

National Institute of Justice Historical Document

Document Title: **Research Into Action: The Approach of the
National Institute of Law Enforcement and
Criminal Justice**

Author: **Blair G. Ewing**

Document No.: **236836**

Date Received: **December 2011**

**To provide better customer service, NCJRS has made this report
available electronically in addition to traditional paper copies.**



APDP

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20531

Balance Issue p. 3
p. 5.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

RESEARCH INTO ACTION:
THE APPROACH OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

A Paper for Presentation by
Blair G. Ewing, Acting Director
National Institute of Law Enforcement
and Criminal Justice
at the
Annual Meeting of the American Society
of Criminology

Dallas, Texas, November 8, 1978



Science and government are uneasy partners. The relationship changes over time as the participants perceive that their interests either converge or diverge. In the hard sciences, the partnership has been fairly satisfactory. Engineering, physics, mathematics, medicine -- the fruits of these disciplines have a clear application to such national concerns as defense, health, and exploration.

In the 1960's many sought to forge a similar partnership between the social sciences and government. By applying the techniques and knowledge of the social sciences, they reasoned, the nation could begin to remedy many of the social ills that afflicted it: poverty, unemployment, racial discrimination, and crime.

With considerable expectation, government sprang into action. Congress passed laws on the assumption that the social sciences would respond to the need for solutions to domestic problems in the way the hard sciences had developed the polio vaccine and the spacecraft that flew to the moon. Appropriations were made, grants and contracts were let, and social scientists set to work.

Unfortunately, the onslaught of research did not produce the dramatic inroads on the problems that were anticipated. Useful and worthwhile results ensued, to be sure, but not of the magnitude expected. Many reasons are advanced to explain what appears to be, in some sense, a failure: Unrealistic expectations; social problems that are far more intractable than the optimism of the 1960s led many to believe; and, finally, the recognition that the social sciences have not yet advanced

our understanding of complex behaviors to the point where easy, quick solutions can be devised. In short, it is not possible to buy neat bundles of knowledge about social problems the way one develops a missile that can reach the moon.

The frustrations and disappointments of the recent past have produced the inevitable backlash. Having appropriated substantial sums for prescriptions to alleviate a catalog of social ills, it is not surprising that Congress has been sharply critical of government-sponsored programs that have failed to yield cures and impatient with research that appears sluggish in producing the knowledge that might lead to effective remedies. These Congressional complaints are echoed by an increasingly vocal public dissatisfied by what they perceive to be the slim return on their tax dollars and determined to use the ballot to restrain government spending.

The academic research world, while not united in its reaction includes many who say, in effect, "I told you so." Efforts to force knowledge development in this way, they assert, are doomed to failure and bring disrepute to both the social sciences and to government research programs. The fatal error is in trying to solve problems too fast, without first addressing the more fundamental problem of understanding the causes of the behaviors and conditions we want to change.

Other observers, while recognizing that research requires time, emphasize that the pressing needs of society require action, even though that action may have to be based on limited knowledge and understanding.

The problem is not solved by rigidly adhering to either perspective. Government-supported research necessarily must be oriented toward finding



timely answers to pressing national problems. At the same time, these pressures cannot be permitted to force researchers to provide responses that are not scientifically-supportable. The National Institute has chosen to try to balance the need to know with the need to act by structuring the relationship between the two in ways that minimize conflict and maximize contributions.

Two recent studies, both conducted under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences, have been helpful to us. They are part of a number of NAS studies that have addressed the growing spectrum of Federally-supported social R&D. Typically these studies acknowledge the different time frames of fundamental and applied or more problem-centered research and call both for more basic research and greater operational relevance.

One of these studies, Understanding Crime,¹ which is an evaluation of the National Institute, is instructive on this seeming paradox. The report recommended that the Ins titute de-emphasize operational questions except insofar as they relate directly to crime control, and allocate funds largely independent of system pressures or political demands. At the same time, the NAS Committee also recommended practitioner involvement in the policy planning process and dissemination of useful research information to criminal justice agencies. While the Committee struggled with balancing the immediate needs of policymakers and practitioners with the demands of science, it failed to come up with a workable approach for accomplishing that goal. The management mechanisms it proposed were clearly more appropriate to a program of fundamental or basic research.

The Committee's recommendations regarding the planning and management of much of the Institute's research program were thoughtful and constructive, and we have acted upon virtually all of those within our power to implement. Reflecting a more traditional academic view, however, the report offered little guidance on translating the knowledge gained from research into action.

A very different view emerges from another NAS report, The Federal Investment in Knowledge of Social Problems,² which focuses not only on the production but the application of knowledge. The authors of this report recognize the formidable difficulties of acquiring timely and useful knowledge that can be put to work in the action arena. They do not, however, give up on the possibility nor do they see conscious efforts to achieve this goal as compromising research. They suggest instead that different strategies are required for the production and application of knowledge and that these necessarily have different time perspectives. The report suggests a series of steps that can help to minimize the obstacles to effective knowledge application, steps that consider not only the character of government -- its political nature, its need to act on incomplete information, and its brief time perspective --³ but also the nature of the research process, which is inherently apolitical, systematic, time consuming.

