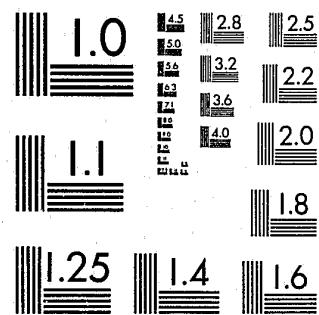


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National Institute of Justice
United States Department of Justice
Washington, D. C. 20531

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INDIVIDUAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT

In Response to a Request for Technical Assistance

By the

Southeastern Colorado Criminal Justice Planning Agency

for

Conejos County, Colorado

FILE

74-125 ✓

August 9, 1974

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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Prepared by:

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**(Per Contract J-LEAA-015-72)
T.A. 74-125**

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NCJRS

SEP 16 1974

ACQUISITION

August 9, 1974

Mr. Robert Heck
Police Specialist
Office of Regional Operations
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration
United States Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Mr. Heck:

Submitted herewith is a copy of the Individual Technical Assistance Report, required by Article II-A-2 of Contract J-LEAA-015-72, of assistance provided to the Conejos County Consolidation of Police Services in response to the Task Assignment No. T.A. 74-125.

Sincerely yours,

G. M. Morris

G. M. Morris
Associate Director

I. PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

- A. Consultant Assigned:**
Dr. George D. Eastman
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio
- B. Date Assignment Received:**
June 24, 1974
- C. Date of Contact with LEAA Regional Coordinator:**
July 17, 1974
- D. Dates of On-Site Consultation:**
July, 1974
- E. Individuals Contacted:**
See consultant's report.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- A. Problem as per Request for Technical Assistance:**
Law enforcement within the Conejos County is inadequate and uneven. The feasibility of consolidation is to be examined.
- B. Problem Actually Observed:**
As stated.

III. FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

See attached consultant's report.

IV. DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION

See attached consultant's report.

V. RECOMMENDED COURSES OF ACTION

See attached consultant's report.

CONSULTANT'S REPORT

Introduction

The study, from which this report has been prepared, was made possible by a request for technical assistance prepared by the Staff Director of the Southeastern Colorado Criminal Justice Planning Councils, approved by the Division of Criminal Justice of the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, processed through appropriate Law Enforcement Assistance Administration offices, and assigned to Public Administration Service.

The broad charge to the consultant was "technical assistance for the analysis and development of a consolidated law enforcement agency in Conejos County."¹ Specifically, however, assistance was being sought in:

- Formation of a countywide law enforcement commission which would entail the organizational and administrative structure of the proposed countywide agency.
- Development of contractual agreements between participating towns and law enforcement agencies.
- An outline of costs of development and operation of a countywide agency.
- Five- and 10-year manpower projections and costs.
- Procedures for assessment of costs to each participating community.
- Recommendations for LEAA fundings.²

Within limits of time available, adequate response can be made only to the broader charge, although appropriate attention is given to the specific interests stated above. It is recognized by the requesting office that much additional work will need to be done locally.

It should be noted that much effort already has gone into improving local law enforcement in Conejos County, including the infusion of grant money well in excess of \$20,000 by the Division of Criminal Justice on initial approval by the Pueblo office. More recently, staff of the Law Enforcement Planning Council and local officials and citizens have initiated new efforts for improvement. In December, 1973, for example, a town meeting was held in Antonito attended by approximately 20 citizens and, in January, 1974, a meeting was held in La Jara with representatives from Antonito, La Jara, Manassa, Romeo, and Sanford. The request for assistance is supported by formal actions taken by the Board of County Commissioners and the Towns of Antonito, Manassa, Romeo, and Sanford; only the Town of La Jara decided against support of the proposed study.

¹ Letter of May 7, 1974, from Rodney L. Ausfahl, Director, Southeastern Colorado Criminal Justice Planning Councils to G. Nicholas Pijoan, Director, Division of Criminal Justice, Colorado Department of Local Affairs.

² Same reference as preceding footnote.

Study Methodology

Commonly accepted means of data gathering were used to secure information pertinent to the study; these included documents review, interviewing, and observation.

Documents Review

Prior consultant experience in Colorado minimized the need for documents review, especially in regard to statutes on county and town government. Particular attention, however, was given to the budgets of Conejos County and the Town of Antonito, to the Economic Base Study for the San Luis Valley prepared by the San Luis Valley Council of Governments, and to a pending regionwide communications grant application, as well as pension provisions for local jurisdictions. Local agency records were also reviewed.

