilized. This means that evaluation and decision making need to be amalgamized. Decision makers should be informed of the evaluation, involved in its preparation, and targeted as the readers and users of the results.

On the other hand, tension can easily develop between the researcher and the host agency. The staff may resent the presence of the researcher especially if it deters them from working with the clients. They may also resent the potentially negative and harmful effects of the evaluation. Procedures, however, can be used by the administrator to improve the relationship between staff and researcher.

WORKING WITH DECISION MAKERS

Key decision makers should be involved both early in the pre-evaluation period and during the conduct of the actual study. A broad range of decision makers might be implicated in the study, including:

- Court personnel. Judges, public defenders, defense bar, clerks, and prosecutors should be made aware of the nature of the study.
- Funding agencies (e.g., State Planning Agencies, County and City budget officials). It is important to determine the type of information that these decision makers require for making the most crucial decisions about the agency.
- Cooperating agencies. These include referral agencies such as employment, counseling, drug, and halfway houses.
- Law enforcement agencies. In addition to their arrest function, the police or sheriff's department often has charge of the city or county jail. Sheriffs' departments and local police departments may contain the records that are going to be needed to gather information about rearrest, recidivism and prior records. Contacts should be made so that law enforcement agencies are prepared for the data gathering staff.

^{59/} Step 6 is placed last not because of lack of importance but because it occurs throughout the earlier steps.

- The media, including local newspapers, radio and television. The administrator should hold discussions with reporters on the criminal justice "beat" to inform them that empirical data will be available. It would also improve utilization and involvement of the reporter if (s)he were asked whether there is information they might find helpful. 60/

The administrator should convey the nature of the project to various officials. There should be an attempt to solicit from the decision maker the type of information (s)he would find most useful. Decision makers can offer many useful insights (in common sense terms) on the information which needs to be obtained. The administrator must communicate to the decision maker a sense of excitement about the project. Every attempt should be made to get the decision maker to "buy into" not only the logic of the study but to utilization of the results.

In contacting decision makers, the administrator may want to consider asking them or their representatives to serve on an advisory committee. The advisory committee involves a group of decision makers who advise the program and evaluators about the conduct of the study. 61/ The advisory committee has four functions:

- Provides advice on the study.
- Involves key decision makers in the study for possible implementation of recommendations.
- Creates a group, possibly without a vested interest, which can guarantee the objectivity of the procedures.
- Creates a group to interpret the study to other decision makers. Not all decision makers have the time or inclination to read and assimilate a report. Further, they tend to be generally skeptical of reports prepared by "consultants". If one of the fellow colleagues describes and vouches for a study, they are more apt to accept its results.

In selecting the members of an advisory committee, the following criteria should be employed:

- Will the person attend the sessions on a regular basis?
- Does the person have an interest in the study results?
- Is the person important to the agency?
- Is there a mix of those with a data-based background and those who have more of a political focus?

60/ The media is not often referred to in the context of decision makers. Given the impact of media on local decisions and its communication of studies in a form to which decision makers respond, this designation is clearly appropriate. However, some would argue that prior involvement of the media creates so many problems that it should be avoided.

61/ An advisory committee functioned effectively in the evaluation of the Monroe County Diversion Program.

WORKING WITH STAFF

The staff should be informed that an evaluation will be undertaken as soon as Step 1 of the process begins. The value of the research should also be propagandized to the staff. Though some staff members may not understand the complete mechanics of an evaluation, they can appreciate it as a survival issue.

Not only should the staff be informed of the evaluation during Step 1, but they also ought to be involved in its planning throughout all of the steps. All the staff members, not just the administrator, should understand the analytical structure and technical issues of the evaluation. This will allow the administrator to solicit advice from staff members on both their problems and informational needs. The administrator should recognize that his/her needs and the remainder of the staff's will be greatly different. Staff members might also be asked to comment on the various documents generated (e.g., RFP and proposal). Such requests will give the staff a sense of participation and involvement in the evaluation.

If the evaluator wants some information, (s)he will have to supplement the meager amount of data which is usually contained in evaluation records. The evaluation staff may meet with resistance from the agency staff. A solution is to assist the agency in developing a comprehensive, though easy-to-implement, management information system which contains the necessary items. Many agency records are poorly conceived and difficult to complete. An evaluator who develops a record system requiring less effort will have gained the support of the staff.