The social R&D report underscores the complexities of the research application process; the experience of the National Institute in this area amply corroborates that view, as this paper will demonstrate.



But, as the report notes, a laissez-faire attitude toward knowledge application runs the risk of further undermining public support for research. Thus the Institute remains committed to energetic efforts to translate research and evaluation findings into action. This commitment grows out of the legislative mandate given to the National Institute "to make recommendations for action" to improve and strengthen law enforcement and criminal justice. It stems also, however, from the recognition of the potential of research in suggesting ideas that might be adopted, first in an experimental way to assess the validity of the findings, and then more broadly if the experiment proves successful.



This paper traces the development of the Institute's efforts to translate research into action to deal with an exceedingly complex social problem -- criminal behavior. That the process is much harder to manage than we earlier thought is abundantly clear. To have any hope for progress, the process requires much more time, skill, talents, and special organizational arrangements and attention than originally envisioned.

The approach to program development and knowledge application now followed by the Institute is the product of an evolutionary process. While not as dramatic as conceptualizing and implementing a new system in toto, it has permitted the Institute to fashion programs in a developing field of knowledge -- criminal justice -- and to alter them based on the way existing elements of the system were actually operating and as new information emerged from research and experimentation.

Federal Support for Criminal Justice Research: The First Decade

A brief review of the history of Federally-supported criminal justice research will help to put these efforts in context. The Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 created the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration in response to growing national concern about crime and violence. In establishing LEAA, the Congress made specific provision for a research institute.

The research of the first decade after 1968 was based largely on the assumption that immediate need and the fast-mounting crises of crime and collective violence precluded the time required for research that attempted to understand criminal behavior. What one needed, so the argument went, was short-term research that showed how to make crime control more effective. The problems were urgent; while crime correlates might be of academic interest, the government needed immediate answers to the pressing problems of crime control and the violence that appeared to be rampant when LEAA was formed. In the face of this crisis, low priorities were set on research designed to explore the basis of criminal behavior and emphasis placed instead on short-term research on criminal justice efficiency, effectiveness and fairness.

Given the pressures to act in the inherently political arena of crime control, the tipping of the balance in favor of the immediate demands of the policymaker and the practitioner is not surprising, nor is it a typical or altogether undesirable for the research arm of a mission agency. Typically,

the catalyst for the accumulation of knowledge about a social problem is the passage of new legislation, the creation of the program, and the authorization and expenditure of funds. None of these actions can be forestalled until a body of knowledge is in place, although in an ideal world that might be the case.

Our world is of course far from ideal, and our actions dictated by the political realities: the competing needs and interests that must be weighed in addressing any national issue. While early, Federally-supported criminal justice research efforts weighed heavily on the side of the immediate problem-solving, these efforts certainly were not without merit. Many produced timely and usable findings, and the objective of improving the criminal justice system remains an appropriate goal vigorously pursued by the Institute.

At the same time, it became increasingly clear as the first decade of criminal justice research activity drew to a close that the program was out of kilter. The support for basic research, which is essential for long-term improvements in the utility of research investments, had been neglected.

Shaping the Second Decade

Realignment of the program began in 1975, when a major new approach emphasizing long-term explorations of fundamental issues began. Known as the Research Agreements Program, the arrangement linked the Institute to established research centers, principally in the academic world which had voiced concerns about future directions for Federally-sponsored criminal justice research.

As the Institute continued its period of reassessment, it called upon the National Academy of Sciences to assist in the evaluation. From these internal and external reviews agenda-setting emerged as a paramount concern. Unless research needs were more clearly articulated and priorities consciously reflected, it was obvious that the more complex questions about criminal behavior or the long-term consequences of various intervention strategies could get short shrift in the zeal to produce immediately usable facts. At the same time, a quest for durable findings of high scientific quality could mean shelving urgent questions for which answers are needed.

A carefully-drawn research agenda, subject to periodic review and revision, clearly could serve as a scale for balancing the two needs. Accordingly, the Institute in 1977 began the task of constructing an agenda for what might be called the "second generation" of criminal justice research. The priorities that have been set are:

1. Correlates of crime and determinants of criminal behavior.
2. Violent crime and the violent offender.
3. Community crime prevention.
4. Career criminals and habitual offenders.
5. Utilization and deployment of police resources.
6. Pre-trial process: consistency, fairness, and delay reduction
7. Sentencing
8. Rehabilitation
9. Deterrence
10. Performance standards and measures

The discipline of the agenda-setting process also helped the Institute to advance on another important front -- summarizing and synthesizing the knowledge that has been gained through research in these ten priority areas, as well as elsewhere. The process of cumulation is of course the hallmark of a body of research; it is also crucial to research utilization efforts and is being strongly emphasized as the second decade of Federally-supported criminal justice research proceeds.