Interviewing

Persons with whom the project was discussed divide into two groups. One consists of public and police officials in Conejos County and the other of officials and others in Alamosa County. The importance of the latter group is indicated by the titles and positions of persons interviewed.

Persons with whom the project was discussed in Alamosa County include:

James Bettridge, Director, Comprehensive Health Planning, San Luis Valley Comprehensive Health Planning Council

Robert Bishop, Resident Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Joe O. Lewis, District Attorney, Colorado 12th Judicial District

Nyle Langstron, Chief of Police, Alamosa

Guy W. Miles, Captain and District Commander, Colorado Highway Patrol

Ron Phillips, Director, San Luis Valley Council of Governments

Persons with whom the project was discussed in Conejos County include:

Amos Abeyta, Sheriff, Conejos County
Ray Chacon, Chairman, Conejos County Commission
Gloria R. Garule, Town Clerk, Antonito
Robert G. Gallegos, Mayor, Antonito

Kenneth Kroh, Police Officer, Antonito³
Lawrence Rugbal, Police Officer, Antonito
Mitchell Vondrak, Chief of Police, Antonito⁴

In addition, of course, extensive discussions were held with Rodney L. Ausfahl, Director, and Chuck Phillips, Associate Director, of Southeastern Colorado Criminal Justice Planning Councils, both in Alamosa and Pueblo. Mr. Phillips participated in local interviewing in Alamosa and Conejos County.

Observation

Law enforcement facilities of Conejos County and the Town of Antonito were inspected, including county detention quarters. General observations were made of traffic and other public activity in the area.

³ Mr. Kroh later resigned his position for other employment.

⁴ By Colorado Statute, the head of the police function in a town is designated as a marshal; chief of police, however, is a more commonly used title.

The Local Setting

San Luis Valley, an area ceded to the United States by Mexico in 1848, is located in south central Colorado and is comprised of six counties—Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, and Saguache. It is important to note that the six counties comprise the Colorado Twelfth Judicial District, the area served by the San Luis Valley Council of Governments, as well as the Region VIII Criminal Justice Planning Council, and the area served by Post A of Division 5 of the Colorado Highway Patrol. Professional staff of the Council of Governments is housed in Alamosa; professional staff serving the Criminal Justice Council is located in Pueblo.

Area Characteristics

Conejos County, which is 36th in area among the 63 counties in the State, borders the State of New Mexico on the south and encompasses 1,269 square miles, of which only approximately 34.4 percent is privately held; more than 58 percent is federally owned; and about 17.4 percent, state-owned—but 21.9 percent of one square mile is held by the County and municipalities.⁵ Population estimates vary; although the Colorado Interstate Gas Company cites a 1972 population of 8,196 (which ranks it 29th in the State), a slight decline from a figure of 8,428 in 1960, a recent report cites a Conejos County population of 7,847 in 1970.⁶ The latter report predicts further modest decline into the early 1980's, and then a gradual increase through the year 2000 to a total population of about 7 percent below 1970. The report's figures for 1970 show that approximately one-half of the County's population of 7,847 live in Antonito (1,113), Capulin (185), Guadalupe (30), La Jara (768), Manassa (814), Romeo (352), Sanford (638), and the rest (3,900) elsewhere in the County; among the places listed, only Capulin and Guadalupe are not incorporated.

The terrain may be described as "open valley," with the San Juan Mountains to the West. The major source of income is agriculture, although the average growing season is only 95 days, and the annual mean temperature is 42.4 degrees. Antonito, typical of the County, is at an elevation of about 7,800 feet.

Of significance to this study and report are economic conditions in the area. Conejos and Costilla Counties are the two most depressed in the area and among the most depressed in Colorado; in the following table, comparative incomes are shown for Alamosa, Mineral, Conejos, and Costilla Counties.

⁵ 1973 Colorado Yearbook, Public Affairs Department, Colorado Interstate Gas Company, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

⁶ Economic Base Study for the San Luis Valley, published by the San Luis Valley Council of Governments in June, 1973.

