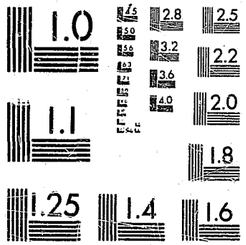

1133-03-81-TR

Survey of Criminal Justice Information Agencies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

June 1981

MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS DIVISION

GENERAL RESEARCH CORPORATION

A SUBSIDIARY OF FLOW GENERAL INC.

7655 Old Springhouse Road, McLean, Virginia 22102

Prepared For:

Office of Program Evaluation
National Institute of Justice
633 Indiana Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20001

Grant No. 79MU-AX-0034

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SURVEY OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION AGENCIES

The Survey of Criminal Justice Information Agencies conducted by General Research Corporation (GRC) for the National Institute of Justice represented the continued interest of the Federal government in the development of criminal justice information systems. Results of the study describe the capabilities of each state and the District of Columbia to report on criminal justice information in the generic areas of corrections, courts, juvenile justice, and law enforcement. The summary of the results of this project is presented in the following sections:

- Evaluation of Statistical Analysis Centers (SAC) - A discussion of the background of the project and change of study focus.
- Study Methodology - A description of the data collection procedure and study limitations.
- Study Findings - A description of interstate capabilities and comparative capabilities of SACs.
- Conclusions

EVALUATION OF STATISTICAL ANALYSIS CENTERS (SAC)

Since the passage of the Omnibus Crime Control Act of 1968, which established the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), the Federal government has been formally involved in information system development. In 1970, the National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service (NCJISS) was created as a statistical arm of LEAA. NCJISS provided funding and technical assistance to states and localities for the development of information systems.

In 1972, LEAA announced the Comprehensive Data Systems (CDS) Program.[1] This program was intended to encourage states to develop greater data analysis and collection capabilities and introduce more interstate standardization among state-level information systems.

[1] For a comprehensive description of the CDS program, see Cost and Benefits of the Comprehensive Data System Program, Institute for Law and Social Research, Washington, D.C., 1976.

Specifically, the CDS program contained five components:

- Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)
- Offender-Based Transaction Statistics and Computerized Criminal Histories (OBTS/CCH)
- Management and Administrative Statistics (MAS)
- State Statistical Analysis Centers (SACs)
- Technical Assistance to coordinate the implementation of the CDS program

Change in Study Focus

The initial study plan called for an assessment of the impact of the SAC component of the CDS program and the development of models describing SAC activities, developmental processes, and user satisfaction with SAC products.

However, in December 1979, three months after the study had been initiated, the Justice System Improvement Act (JSIA) reorganized LEAA and created the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). BJS was created with a specific mandate to work with the states in the collection, analysis and reporting of criminal justice information.

The "SAC evaluation" focus was changed partially in response to JSIA to assist BJS in fulfilling its mandate. Also, during preliminary research for the study, it was determined that SAC compliance with CDS varied depending on a SAC's level of development. Additional research in this area, it was thought, would not generate particularly policy useful information. Therefore, a decision was made to change the SAC evaluation into a more prospective study that would identify a future course for Federal involvement in information system development.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

In terms of study focus, objectives and methodology, the project was separated into 2 distinct phases. The activities of the first 6 months of the project (Initial Phase), October 1979 to April 1980, were devoted to the accomplishment of tasks intended for the SAC evaluation. The Final Phase, extending from April 1980 to April 1981, included the tasks involved in the collection of data from all state level agencies participating in a state's information system network.

The methodology of each phase is described in the following sections.

Initial Phase

The original study plan called for an evaluation of how well the SACs were conforming to the guidelines of the CDS program and the creation of models describing SAC activities, developments and products. During the Initial Phase, an evaluation plan was designed and pilot tested in 6 states during site visits. After testing the plan through the site visits, a decision was made to re-focus the study.

Final Phase

During the Final Phase, the orientation of the study was toward the examination of the capacity of state criminal justice information networks. This examination called for the identification of all agencies responsible for collecting information within the state, types and availability of data, capabilities of agencies to collect, analyze, and report data, the accessibility of data to state and Federal Agencies, and the roles of the SACs within these information networks.

To collect data on these topics, a telephone survey with a mail option was utilized. This methodology was utilized because of the individuality of the various state criminal justice information systems.