Applying Existing Knowledge

Although it takes years to build a knowledge base, the criminal justice system's need for better information about crime and the processes that deal with it have to be met. The Congress clearly recognized this need by assigning specific responsibilities for information dissemination to the National Institute.

The twin Congressional directives for both research and dissemination reflect the state of the criminal justice system in the mid-sixties. The deficiencies of the system were graphically described in the landmark reports of the Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. In its 1967 report, the Commission observed:

"Probably the single greatest limitation on the system's ability to make decisions wisely and fairly is that the people in the system often are required to decide issues without enough information. . . The Commission has found and discussed in this report many needs of law enforcement and the administration of criminal justice. But what it has found to be the greatest need is the need to know."⁴

While the early research agenda was quickly shaped to yield information about the most pressing concerns of the system, the dissemination program

attempted to deal with one of the crippling features of the system -- parochialism. Innovative approaches had emerged in some jurisdictions, but they were by and large not known beyond the boundaries of their originating communities. It was clear that the experience of progressive agencies offered a rich vein of information that could be mined and packaged as a resource for the system nationwide.

In shaping the initial stages of the knowledge application program, the Institute attempted to exploit that possibility while launching efforts to disseminate results from the embryonic field of criminal justice research. Two vehicles were constructed for accomplishing this.

"Prescriptive Package" was the title given a publication series that synthesized research findings and operational experience in a particular subject and presented guidelines for operating a model program. The reports were designed to share valuable information in a format that attempted to counteract two perennial obstacles cited by many studies of knowledge diffusion:

-- Research reports are often incomprehensible to the practitioner. Findings with implications for operating agencies may be buried under layers of technical language and detail.

-- Even the most receptive and conscientious program administrators and policymakers lack the time -- and often the skills -- to review and assimilate the related literature on a topic, extract the most salient data and translate the information into practical terms.

Prescriptive Packages were an attempt to translate research into laymen's language, to synthesize research results and actual experience,

and to consolidate this information into a single, readable report. The format was tailored to the audience -- practitioners and policymakers -- and the reports included such practical information as staff and budget needs, potential problems, and methods for measuring the program's impact.

Another tool for tapping existing knowledge, the Exemplary Projects Program, was launched during the same period. Work on the Exemplary Project Program began in mid-1972, sparked initially by a pilot program in HEW's Office of Education which sought to find and publicize outstanding teaching techniques.

Still very much a part of our approach to knowledge diffusion, the program represents a systematic method for identifying state and local programs that have demonstrated consistent success in reducing crime or achieving a measurable improvement in criminal justice. Projects selected are required to have formal evaluation data or other conclusive evidence of achievement, which is then reviewed and validated by an independent evaluator. The next step in the process is to publicize the projects widely through various channels, providing sufficient detail so that other communities can benefit from the lessons learned. From more than 515 candidates, only 29 have passed the screening process and won the Exemplary designation. To date more than 150,000 copies of the instructional manuals on the first 24 Exemplary Projects have been distributed in response to requests for information.

The history of the first Exemplary Project, the Polk County Court Services Project of Des Moines, Iowa, illustrates some of the program development and transfer issues which challenge agencies working in social program areas.

The project had begun when the State of Iowa condemned the Polk County Jail for overcrowding. Through a range of pre-and post-trial programs, and the institution of a community-based correctional facility, the project reduced the local jail population by 50 percent within the first three years. Not only was the county spared the cost of new jail construction, but both services and sentencing options were broadened without increasing overall cost or risk to the community. Two organizational factors were identified as major elements in program success. All service delivery components were integrated under a single administrative unit, and the project had been designed to make extensive use of existing community resources.

The initial announcement of the project's selection triggered a chain of media interest that continued for over two years -- by major dailies and magazines and network TV. Each mention brought new attention and inquiries to the Des Moines project.

The coverage clearly illustrates the important role the media can play in information diffusion and in creating awareness and acceptance of new approaches. However, beyond the initial trigger -- publishing a

report or issuing a press release -- the information flow about an innovation in the mass media cannot be shaped by a sponsoring agency. And as Niehoff (1966) has observed, the media reach too broad a public with little opportunity for feedback.

In augmenting the publicity, the Institute therefore focused on strategies to reach target audiences. The initial dissemination route was through the typical avenue of publications. As has become standard on all Exemplary Projects, two types of publications are developed. The first, a brief descriptive brochure written in simple, lively language, is designed to stimulate interest without overwhelming the reader. The second is a more detailed operations manual for the potential user. This report delves into the rationale for the program, the mechanics of operations, staffing, and budget, along with information on evaluating program impact. Although more technical, the manual avoids jargon and attempts to convey the requisite information in a simple, easy-to-read format.

Recognizing the limitations of relying on a single medium of communications, the Institute encourages site visits to the projects and sponsors training programs based on the exemplary approaches.

As the Institute planned its first training program on the Des Moines approach, it focused on three major issues: audience, content, and

instructors. The principles that emerged from that process still guide Institute training efforts.