There are often conflicts in data collection procedures. The evaluator may ask the program staff to fill out extensive forms about their clients. Even worse, the researcher may directly contact the client, thus breaking the "perceived" chain of trust and relationship between the staff member and the client. The solution to such difficulties is very simple. First, extensive data collection forms should not be filled out by staff members. Not only is this disruptive, but data gathering by program staff provides data of questionably validity. If extensive data needs to be collected, it should be done solely by the research staff. Staff members may not have the necessary commitment to the accurate and careful collection of the data. Staff members also have a vested interest in the results and could conceivably distort the information.

Second, the evaluator should have rapport with the staff members. This means some level of socializing with staff members, knowing them as individuals, and working with them side by side. Realization of the tensions and problems under which the staff member operates is absolutely crucial. Before beginning the evaluation of a pretrial release agency, as an example, the evaluator might consider spending some time working as an interviewer.

CHECKLIST FOR
STEP 6

- ☐ Key decision makers should be contacted about the possible conduct of a study.
- ☐ Key decision makers include:
 - ☐ Court personnel
 - ☐ Funding agencies
 - ☐ Cooperating agencies
 - ☐ Law enforcement agencies
 - ☐ Media
- ☐ An advisory board provides an effective mechanism for influencing decision makers.
- ☐ Procedures can be instituted to create a sense of staff participation in the evaluation.
- ☐ Potential conflicts between researchers and staff members should be carefully avoided.

SUMMARY

In this bulletin six steps are proposed to the administrator who wishes to conduct an evaluation. Each of these steps has been re-stated in the form of a checklist for easy guidance. Shortcuts have also been suggested for the administrator's involvement. An example is using a consultant to prepare an RFP or proposal, rather than basing it on the earlier working description. Using the consultant, especially one attuned to the considerations discussed in this bulletin, may produce a worthwhile RFP or proposal. It does, however, remove a learning experience which will make the administrator more attuned to possible utilization of research and evaluation. Not only is knowledge gained, but the administrator develops an emotional stake in the procedure and results.

Although this bulletin has described his/her role in the pre-evaluation, the administrator should recognize that there will be involvement beyond this point. The administrator will want to monitor the evaluation process, especially by assisting the evaluator in any data gathering problems. Since evaluators may find it difficult to meet deadlines, the administrator must set forth and monitor a timetable. And the administrator will want to react to the tentative findings produced by the evaluator. If an advisory committee is selected, the administrator should encourage meetings on a regular basis. The administrator will also be involved in the dissemination of the final study. This will involve choosing those parts of the study that are most appropriate for an external audience. Clearly, the administrator needs to be involved in the evaluation from start to finish.

One of the major problems with evaluation is its lack of a user orientation, although by definition evaluation is meant to inform management and decision makers. Too often evaluation is seen as overly methodological. It becomes a document that sits on a shelf and gets little use from anyone. It is hoped that this bulletin has contributed to alerting the administrator to methods where (s)he can both manage and utilize the evaluation. The evaluator is a small cog, albeit an important one, in the total evaluation process. If the evaluation is not methodologically proper and utilized, then the evaluator's role has been a hollow exercise meant only to collect a consulting fee.

APPENDIX I

REVIEW OF SPECIFIC ITEMS IN PROPOSAL

A. The Problem Statement:

- There should be a clear but brief statement of the problem to be examined.
 - As an example, a problem statement might indicate: The evaluation would examine the impact of a diversion program on the recidivism rates of clients. This impact evaluation would be based on a quasi-experimental design using a comparison group selected for one year prior to the program's inception.
 - A statement such as that contained in the example alerts the reviewer to the key aspect of the study. It is brief and clear, but highly descriptive.
 - The importance of the statement should be highlighted by a visual technique such as underlining and capitalizing.
 - The above statement should be in the first paragraph of the proposal.
 - The administrator will want to amplify on this basic problem statement with additional paragraphs.
- Justification: The author should indicate the rationale for the project.
 - Why was it developed?
 - How will it be used?
 - Does the administrator have an appreciation of good research practices?
 - Is the budgetary size and importance of the agency sufficient to justify outside funding of the evaluation?
 - Is the problem being studied precisely defined and can it be examined given the funds being requested?
 - Is documentation available through newspaper clippings, statistics, letters from the jurisdiction, consultants, and independent analyses recommending further study? The actual documents should be briefly described in this section, but should be physically placed in an appendix.
 - Why is this type of study (e.g., impact evaluation) and not another type to be conducted?

-Are there benefits to the funding agency from the conduct of the study?

-What benefits are there to the local jurisdiction and the criminal justice system?