Table 1
INCOME BREAKDOWN IN 1973
COUNTIES OF ALAMOSA, MINERAL, CONEJOS, AND COSTILLA^a
(In Percentages of Population)

| <i>Income</i> | <i>Alamosa</i> | <i>Mineral</i> | <i>Conejos</i> | <i>Costilla</i> |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| To \$2,999 | 23.3 | 27.0 | 33.3 | 45.1 |
| \$3,000 – \$4,999 | 17.7 | 16.7 | 26.0 | 23.6 |
| 5,000 – 7,999 | 25.1 | 27.7 | 21.9 | 15.4 |
| 8,000 – 9,999 | 14.0 | 14.6 | 6.8 | 8.2 |
| Over \$10,000 | 19.9 | 14.0 | 12.0 | 7.7 |

^a 1973 Colorado Yearbook: Public Affairs Department, Colorado Interstate Gas Company, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

It is reported that one in three residents in Conejos County receives public assistance.⁷

Local Government

The County and towns within it are organized as prescribed by State Statute. The County has a commission form of government, with three commissioners elected at-large for four-year terms, on an overlapping term basis; commissioners have both legislative and management responsibilities. The county seat is Conejos which, itself, is not incorporated. The towns have six-member Boards of Trustees (more commonly known as town councils), with members also elected for four-year overlapping terms, and elected mayors; it should be noted, however, that three of the Antonito trustees are serving two- rather than four-year terms.

⁷ Economic Base Study for the San Luis Valley, San Luis Valley Council of Governments, 1973.

Financial Considerations

Like most law enforcement agencies at the local level, the Conejos County Sheriff's Department and the Antonito Police Department are supported through the general funds of their respective jurisdictions. At both levels, the general fund receives a considerable contribution from property taxation.

The brief analysis which follows is developed from the documentation of the 1974 budgets for Antonito and Conejos County. While it is artificially constructed and does not take into account the socio-political-economic reasoning behind it, it does present a certain reality in traditional revenue gathering and expending patterns adopted years ago and still in use today. Refer to Table 2 for clarity and understanding of figures used below.

For 1974, Conejos County has estimated its general fund revenue at \$211,151, of which it expects to collect \$108,076, or 51.2 percent, in property taxes from a 10.44 mill levy applied to the total county valuation of \$12,848,715. The Town of Antonito, however, estimates its 1974 general fund at \$45,850, of which only \$8,964.55 in property taxes, or 19.6 percent, will be produced from a 15.37 mill levy on a town valuation of \$583,250.

By applying these percentages, 51.2 and 19.6, to the respective law enforcement budgets of the jurisdictions and then dividing by the population of each, it is possible to arrive at an approximation of per capita property tax support to law enforcement services. In Conejos County, the amount of property tax supporting the law enforcement budget is \$7,255.04, or only \$.97 per capita based upon a total county population projection of 7,450. In Antonito property tax applied to the law enforcement budget amounts to \$1,568 or \$1.42 per capita based upon a population projection of 1,100.⁸

It should be recognized that these per capita figures represent only property tax support. Through all revenue sources the amount spent on law enforcement in the County is \$1.90 per capita and \$7.27 in Antonito.

Returning to the issue of property tax support levels, it should be noted that Antonito residents do not contribute \$.97 per capita to the operation of the County Sheriff's Department. In fact, only \$.18 per capita is realized from Antonito (this is determined by applying the county mill levy to the valuation for Antonito). Consequently, Antonito residents pay \$1.60 for law enforcement services (\$1.42 municipal and \$.18 county) while county residents assume a slightly higher burden than \$.97.

Such variance as this should not be viewed as unjust since Antonito residents, by providing their own law enforcement services (an \$8,000 budget as compared to the County's \$14,170 budget), are relieving the County of that responsibility; it therefore seems more than appropriate that the municipal residents should contribute less in property tax to the operation of the Sheriff's Department. Unfortunately, this relatively just situation is not the result of thoughtful calculation and study; only the age-old method of valuation has preserved equitability. If valuations shift with an increase occurring in Antonito, a larger portion of the Sheriff's budget will be assumed by municipal residents. Careful examination and study, therefore, seems appropriate for both the Town and County to determine the most judicious and expedient methods of funding law enforcement throughout the County.

⁸ Projections are for 1975 made by the San Luis Valley Council of Governments; they are assumed to be sufficiently accurate for present purposes.

Local Law Enforcement Agencies and Services

Although the Sheriff's Department has concurrent jurisdiction with municipal police agencies in the towns, it largely confines itself to rural law enforcement problems, and such towns as so choose have their own police agencies.

The Conejos County Sheriff's Department

County law enforcement is the responsibility of a Sheriff's Department, and the incumbent Sheriff is not standing for reelection this year. The Sheriff has responsibility for law enforcement, prisoner detention, and court service, which is typical of sheriff's departments in most counties in the United States; he serves, however, as fire marshal under Colorado law and has other statutory duties as well.