To get the maximum benefit from limited training funds, the target audience was identified as a mix of decisionmakers with authority to implement the program in their home communities and practitioners whose understanding and cooperation is essential to successful implementation.

Second, the training materials were developed not only to explain program operations in detail and outline the potential benefits but also to candidly present the problems likely to occur. The format of the workshops included ample time for discussion and interaction so that participants could relate the Des Moines experience to the way things were "back home."

Finally, in selecting instructors it was clear that the originators of the concept -- the Des Moines Project staff -- represented a valuable linking agent. As practitioners themselves, they could establish rapport with their audience. As the "experts" on the subject, they had credibility and were more likely to generate enthusiasm and acceptance for the materials presented.

The workshops reached over 450 judges, senior probation officials and correctional administrators. While no funds were provided for implementation, an independent survey of the participants six months later found that 30 percent of the respondents reported that adoption of all or part of the Des Moines approach was underway; an additional 9 percent reported firm plans to adopt; and 33 percent reported that adoption was under consideration.

Spreading the Word on Early Research Findings

Another example of early Institute efforts to introduce innovations is particularly instructive because it illustrates a major stumbling block to research utilization, one that persists today. As the Social R&D report states, many researchers and research administrators pay little attention to the process of how research results can find their way into practice, substituting instead a sort of blind faith that good results will somehow gain the attention they deserve and prompt the appropriate action.⁵

One of the earliest Institute projects -- begun, in fact, under the small pilot program that preceded LEAA -- experimented with an approach for training police to deal with family fights. Then as now domestic quarrels were recognized as particularly hazardous duty for police, frequently resulting in injury or death both to the disputants and to the police. Through special training in crisis intervention techniques, researchers postulated, officers could be equipped to deal more humanely and safely with these situations. The results of an experiment in the New York City Police Department were encouraging. None of the more than 1,000 calls handled by the specially-trained officers resulted in deaths to the family members, and no police officers were injured.

The project received favorable press in the major New York newspapers. Reports on the concept and experience were published and disseminated. The approach even won praise from a prestigious national commission. And the National Institute in one of its first grants continued the project with the New York City Housing Authority Police.

Despite these efforts, however, relatively few police departments had picked up on the idea in the years immediately following the experiment. The reasons why are difficult to determine precisely. Some of the sluggishness may have been the normal time-lag in the adoption of an innovation. Another impediment may have been the concept itself. Although certainly responding to a felt need, crisis intervention derived from psychological principles that may have been foreign -- at least in 1970 -- and therefore suspect to many police officers who were the intended users. But the apathy also may have resulted from the rather cursory efforts of the Institute to foster the application of the research findings. Spreading the word on crisis intervention required more than a few stories in the press and a brief publication.

Family crisis intervention training for police clearly needed a boost if it was to begin to gain widespread acceptance. The Institute, therefore, selected it as one of its first nationwide training efforts, along with the Des Moines project. Some 600 police officials throughout the country attended the initial workshops. A follow-up assessment showed that 63 percent of the respondents said that the workshops had motivated their agencies to incorporate elements of crisis intervention training. In recent years, acceptance of the concept appears to be increasing with more than 100 major police departments operating domestic disturbance units.

As the training workshops on these two programs progressed, other channels for dissemination opened up, many of them feeding into the kind of "natural entry points" recommended by scholars of research utilization. In the case of family crisis intervention, for example, a number of states incorporated this type of training into State

standards for police instruction. The Des Moines training materials became part of a workshop at a national conference of the American Correctional Association, as well as being adopted for use in criminal justice courses and lectures.

While these early transfer efforts were encouraging and provided some useful feedback on the underlying concepts of the innovations, they obviously did not provide the opportunity for the rigorous scrutiny and "debugging" of the concepts possible through the actual implementation and observation of the programs in variety of real-world environments. That was the task of the Institute's demonstration program.

Demonstrations

To broaden our understanding of both the Des Moines project and the Family Crisis Intervention Training approach and to promote further application, these two innovations became the subjects of the first Institute demonstrations. The program also had a further goal: to provide insights into knowledge transfer as it occurs within the criminal justice system.

I think it is accurate to say that these goals were only partially met. Evaluation of these early demonstrations reflects not just the inexperience of the Institute but the stumbling blocks in translating knowledge into action. If the process is to be successful, a number of interlocking factors must be present: an adequate base of information, a carefully-structured program, appropriate real-life "laboratories" in

the form of communities willing to observe the experimental process, and the synchronization of the program with the evaluation. Achieving these aims is difficult in most fields; it's particularly arduous in criminal justice, a field without longstanding orientation to research and experimentation.

While the Institute has learned and progressed from its early experience with demonstrations, we continue to grapple with many of the problems inherent in the knowledge utilization process. How can the experimental design be safeguarded on the one hand, while allowing for the practical realities in the participating jurisdictions? How can one ensure useful, accurate, and timely feedback?