The questionnaire consisted of two components:

- General questions applicable to all agencies
- Four specialized sections or "modules" relevant to particular agencies which deal with criminal justice data in the areas of corrections, courts, juvenile justice, and law enforcement. Within these areas, data were also collected on subclassifications such as offender, parole, probation, and prosecutor.

Each agency participating in the survey was asked to describe its participation in its state's criminal justice information network with reference to its use of the four classifications of data.

Three hundred fifty two questionnaire packages, including nine pretest instruments were mailed. Appropriate referrals recommended by original respondents were added during the survey process and contacted to schedule a telephone interview appointment. Controlling for inappropriate and duplicative respondents, a total response rate of over 96% was achieved.

Limitations

There are a number of methodological and data limitations in the study. These limitations are important because they constrain the type of conclusions and policy recommendations that can be generated by the study. These limitations are listed below.

- An overall constraint results from the objective of this research: to present a description of information system development in each state. The descriptive framework of the study is a constraint on the type of analysis that can be conducted.
- The variables selected as proxies for reporting capabilities are theoretically appropriate. The available measures of these variables, are somewhat limiting, however. The measurement limitations are attributable to the descriptive objectives of the study.

- The results of this study are based on the perceptions of one respondent in every state information system agency. It is possible that a different choice of respondent would lead to slight changes in the data as reported. Therefore, all results must be interpreted as estimates of an agency's capabilities based on perceptual data.
- A factor that, in a minor way, impacted on the study was the design of the survey instrument. The instrument contained two components and appeared long and somewhat intimidating. One effect of the lengthy instrument was that some respondents had difficulty following the skip patterns. As a result, there are some missing data in the study.
- One problem encountered in the study was the loss of survey instruments in the mail. Despite responding previously to the survey, when recontacted, nearly all respondents whose instruments were lost in the mail consented to conduct a telephone interview, fill out a second questionnaire, or mail a copy of their survey.

STUDY FINDINGS

Findings of the survey of criminal justice information agencies are described under two headings:

- Interstate Capabilities
- Capabilities of SACs

Interstate Capabilities

Interstate disparities in reporting capabilities are widely acknowledged. However, the extent of these disparities has not been documented. This section describes the variance in state reporting capabilities on a number of variables. Only broad generalizations are made about the states using simple measures such as frequency distributions. A model for ranking each state's comparative reporting capability on each variable is also utilized. A frequency distribution with three intervals is the basis for the ranking. The minimum and maximum values in the dis-

tribution are used to determine the endpoints of the 1st and 3rd interval. From these starting points, 3 intervals of equal width are calculated. States in the bottom interval are considered to rank low on a variable in comparison to other states. States in the middle interval are considered of moderate rank on a variable in comparison to other states. States in the top interval are considered to rank high on a particular variable in comparison to other states. The rankings do not measure the level of information system development on a particular variable in a state. What they describe is the relative level of development on a variable compared to other states.

The variables used to represent a state's level of information system development are listed below.

- Data availability variables, including
  - overall diversity of data types
  - availability of statistical data types
  - availability of operational data types
- Processing capability variables, including
  - level of computerization
  - availability of statisticians or criminal justice data analysts
  - preparation of statistical summaries or analytical reports
- Interaction variables, including
  - level of interaction in data sharing
  - intensity of interaction in data sharing
  - level of interaction in technical assistance provision
- Authorization variable
  - Formal mandate to report on information and statistics

The findings on each of these four variables for all states and the District of Columbia are briefy summarized below. Table 1 contains the comparative ranking of states on all variables.

TABLE 1

SUMMARY RANKING OF COMPARATIVE STATE ABILITIES TO REPORT ON INFORMATION

State	DATA AVAILABILITY VARIABLES			PROCESSING CAPABILITY VARIABLES		INTERACTION VARIABLES			AUTHORIZATION VARIABLE
	Diversity of Data Types	Availability of Statistical Data Types	Availability of Operational Data Types	Access to Computers	Computerization of Data Storage	Level of Interaction in Data Sharing	Intensity of Interaction in Data Sharing	Level of Interaction in Technical Assistance	Formal Authorization
Alabama	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
Alaska	High	High	Moderate	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate
Arizona	Low	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	High
Arkansas	Low	Moderate	Low	High	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	High
California	High	High	High	High	High	Low	Low	Low	High
Colorado	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	Moderate
Connecticut	High	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High	Low	High
Delaware	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	High	High	High
District of Columbia	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	Moderate	Moderate
Florida	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	High	High	High	High
Georgia	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	Moderate	High
Hawaii	High	High	High	High	Moderate	High	High	High	High
Idaho	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low
Illinois	High	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	High	High
Indiana	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
Iowa	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low
Kansas	High	High	High	High	Moderate	High	High	High	Moderate
Kentucky	Moderate	Low	High	High	High	High	Low	Moderate	Low
Louisiana	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

TABLE 1 (Cont.)