The Department has a complement of four persons—the Sheriff, Undersheriff, a deputy, and a night watchman, none of whom has been certified by the Colorado Law Enforcement Training Academy (CLETA). The Sheriff is paid \$545 per month, the Undersheriff and deputy, \$400 per month, and the night watchman, \$335. The night watchman is on duty approximately 12 hours per day, and the Sheriff reports workweeks of up to 80 hours. There is no regular provision for vacation, although, conditions permitting, the Sheriff annually may allow one to two weeks to his personnel. Employees participate in the Federal Social Security program, but are not, at the same time, under a state or local pension plan; they are, however, under workmen's compensation, medical, hospital, and group life insurance plans.

Detention quarters are clean but otherwise inadequate, and their use is limited by the State Health Department, according to the Sheriff; if there is no unusual need for segregation, there are accommodations for seven persons. They are sometimes used to house time-serving prisoners even though supervision cannot be provided consistently. The Department charges about \$5 per day for holding prisoners of other local agencies, based on a formula involving charges per meal and for utilities.

Municipal Police Services

Four of the incorporated towns provide for some local law enforcement services—Antonito, La Jara, Manassa, and Sanford—although the latter has only a town marshal.

Inquiry in depth in regard to municipal law enforcement services was made only in Antonito, the largest of the towns in Conejos County. On the consultant's first visit to the town, there was a chief of police (town marshal) and two patrolmen (deputy marshals); on a subsequent visit there was only the chief and a patrolman; on the last visit consideration was being given to hiring two patrolmen—for a total complement of four. Since 1971, there have been six chiefs of police (one of whom served twice) and more than that many patrolmen. In simple translation, Antonito has employed several times as many

police personnel in three years as are in service at any one time.

The chief of police is paid \$550 per month, although a former chief was paid at the rate of \$700 per month. On the consultant's first visit to Antonito, the patrolmen were being paid \$15 per day on a six-day week—or \$90 per week which translates to \$390 per month. On the last visit, the daily rate remained at \$15 but payment was to be made for six days per week with the actual workweek reduced to five days.

All employees are new and have been employed only a matter of a few to several weeks. None has been certified by the Colorado Law Enforcement Training Academy.

Although there is no provision for holidays, men are allowed a two-week vacation annually; apparently none has served long enough in recent years to benefit from the allowance. Men interviewed, including the chief of police, said there were no pensions, Social Security, or insurance programs in effect; there is, however, a pension item in the town budget, and it may be that men were not informed because of an assumed temporary nature of their employment, or for other reasons.

The Department is housed in rented quarters across the street from the Town Hall building; the chief would like to find other quarters in the municipal facility to save the present rental cost of \$30 per month.

Problems of Local Law Enforcement

Concern for the quality of law enforcement in Conejos County provides the basis for this study and report and, at this point, it is appropriate to discuss particular matters which affect the quality of police service in the area. Certain matters, however, such as government responsibility for quality of service, will be discussed only in the subsequent section of this report titled *Plans for Improvement*.

Records

Because of inadequacies in receiving, investigating, and recording citizen complaints about criminal offenses, there is no way for anyone to reasonably quantify the incidence of crime in the County. Citizen complaints actually received by law enforcement agencies may reflect no more than 20 percent of incidents known to citizens, and with these not fully recorded nor systematically filed they serve but poorly to estimate or analyze local crime problems. Thus, though there may be a feeling of unease about "conditions," there presently is no sound basis for judgments on police agency requirements.

Communications

One of the components of the records problem is inadequate telephone services for citizen reporting of complaints, and another is inadequate police communications services—and each tends to aggravate the other. There are, for example, five dozen emergency telephone numbers—police, fire, and ambulance. The only dispatch center serving Conejos County is that maintained by the Colorado State Highway Patrol in Alamosa, and all local police units are served by the Patrol. Communications faults clearly are not those of the patrol system and its operation but, rather, lie elsewhere.

If a citizen in Antonito needs service, he can be assured of receiving it promptly only if his call to the police station or an officer's home or a cooperating service station directly reaches an officer. Otherwise he must call the State Patrol on an operator-assisted basis with a 40-cent service or toll charge. If the patrol dispatcher cannot reach an Antonito unit, the citizen's call usually must be left without response. Attempts have been made to utilize local government-band radios to alleviate such problems but with inadequate success. It is both unfortunate and correct to say that most citizens are isolated from contact with their police agencies.