Evaluation, particularly in criminal justice, is an infant art, and the usefulness of the information uncovered by evaluators is often determined by factors difficult to control. Data may be non-existent or difficult to obtain. Adaptations considered essential by individual sites may confound the evaluator's attempt to make comparisons across sites. And it may be impossible to accurately gauge the program's effects within a short time frame: initial success may dissipate or the nucleus of an idea may take root despite initial resistance or even failure.

While these problems cannot be entirely solved, they can be minimized. In assessing the early demonstrations, the Institute concluded that insufficient attention to standardized data collection requirements in the program design and too much flexibility given to the sites in adapting the model program had made it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the impact of a program. It was clear that the initial design of



the program played a pivotal role in determining the ultimate value of field experiments. Hence, the centerpiece of the program development process as it now operates within the National Institute and LEAA is the concept of a carefully-crafted design based on an adequate foundation of knowledge and agreed to by the researchers, the evaluators and the implementers.

Developing an Integrated Knowledge Application Program

Building on our experience and our expanded capabilities for collecting, synthesizing and cumulating research findings, the Institute has created a workable cycle of knowledge production and application. This effort has proceeded in parallel with an agency-wide effort to forge a stronger link between the research and evaluation programs of the Institute and the demonstration programs financed by LEAA.

While no panacea, I believe the creation of a formal process for program development helps to balance both research and action goals in a mission agency such as LEAA. The process has been instrumental in shaping a more coherent approach, based on the more careful assembly and organization of data and findings from research and evaluation. It unquestionably has led to more meticulous design of programs and of evaluations, giving order and logic to what sometimes had been a matter of funding hunches and biases.

Fundamentals of the Program Development Process

Briefly stated, the program development process we now follow proceeds along these lines:

1. Identifying priority problems revealed through research or experience;
2. Selecting response strategies -- additional research if the knowledge base is insufficient or. . .
3. Development of a program model based on the best available research and evaluation data and lessons learned through practical experience;
4. Designing a field test of the model program;
5. Implementing and evaluating the field test, and incorporating the results in. . .
6. A refined model program, called a validated program design, which provides direction for future research and action planning.

Assessing Research Findings

Having identified a specific problem area, the program development process typically begins by pulling together the available knowledge. The results of one research study, no matter how provocative or promising, rarely suffice for program development. As the body of criminal justice research has grown over the years, it is increasingly possible to assemble cumulative findings that can be coalesced into a design for a program.

At the Institute, the impetus for consolidating and assessing these increments of knowledge may come from the Research Utilization Committee, which is convened at the conclusion of each Institute-sponsored research and evaluation grant or when significant interim results are available.

The Committee brings together representatives of all relevant Institute divisions and appropriate LEAA action offices. The assignment is to review the research results and to make recommendations for further research directions, for program development, and for disseminating the findings to the appropriate audience.

Selecting Response Strategies

The Committee may find no immediate insights from the research project to guide action efforts and thus highlight the need for further study perhaps of a theoretical nature. If the findings of a study appear to tie in with the results of other research with implications for action, then the program development process may be set in motion.

While staff recommendations carry weight, the LEAA Administrator ultimately makes the final decision on whether to wait or go forward in developing an action program. That decision necessarily may reflect the exigencies of the political world. Our experience to date, however, suggests that the integrity of the program development process can be maintained.

A case in point is a program known as Neighborhood Justice Centers which offers an alternative method of resolving minor criminal cases and interpersonal disputes. This type of conflict has over the years increasingly landed in the criminal courts, despite frequently-voiced concerns that the formal adjudication process may not offer the best promise of resolving the matter in a timely and affordable fashion. The burden that these cases place on the courts is a matter of concern to the Attorney General, and he set experimentation with alternative approaches

as a priority for LEAA. But even in this case of an assigned priority by the political leadership, the program development process was allowed to follow its course, proceeding through the stages I've outlined and will now explain in more detail.

Integrating Research Findings and Operational Experience

When available research indicates program possibilities in a particular topic area, the Institute may commission the preparation of a Program Models report, designed to serve both as the springboard for further program development and as an informational tool for the practitioner.

The Program Models build on the Institute's early efforts to distill research and evaluation findings into a single, useful document that could guide policymakers and practitioners. The reports provide a detailed analysis of programmatic options and identify areas in which current knowledge is incomplete and additional research needed.

Under NILECJ direction, each Program Model is developed by a contractor through a process which includes a literature review, mail and telephone surveys, and on-site assessments of operational projects and culminates in data analysis and model development. The authors are guided by a distinguished advisory group of researchers and practitioners in the topic area who critique the study methodology, advise on site selection,

respond to issues raised during the site assessments, and review drafts of the final report. Twenty-three Program Models are underway or completed. They serve a number of possible program development applications including use in Agency technical assistance, training, and demonstration programs, as well as in development of programs to be field-tested.