SUMMARY RANKING OF COMPARATIVE STATE ABILITIES TO REPORT ON INFORMATION

State	DATA AVAILABILITY VARIABLES			PROCESSING CAPABILITY VARIABLES		INTERACTION VARIABLES			AUTHORIZATION VARIABLE
	Diversity of Data Types	Availability of Statistical Data Types	Availability of Operational Data Types	Access to Computers	Computerization of Data Storage	Level of Interaction in Data Sharing	Intensity of Interaction in Data Sharing	Interaction in Technical Assistance	Formal Authorization
Maine	High	High	High	High	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	Moderate
Maryland	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	High	Moderate	High	Moderate
Massachusetts	High	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	High
Michigan	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High
Minnesota	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High	High	High	High	High	High
Mississippi	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Missouri	High	Moderate	High	High	High	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
Montana	Low	Moderate	Low	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Nebraska	High	Moderate	High	High	High	Moderate	High	Low	High
Nevada	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low	Low
New Hampshire	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
New Jersey	High	Moderate	High	High	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low
New Mexico	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low	High
New York	High	High	High	High	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	High
North Carolina	Low	Low	Low	High	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	High
North Dakota	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low
Ohio	High	High	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High
Oklahoma	High	High	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Oregon	Low	Low	Low	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Pennsylvania	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	Moderate	High

TABLE 1 (Cont.)

SUMMARY RANKING OF COMPARATIVE STATE ABILITIES TO REPORT ON INFORMATION

State	DATA AVAILABILITY VARIABLES			PROCESSING CAPABILITY VARIABLES		INTERACTION VARIABLES			AUTHORIZATION VARIABLE
	Diversity of Data Types	Availability of Statistical Data Types	Availability of Operational Data Types	Access to Computers	Computerization of Data Storage	Level of Interaction in Data Sharing	Intensity of Interaction in Data Sharing	Interaction in Technical Assistance	Formal Authorization
Rhode Island	High	Moderate	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	Low	Moderate
South Carolina	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	Moderate	Moderate
South Dakota	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low
Tennessee	Low	Low	Low	High	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low	High
Texas	High	High	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Utah	High	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low
Vermont	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High
Virginia	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low
Washington	Moderate	Low	High	High	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
West Virginia	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	High
Wisconsin	High	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	High
Wyoming	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High	Moderate	Moderate	High

Availability of Data

The overall availability of criminal justice data varies widely between states. The percentage of selected data types maintained in the states varies from 35% in Tennessee to 96% in Maine. The mean for data availability is 71%.

Capability to Use and Process Data

The percentages of respondent agencies that have their own computer systems or access to the systems of another agency range from 25% in Wyoming to 100% in Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Virginia, and Washington. In New Hampshire, only 17% of the respondent agencies have analysts or statisticians on staff, versus 100% of the agencies in California, Idaho, Massachusetts, and Minnesota. Although the percentages of agencies producing reports ranges from 0% in Idaho and South Dakota to 100% in twenty eight states, the mean for the variable is 86%.

Interagency Interaction

The intrastate networks of interactions between information system agencies are quite disparate. The level of interaction in data sharing, reflected by the percentage of agencies sharing data, varies from 20% in Nevada and Tennessee to 100% in Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, and Washington. In the category of technical assistance provision, the percentage of agencies providing technical assistance to other state agencies ranges from 0% in Missouri to 100% in Arizona, Colorado, Florida, and Illinois. The intensity of interaction in data sharing which is defined as the percentage of the maximum number of data exchanges that take place in a state ranges from 5% in Nevada to 58% in Hawaii and Maine.