Field Services

When several factors are considered together—too few personnel (especially in the County), poor communications, lack of officer training, and still others—it may be said unequivocally that there cannot be adequate field services, and there is not.

Personnel

It is commonly recognized that personnel are the key and principal resource of all police agencies. Yet, adequate background investigations are not made of new personnel nor were any personnel interviewed certified by CLETA. Equally important, standards for employment are not established. Low salaries are a factor in this situation.

Plans for Improvement

It is timely, at this point, to recall that the basic study charge was directed toward "development of a consolidated law enforcement agency in Conejos County."⁹ If the charge is met head on, as no doubt it should be, the answer is, unequivocally, that this is not an appropriate time to attempt it. Ultimately—and a time span is not identified—it may become quite feasible. The balance of this section treats of total consolidation, other degrees and kinds of consolidation, contract services, and other matters germane to the issues at hand.

Total Consolidation Within a New Government Structure

There is one sure way to effect consolidation of police services in Conejos County to the benefit of all its residents. This would entail achieving home rule or charter status for the County in which a single government, framed by the voters, would serve the entire area and all its residents. Though some day this may be accepted practice in Colorado and elsewhere, and has sufficient merit that the County is urged to give it serious consideration—perhaps with adoption in 5 to 10 years—this is not presently a viable option. No other county in Colorado has successfully followed this course, and officials in Conejos County should study and evaluate similar efforts elsewhere in the State—as those recently undertaken in Summit County, for example. Home rule would make possible avoiding legal and political considerations involving the office of the Sheriff.

Consolidation Within the Present Government Structure

Consolidation may be effected, short of a change in government structure, but under circumstances perhaps as difficult to bring about as attainment of home rule. Counties and municipalities are permitted under Colorado law to engage in a variety of joint ventures, and it seems reasonable to propose that Conejos County and its incorporated towns consider a unique solution to its problems—assuming certain critical issues are understood and resolved. This solution involves a formal agreement among all participating jurisdictions to form a county police department. This arrangement presumes creation of a managing board—perhaps a Conejos County Police Commission—to assume responsibility for the police function countywide. The commission would establish policy, procedures, and regulations and appoint the police chief (or director or superintendent). The police commission would be appointed by and be representative of the several jurisdictions. Financial support for the department would be shared by the jurisdictions on some equitable basis established in the multijurisdiction agreement.

This solution to the need for improved police services holds great promise. Aside from considerations presented in the above paragraph, however, are several to which local officials and citizens should give careful attention; the more important ones are discussed below.

⁹ See page 1 of this report.

The Conejos County Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff is a constitutional officer in Colorado, as he is in most states. His duties, however, are statutory; thus, the Colorado Legislature defines his responsibilities and duties. As an elected county official he is free of control of the County Commission except as his operations are influenced by commission budget allocations. To give full authority for county policing to the police commission would require legislative action. It is believed that the Sheriff, however, could contract with the police commission for police services though, if he could, his agreement would not be binding on a successor Sheriff. There are thus posed both legal and political issues.

Personnel Considerations. The board of police commissioners—and this implies full support of cooperating jurisdictions—would have to establish standards of employment superior to practices now existing. Particular attention should be given to employment qualifications, background investigations, training, and salaries and other conditions of employment.

Equally important, it should be recognized that the Sheriff's Department is grossly undermanned in view of what should be expected in regard to even reasonable provision of field services. In other words, a county department that assumes law enforcement services throughout the County would have to employ several or many more police officers than are now employed in all jurisdictions combined.

Costs. It should be understood that significantly increasing the number of police personnel in the County as well as raising their conditions of employment to even reasonable levels—in addition to providing them with adequate equipment—means a very substantial increase in allocation of tax monies to the police function. It should be recognized, equally, that present allocations of tax monies to the police function are less than minimal in regard to need (see also the earlier section titled *Financial Considerations*).

Intertown Consolidation

A viable approach to improvement of local law enforcement services short of countywide consolidation could be taken by establishing a tri-town department involving Antonito, La Jara, and Manassa (perhaps extended, logically, to include Romeo). Less viable, but still practical, would be a two-town consolidation including Antonito and Manassa (and again, perhaps, extending to Romeo). In this case, there would be a formal agreement among the two to four towns and, again, as suggested in an earlier section, a board of police commissioners which would hold responsibility for police management. In this situation there would be a single chief of police with a supervisory officer—perhaps a sergeant—in each town except Romeo. Combining such town forces provides opportunities for higher policing standards, availability of officers around-the-clock, a greater concentration of strength when needed, and other advantages.