Other mechanisms for incorporating the experience of operating criminal justice programs are the Exemplary Projects Program, described earlier, and the National Evaluation Program. The NEP studies are aimed at synthesizing research and practice in state and local programs funded under the LEAA block grant program. Rather than discussing program options, the NEP assessments typically analyze the adequacy and availability of research on various topic areas. The studies pinpoint knowledge gaps and weigh the available evidence to determine how much confidence can be placed in existing data and how great the need is for more precise, reliable information. The initial assessments may conclude, for example, that the cost of obtaining accurate knowledge outweighs its potential benefits to either researchers or practitioners. If further evaluation is both warranted and feasible, then the initial assessment provides a framework for more intensive study of the topic.

Testing the Concepts

These efforts to accumulate and synthesize research and operational experience help to stimulate awareness, define the problem and document the findings. While they may potentially influence policy and practice both in the field and within the agency's funding apparatus, that outcome

is not certain nor, in some cases, is it desirable. Often the research-based concepts need to be applied in a real-life setting and the results carefully evaluated.

At the Institute, this applied research process takes the form of field tests that have evolved from our early experience with demonstration programs. As now constituted, the tests approximate the "demonstrations for policy formulation" as defined by the Social R&D Study Project.⁶ That is, the tests are intended to generate new information about the effects of a particular innovation and the desirability and feasibility of implementing it.

In deciding whether a topic area is suitable for testing, we analyze it in light of several questions. Does the topic area embody applied research questions which are best answered through carefully structured experimentation in more than one site? Are the program concepts amenable to the requirements of an evaluation research design? Will the answers to these questions, whether positive or negative, have potentially significant impact on the expenditure of resources by state and local criminal justice agencies and/or LEAA action offices? Alternatively, will the answers add significant new insights to the body of knowledge? We also make judgments about whether the criminal justice knowledge is sufficient for the development of a program model and the formulation of specific hypotheses to be tested; and whether it is feasible to conduct the test in an operational setting within the confines of available resources, and possible to find agencies willing to participate in the test.

The current approach to field tests reflects a number of lessons learned the hard way. As I've mentioned, the design of the program appears to be a key determinant of the future value of the effort. By value, I don't necessarily mean success. Finding out what doesn't work and what gaps in our knowledge must be filled are equally important.

We know, too, that a workable design requires coordination with all the key actors in the field test: the researchers who posit the theory, the practitioners who will implement the concept, and the evaluators who will trace its progress from the drawing board to the field.

Accordingly, our process involves the program development, testing, research, and evaluation offices in a joint effort to design a program that is feasible to operate and to evaluate. Working over a three-to six-month period, the team develops a detailed design document that:

- identifies the essential elements of the model to be tested, and articulates the objectives and underlying assumptions and/or hypotheses for each component;
- defines the methodology and the issues to be addressed in the evaluation; and
- specifies the criteria for selecting the test sites.

A panel of experts conversant with the key research and operational issues assists in the final drafting of the design and provides advice to the Institute in the site selection process. Spelling out the precise features of the program to be tested helps to avoid the possibility of

misunderstanding on the part of the communities to be involved in the test. The demands of the program are clearly established so that they can make a rational decision about whether to participate in the experiment. The program design also guides the independent evaluation done on every test, as well as Institute training to help the test sites implement the program.

Currently six programs are being field tested, each in a limited number of jurisdictions. The programs are: Managing Criminal Investigations, Juror Use and Management, Neighborhood Justice Centers, Improved Correctional Field Services, Managing Patrol Operations, Pre-release Centers. In the current year, we plan to sponsor a field test of sentencing guidelines in two or three states. The guidelines, which were developed through Institute research, have been implemented in several individual jurisdictions; this test will extend the guidelines approach to two to four local courts in each state to see whether the guidelines can help to reduce disparity across jurisdictions. This is, we believe, a necessary step before proceeding to application of the guidelines at the statewide level.

Our FY 1979 plans also call for design work to begin on four new experiments directed at significant problems facing the criminal justice system. Designs will be developed for programs dealing with arson, commercial robbery and burglary, plea bargaining, and residential burglary.

Refining the Original Model

As the evaluation results come in on the test sites, the Institute is in a position to decide whether the program is working as it should,

or whether flaws in the concept or structure make it unsuitable for adoption until a sounder foundation of knowledge can be laid.

If the findings suggest that further replication is warranted, the Institute sets about the task of refining the original model so that it becomes, in our vocabulary, a validated program design. If, on the other hand, the test results challenge the efficacy of the approach, these findings are disseminated to the research and practitioner communities and the implications for further study analyzed.

The validated version of the test program specifies those features of the program that have demonstrated their value and, of course, eliminates those that didn't work. It also delineates the optional components from those that are essential so potential replicators can know in advance if aspects of the program that may not be feasible for them are expendable.

Intended as a guide for policymakers, planners, managers, and practitioners, the document describes:

- program objectives, costs, and likely results;
- conditions for successful implementation: the demography of a community, for example, or the structure, operations, and attitudes of relevant criminal justice or political entities;
- operational and management details;
- pitfalls to be avoided in replication efforts.