-Are the limitations of the evaluation recognized?

B. Literature Review: This section describes the field, some of the research problems and questions, and some of the more important findings.

- The reviewers may not necessarily understand the pretrial field. Thus a two- to three-page review of the key events and developments of the field is important. It is not necessary to offer a comprehensive review. However, a short paragraph should describe four or five of the key publications in the field which the proposal reviewer might want to examine.
- The historical development of the agency should be described in the context of the above developments. The ways in which the pretrial agency is similar to or different from the trends should be briefly discussed.
- The empirical studies, which are applicable to the problem, should be discussed.

-Key pieces of literature should be presented and used to justify the need for a study. This section should show a) what is known about release or diversion; b) what are the methodological difficulties which have prevented the field from knowing more; c) are there studies in progress which overcome these problems?

- There are numerous works in both release and diversion which provide information on these topics.

C. Methodology: This section provides the analytical framework for the study.

- A summary statement (no more than a single paragraph) should show how the problem statement is related to the outcomes and research design. In essence this involves describing the logic from Step 2 (e.g., problem, assumptions, type of evaluation, design, and outcome). The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that the framework is really an integrated one.
- The outcome variables should be defined and operationalized.

-Using an example of an impact evaluation of diversion, the outcome to be examined could be recidivism. The aspects of recidivism could be defined as: time period (three months, one year, etc.); rearrest or conviction; etc.

- The research design should be clearly described.
 - The logic of research design should be discussed.
 - The reasons for incorporating research design into the study should be explained.
 - The particular design selected should be clearly described.
 - The strengths and limitations of that particular design should be discussed.
 - The reasons for selecting that design should be discussed.
 - Any problems in implementation should be presented.
 - The reasons why this design could be implemented should be discussed.
 - If using quasi-experimental design, the question of drawing an equivalent comparison group should be addressed.
 - Key literature should be alluded to for purposes of documentation.

D. Research Procedure: This section describes the data gathering and data analysis techniques. Though the evaluator will be responsible for this aspect of the project, there should still be some indication in the proposal on how the study will proceed.

- Data gathering techniques: Each of the data gathering techniques should be described. Only the techniques directly applicable to the question should be used. Most likely, this will include the use of court, police and agency records. This section should describe questions relating to sources of data: access to the data; problems in data gathering; number of cases; pre-test; sampling techniques; confidentiality requirements; validating and checking the accuracy of the data.
- Data Processing:
 - Will there be manual or computer processing of data?
 - What facilities will the consultant have to provide?
- Data Analysis:
 - There is a tendency in proposal writing to indicate that "sophisticated" analysis techniques will be employed. Proposals often indicate that techniques will be used which are not appropriate for the purposes of the study, thus lessening the credibility of the proposal.

-For most evaluation documents nothing more sophisticated than percentages are required.

E. Final Report: A system for disseminating the report should be described.

- The system should be practitioner oriented. This may include:
 - A short brochure describing key findings.
 - An executive summary (similar to an abstract).
 - A press release.
 - Verbal descriptions to key decision makers.
 - Dissemination to the media.
- If a larger, more technical report is prepared, it should only be disseminated to those who would utilize its contents (program staff, other researchers, special requests, etc.). The short brochure should be the only published document. The small number of copies required of the larger document can be inexpensively photocopied.

F. Working Guide: This section describes the project schedule.

- The number of months required to implement each aspect of the project should be described.
- A chart should be used, so that a professional description is presented.

G. Budget:

- See Step 4 for a discussion of this topic.

H. Choosing an Evaluator:

- See Step 5 for a discussion of this topic.

I. Supporting Evidence:

- Letters from key officials documenting the need for study should be appended.
- Letters from researchers indicating the validity of the approach could prove useful.
- Key newspaper clippings and articles should also be appended.

APPENDIX II BUDGET CHART

The chart below provides a list of functions that must be accounted for in the budget. Some of these functions can be contracted out, while some can be done in-house. The size of the items is relatively high, assuming a large evaluation. The actual costs will depend on the complexity of the evaluation, cost of living, local funding practices, and type of researchers selected.