There is no opportunity for in-county contract provision of services except as discussed earlier in regard to a county police department contracting with the Sheriff to police the county areas outside the towns. A unique contracting opportunity does exist, however. Any one or more of the towns in Conejos County could contract for its services to be provided by the Town of Alamosa. The Alamosa Police Department has the stability and

competence to well serve the Conejos County towns. It is ably led, all men are certified by CLETA, and the distance factor is not insurmountable. Such an arrangement suggests certain assumptions. One is that contracts would have a life of perhaps three years, with particular provision for increasing, reducing, or abandoning services. Another is that each town should have one resident officer.

Patrolmen in Alamosa start at a monthly salary of \$460 and go to \$485 in six months; longevity and other provisions result in one patrolman now being paid at the rate of \$666 per month. It can be seen, thus, that compensation rates alone would increase police costs in Antonito, for example, where patrolmen are presently paid \$390 per month; other fringe benefits broaden the disparity in compensation even further. All factors considered, this course of action has considerable appeal and should be examined carefully.

Records

A records system—including standard forms—should be adopted for all police agencies in the County, preferably for the entire San Luis Valley region and, still more preferably, for the entire State. Accomplishment of this for the County would be made practicable in the event of countywide consolidation. If the regional communications plan is adopted, the communications center also could serve as a regional records and information center. It is important that criminal and certain other data developed in any jurisdiction be immediately available to agencies in other jurisdictions.

Communications

The lack of communications in the County is the single most important technological and functional weakness of local law enforcement—and one which seriously affects citizen/police relations and police effectiveness. Out of lack of familiarity with it, all details of the proposed San Luis Valley communications system cannot be offered support, but it is supported in principle for it provides a viable response to area communications needs.

In the event the funding request is not granted, other steps should be taken. Foremost among these would be direct dialing from anywhere in the County to Alamosa. If local officials cannot be persuasive with the telephone company, an appeal should be made to the Colorado Public Utilities Commission that emergency foreign exchange numbers be established in such locations as Antonito. If this were to be done, facilities permitting, only toll free calls placed to the emergency number could be answered at the State Patrol Communication office in Alamosa. Such calls could not be intercepted, however, in Antonito or other exchange locations. This would require two telephone calls for police service if the calling person were to call the local department where no one responded—the second call, of course, would be placed to the emergency foreign exchange.

Role of the State

As has been done in prior reports, the State is urged to pursue development of four master plans—one for criminal justice records, one for communications, one for corrections and detention, and one for rural policing. The master plans for records and communications should be coordinated carefully. To all practical purposes, there are no records—certainly no records system—in Conejos County. The present level of sophistication in telecommunications clearly indicates need for master plans; they would assure common data collection and recording formats, a superb base for data analysis, and strong support for police agencies. Further, they would preclude development of many incompatible, less than fully useful systems at considerable cost to many agencies.

Certainly, as well, prisoners should not serve time in such facilities as the Conejos County Jail where around-the-clock supervision is not provided, and where prisoners merely serve time without common amenities or professional guidance and service.

Rural and small urban areas in which crime apparently is rising faster than in the metropolitan and suburban areas generally lack the resources to combat effectively or contain their crime problems. This study and several others done by the consultant in Colorado support the preceding contention. Because conditioning factors involve such diverse factors as tax bases, structure, process, and functional ability of local government, isolation, lack of interjurisdictional support arrangements, and other factors such as underreporting of crime all lead to the logical conclusion that corrective action should be initiated through development of a comprehensive state master plan.

Earlier development of the master plans, along with provision for their implementation, would have eliminated part of the present need for consultative services. Further delay will serve no end but further difficulties at local levels. It should be observed that the Colorado Bureau of Investigation was referred to favorably throughout this study for the extent and quality of services now rendered to local agencies by the Bureau.

Conclusion

Conejos County is large in area with a small population—the average number of residents in its five incorporated towns is only 761. These factors, plus the economic situation extant throughout the area, make difficult development of viable recommendations for improvement of police services. There is a wide disparity between perceived needs and available resources.

Nonetheless, a vigorous effort has been made to point out alternatives available for improvement. For many reasons, however, the consultant has been less explicit than usual, and has not set forth one course of action as being superior to all others. It seemed more important to lay the groundwork for local decisions than to give even a suggestion of being dogmatic.

There are adequate resources of personnel, interest, and determination among local public officials to reasonably assure thoughtful consideration of alternatives and, ultimately, selection of the ones most appropriate in the context of local circumstances.

END