Current designs are being fine-tuned for such tested programs as managing criminal investigations and juror usage and management. In selected instances, a validated design may also be drawn from the evaluation

of LEAA demonstration programs. For example, evaluation results on LEAA-funded career criminal programs now operating in a number of jurisdictions are being used to prepare a validated design for such programs.

Marketing Test Results

As the culmination of several research and evaluation efforts, the validated design document will be widely disseminated to the field and will be turned over to LEAA action offices for possible marketing through a new Incentives Fund Program. This effort will encourage states and localities to adopt and eventually institutionalize advanced criminal justice practices that research, testing and validation have shown to be effective. While the approach will include enough flexibility to permit the programs to be adapted to local needs, the guidelines for Incentives Funding stipulate that the essential research-based elements must be implemented.

With this kind of information, we believe that local administrators can make more rational decisions on which programs they are willing to try. As realists, of course, we all know that funding is frequently the deciding factor. To enhance the viability of the tested programs, we try to keep costs firmly in mind. Many of the validated programs -- managing criminal investigations, improved jury operations, and managing patrol operations, for example -- help deliver the same level of services -- or even a high level -- without increasing costs.

Under the Incentives Fund program, states and localities can receive discretionary funds for 50 percent of the costs of the new programs. Initially they can also use 40 percent of their block grant monies to underwrite the innovation. If the provision in the proposed new legislation for LEAA relating to "national priority grants" is passed, then half of the program could be financed through block grants and half through discretionary grants. To help boost the chances for survival of these programs, the guidelines will set a clear time limit for Federal support of the innovation so that states and localities can plan ahead for eventually assuming the costs of the project.

Reinforcing the Message

The field-tests and Incentives Fund demonstrations represent an important platform for launching widespread application of new knowledge. Bolstering these efforts is a strengthened system of auxiliary channels for disseminating significant new information as it is produced by researchers and evaluators.

The information diffusion process frequently begins with the printed word. We've expanded our use of newsletters as a mechanism for conveying information. One of these is specifically written for the practitioner, and the other for the researcher. While they differ somewhat in style and format, they both aim to provide timely information on research results and program activities.

Our dissemination also entails the publication of full research reports as well as summaries and synopses of the more technical documents. Of course, there are still nagging problems in producing reports that are readable and timely. Many researchers are understandably much more interested in conducting the research than in writing about it, so reports may be quite late and/or may defy translation into lay language. But we try to build the production of a good report into the initial planning of the research project, wherever that's possible. We work into the grant the time and funds for writing and editing the report. We also encourage interim reports or "working papers" from long-term research projects so we can disseminate incremental but useful knowledge on important issues.

Making sure the findings reach the right audience is an important but difficult task. The Research Utilization Committee, which I described earlier, helps carry out this assignment by pinpointing the audience for specific findings and suggesting appropriate dissemination avenues for reaching target groups.

Major responsibility for this task, however, falls to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service which collects and disseminates valuable research documentation from all sources, not just that produced by the National Institute. The design for this information retrieval system was among the initial knowledge transfer efforts of the Institute. Over the years it has evolved into a multi-faceted operation that includes a wide range of distribution and notification services by

which NCJRS informs subscribers of the latest research and operations experience in the field. Its computerized data base of over 29,000 items can provide a prompt response to individual queries on criminal justice topics, in the form of special bibliographies, research reports, or abstracts of relevant documents. By distributing single copies of all available NILECJ and LEAA documents free in response to requests, NCJRS delivers research findings and program information to a wide audience across the country. In addition, copies of many individual items in the data base are available on microfiche or through interlibrary loans.

The sheer volume of information being generated in the field of criminal justice -- as in other areas -- represents another challenge. One way to meet the challenge is by periodic syntheses of the knowledge gained by research. Next Spring, the first of what we anticipate will be an annual publication will be produced under the auspices of the Institute. Entitled Crime and Justice 1978, the volume will consist of essays treating major recent developments in criminal justice research. A 10-member editorial review board of distinguished researchers and research administrators is advising the Institute on topics and reviewing the papers selected for publication. Over time, these annual reviews of criminal justice research will encompass a wide range of

disciplines and research interests. Some essays will be critical summaries of recent developments and possibilities for future research. Others will deal with recent analytical or empirical breakthroughs. Some articles will be conceptual and speculative; others may be methodological.

Other Strategies for Transferring Knowledge

While continuing to refine and expand our publications effort, we try to keep our expectations realistic. No research report, no matter how eloquent or persuasive, is going to make change happen. Other approaches emphasizing personal contact are needed.

Our training efforts, which I've mentioned, continue to target their efforts on key audiences of decisionmakers. The Executive Training Program offers regional workshops for senior criminal justice officials and provides specialized training to support Institute field tests and LEAA demonstrations. Executive workshops are held throughout the country on four to five new programs each year, selected from outstanding research studies and new programs. Participants are those officials with authority and responsibility to institute new programs in the topic area. The two to three day workshops are conducted by national experts--wherever possible by those who originated the technique. The Institute develops a complete training curriculum and resource materials to aid officials who wish to adopt elements of the program in their own communities. Sixteen series of regional workshops have been completed, reaching over 8,300 executives.