Formal Authorization for Reporting

The percentage of agencies within a state which are formally authorized to manage and report on information and statistics ranges from 33%

in South Dakota to 100% in California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Tennessee, and Wyoming.

SAC Capabilities

At the time of this survey, SACs were operational in 36 states. Those states reporting operational SACs are listed in TABLE 2. This section describes the SACs in terms of several of the variables used to describe overall state capabilities. Results are based on responses from thirty five SACs.

Availability of Data

Only 5 SACs -- Colorado, Illinois, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Wyoming -- maintain data in all four generic areas. Of these, all but South Carolina maintain computerized data in all generic areas.

Formal Authorization for Reporting

Only five SACs -- Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine and Massachusetts -- are not formally authorized.

Capability to Use and Process Data

All of the responding SACs have access to computer facilities -- either their own or the shared facilities of another agency. Thirty-three of the responding SACs indicated they have their own statisticians/analysts on staff. All of the responding SACs prepare statistical summaries or analytical reports.

Provision of Technical Assistance

All SACs reported that they provide some form of technical assistance to other agencies in the state.

In general, SACs as a whole appear generally capable on most variables representing reporting capabilities. SACs seem to be an important actor in the development of information systems.

TABLE 2

STATES IN WHICH SACS ARE OPERATIONAL*

SACs are operational in the following 36 states:

Alabama	Minnesota
Alaska	Mississippi
Arizona	Montana
Arkansas	Nebraska
California	New Hampshire
Colorado	New Jersey
Connecticut	New Mexico
Delaware	New York
District of Columbia	Ohio
Hawaii	Oklahoma
Idaho	Oregon
Illinois	Pennsylvania
Iowa	Rhode Island
Kansas	South Carolina
Maine	Utah
Maryland	Virginia
Massachusetts	Washington
Michigan	Wyoming

*These states reported functional SACs at the time of the Survey, November 1980 - January 1981.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study suggest conclusions about the future Federal role in information system development. Based on its descriptive nature, these conclusions must be limited to broad prescriptions. These conclusions are discussed below.

Continue Federal Role in Information System Development

Criminal justice information systems can potentially provide the data and analytical tools to make efficient policy choices and to maximize the productivity of the criminal justice dollar. Therefore, it is a program that should be Federally supported in some way. Given the current fiscal environment, there is justification for the Federal government to confirm its commitment to information system development. The availability of state revenues for justice programs is decreasing and at the same time, the Federal government is cutting back its funding in an attempt to balance its budget. As a result of this fiscal crisis, it is more important than ever that effective criminal justice policy decisions be made.

Targeting Federal Support for Information System Development

Provision of Technical Assistance to States

It is recommended that BJS attempt to increase its interaction with state agencies, and thereby, raise its visibility in the states. Many state respondents indicated during the interview phase of the study that they are solicitous of additional technical assistance from BJS. Others indicated that BJS was not visible enough to the states. Still others reported that despite all the surveys and research supported by BJS and NIJ, very little was being disseminated back to the states, where it was most needed.

Produce a Level of Minimal Competency in the States

The study confirms that the level of development of information systems and reporting capabilities is quite disparate across states. Therefore, an effective Federal strategy that is consistent with funding limitations might be to direct technical assistance primarily to those state agencies that are most in need of such assistance. The goal of such an approach would be to raise all agencies, systems and states to a minimal level of competency in reporting capabilities.

Work with the SACs in System Development

The survival of the SAC concept is very important to BJS. The SACs are generally quite capable of reporting on criminal justice information and statistics. The SACs represent a very positive resource with which BJS can cooperate to further system development. They can be utilized to assess the needs of their state's criminal justice information system agencies, to report these needs to BJS, and to coordinate the distribution of technical assistance products from the Federal government to the states.

Work Toward System Standardization

The study is supportive of the notion that there are great disparities between states in system design, format, and development. The predominant concern in information system development has been the need to increase reporting capabilities within states. A concern that becomes more topical as state systems mature is the comparability of systems across states. BJS can take a leadership role in developing complementary information systems across states either by supporting standardization between systems or promoting the creation of additional national information systems and reporting requirements.

Summary

Regardless of which form of technical assistance is ultimately provided by BJS, for this plan to be successful, BJS must identify the needs of the states as perceived by the states themselves. The most receptive assistance plans are those where the recipient perceives that the services provided are consistent with his/her actual needs.

END