FUNCTION	METHOD	COST
Professional Staff	Project Director Consultant Advisor	Salary of \$20,000 plus fringes 4 days at \$135 4 days at \$135 Travel-\$200 for plane fare Parking fees Ground transportation Per diem-\$35 per day (\$140)
Planning	Use agency staff Secretarial	No additional cost No additional cost
Data Gathering	Part-time students Project Director Data Gathering Monitors	500 Hours at \$3.00 per hour plus fringes No additional cost \$5.00 per hour for 100 hours plus fringes
Secretary	1/2 time for one year	\$5,000 plus fringes
Data Processing and Analysis	Professional Staff Computer time Programmer Statistician	No additional cost Flat fee of \$500 4 days at \$100 per day 2 days at \$135 per day
Report Writing	Professional Staff Proofreader Secretarial	No additional cost 4 days at \$50 per day No additional cost

FUNCTION	METHOD	COST
Printing	Design Consultant Printing Contract	2 days at \$100 \$1,000
Travel	Within City To visit funding source Visit other projects as model	200 miles at 17c per mile 2 trips-500 miles 17c per mile Per diem for meals-\$15 per day for 2 days 2 plane trips for \$500 Per diem for meals-\$15 per day for two days Ground transportation and parking \$30
Indirect cost and/or Profit Margin	60% of wages and fringes	
Equipment	None	
Supplies	List specific-some will be in overhead	\$300
Postage	For evaluation To send out report	\$200 \$200
Photocopying		8c per page-estimated \$1,000
Telephone	Long distance	\$200
Special session for Report Presentation		\$50.00
Meeting facilities for Advisory committee	Agency Seminar Room or Lunch meeting	No cost

APPENDIX III

SELECTING A STUDENT RESEARCHER

This appendix provides a list of procedures which can be used to improve the quality of student research. The list is divided by: obtaining students, pre-evaluation procedures, and agency relationship to the students.

OBTAINING STUDENTS

- The agency should investigate the possibility of using students who can make a long-term commitment to the project. These include a student in a masters thesis, an undergraduate student in an honors project, a student with a year-long paper and a large number of credits, a six-month internship, etc. The longer the student can be involved in the project, the more appropriate and useful the project will be for the agency.
- Another strategy is to obtain a student through a work-study program. If a qualified student is identified at the end of the sophomore year, the agency can train that student for the position and expect to have him/her available for the next two years. The problem with using work-study students is that qualified students are not always available through the program. Rather than looking for course qualifications, it is suggested that a bright and articulate student be identified. That student could not only be trained by the agency, but (s)he could also be expected to take university courses which will assist in the evaluation and research enterprise. The advantage of using the work-study student is clear, for the agency pays a small percentage of the student's salary, which can be as low as 70 cents an hour. Many work-study students are available full time during the summer. To find out if a contract can be arranged, the administrator should contact the financial aid office of a local university.
- To provide continuity, the agency might consider the possibility of a part-time paid research position for the student after the academic responsibility is completed.
- Students who have had prior internship activities or actual exposure to an agency are to be preferred for evaluation purposes.
- The administrator should be aware of the training which the student has received. A student with some background in criminal justice and evaluation is preferable. A background in statistics is not necessary though some background in data analysis and knowledge of cross tabulation tables is absolutely necessary.

PRE-EVALUATION PROCEDURES

- A document similar to an RFP should be prepared for the students so that expectations are made explicit.
- Student research projects tend to be unfocused. The administrator should not only view the project in the context of the prior "steps", but also should insist on a clear and focused statement of purpose.
- Before allowing the student into any type of research activity, the student should act as a staff member serving clients for at least a month. It is only with this intuitive understanding of the agency that the student can proceed meaningfully on his/her project. It also means that (s)he will have contacts with other staff members, thus developing interpersonal relationships which will be useful in the later data gathering phase.

AGENCY RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENT

- A realistic schedule should be developed in the RFP so progress of the study can be gauged.
- Students working on these research projects often become frustrated because they are not able to obtain the necessary data. Agencies often provide the student with excuses that they are busy with program activities or the computer has not yet produced the information. It is only fair to the student (and ultimately to the research needs of the agency) that producing necessary data should be a priority. A staff member, preferably the administrator, should be assigned responsibilities for both consulting with the student and making sure that necessary data has been gathered.
- The administrator should understand the project better than the student, notwithstanding the academic expertise of the student.
- A continuing contact with the student's professor is necessary. Perceptions of the student and agency should be exchanged in his/her presence. It must be remembered that the professor is an extremely busy person, much like the administrator, and has many other day to day activities which preclude direct supervision of the evaluation. It is up to the administrator to insist upon contact and supervision.
- The administrator should stress that a final product is expected. Negotiations should take place between the professor and the administrator so that no grade is assigned until the final product is completed to the satisfaction of the agency.



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