In 1976, limited follow-on training also was made available as an adjunct to the regional workshops. Because Institute funds pay only for the cost of bringing back the original national trainers, a small further investment of Federal dollars extends the new concepts to a wider audience. Over 90 follow-on events have been held in the past two years, reaching an additional 4,650 people. Having invested funds in creating a wide range of materials -- not just publications, but videotapes, audio cassettes, etc. for that key audience we try to keep recycling the material so that it can reach widening pools of users. Wherever possible, we filter the material through the natural points of entry -- the linkages already embedded in the practitioner's world, as Yin describes them.

Thus for a number of years we also have directed our utilization strategies at professional associations and education and training organizations. One new effort will attempt to diffuse knowledge at the policy level -- through governors and state legislatures. Although Institute research findings have been used by legislators at both the state and national level -- results from our work on sentencing guidelines and evaluation of New York's drug laws are examples -- it has been on an ad hoc basis. We intend to formalize the process by creating a new dissemination vehicle -- Policy Briefs -- that lay out the issues and research findings and then discuss their policy and legislative implications.

At the same time, we are expanding our outreach to these and other policymakers and key national audiences through Special National Workshops. These generally fall into three categories:

1. Training Workshops for policy makers whose authority and decisions impact on the criminal justice system. For example, the Institute has held two national workshops for elected officials -- mayors and county executives and supervisors -- which focused on new approaches offering potential for cost savings or better resource allocation, such as juror usage or managing criminal investigations, and on strategies requiring the coordination of several governmental departments, such as crime prevention through environmental design.
2. State-of-the-Art/Problem Analysis Workshops, where experts and scholars collaborate to assemble and analyze knowledge about a topic of current concern, such as determinate sentencing.
3. Developmental Workshops, where preliminary research and analysis may be commissioned on a topic that is important but relatively unexplored. Participation is limited to experts and reactors, with the objective of laying out future research agendas and/or program direction.

The reach of the workshops is frequently extended through publication of the proceedings in professional journals. For example, the workshop on Determinate Sentencing became the focus of the December 1977 issue of Corrections magazine and the workshop on Plea Bargaining will be featured in a future issue of Law and Society Review. Nine special workshops have been held to date, and an equal number are planned for FY 1979.

A more individualized approach to training is followed in our HOST program. As the name implies, this effort permits criminal justice officials who are genuinely interested in an innovative program such as an Exemplary Project to visit the site and get "hands-on" experience. Interest is an important criteria for selecting the participants, but we also evaluate the compatibility or comparability of the visitor's agency with the Host site in terms of such issues as community attitudes and resources. Seventy officials visited 12 Exemplary Projects in the first year of the program. In evaluating their experience, more than 80 percent of the participants who responded to our survey said they planned or had begun to make changes in their own agencies based on what they had learned.

Toward a Better Understanding of Change

The combination of strategies that have been described in this paper represent a comprehensive system that draws upon our own experience -- and that of others -- in fostering change and reform.

We recognize, however, that understanding of how change occurs in criminal justice -- as indeed in other fields -- is still fuzzy. As many observers have noted, there is a need for in-depth research on knowledge diffusion if we are to get a clearer picture of how the process of social change can be encouraged and shaped.

To explore these issues from the criminal justice perspective, the Institute is now soliciting proposals for a long-term research project on the change process.

The first phase of the research will focus on communication -- how the criminal justice community is made aware of an idea, forms attitudes toward it, evaluates it, and decides whether to accept or reject. The next step will look at actual implementation -- how to plan for change, reduce resistance, manage the implementation and assess the impact. The third phase will focus on the transformation of the innovation into everyday practice.

Conclusion

While that research proceeds, we will continue to refine the machinery for knowledge utilization and application that is now in place within the National Institute. Some of these improvement efforts have been described in this paper; others will surface as we continue to learn from our own experience and the experience of others.

It is clear that knowledge application efforts will continue to be emphasized in Federally-supported research. Given the intense competition for resources, every public venture, no matter how noble,

will be called upon to demonstrate through tangible evidence that it has made or tried to make contributions to the solution of difficult practical problems.

The challenge facing us is how to justify continued public support for research on social problems without overpromising. The experience of the sixties has taught us to be more modest in our expectations and considerably more reticent about proffering "solutions" to intractable problems. At the same time, we cannot give up on the effort. The promises may be fewer, but perhaps more of them can be fulfilled.

REFERENCES

1. National Research Council (1977) Understanding Crime: An Evaluation of the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. Committee on Research on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences.
2. National Research Council (1978) The Federal Investment in Knowledge of Social Problems. Study Project on Social Research and Development. Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences.
3. Ibid., Chapter 4.
4. President's commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (1967). The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
5. National Research Council, The Federal Investment in Knowledge of Social Problems, Chapter 3.
6. Ibid., Chapter 1.