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Attached please find the Final Report for this grant.

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Florida

Criminal Justice Workforce

Research Information System

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Florida Department of Corrections

Bureau of Planning, Research and Statistics

June 1996

Summary of Findings

I. Purposes, Goals and Achievements

There were five purposes and goals associated with designing and creating the Florida Criminal Justice Workforce Research Information System (FCJWRIS).

1. To extract data from two transaction management information systems which could then be used by researchers to describe and analyze the workforce which administers justice in Florida.

2. To pilot test the concept of developing a new research information source from existing data systems.

3. To forge partnerships with diverse criminal justice agencies having a mutual need to understand their respective workforces.

4. To design the research files to enable internal and external researchers to utilize the data for analytical purposes.

5. To describe the methodology used to create the FCJWRIS in sufficient detail to enable other states to replicate the process and develop their own criminal justice workforce research database.

To differing degrees, all of these goals were met through the grant. Each of the purposes will be discussed in more detail here along with the level to which they were achieved and related issues that pertain to each.

1. Extraction of Data

Data was extracted from two personnel management systems. The Cooperative Personnel Employment System (COPES) operated by the Department of Management Services (DMS) which contains data on all state employees. Also, the Automated Transaction Management System (ATMS) operated by FDLE which contains data on all certified law enforcement, correctional officers and correctional probation officers in Florida.

This process was more difficult and time consuming than anticipated. There had been minimal experience with the COPES transaction system prior to the beginning of this project. This system proved to be more complex than

expected and obtaining the requisite data from DMS was delayed because of the significant workload resulting on an already understaffed data processing unit.

It was determined that an outside computer programming expert was required to conduct the data extraction process. There were two reasons for this. First, the ATMS and COPES transaction systems are extensive in size and complexity. Only highly skilled and trained systems programmers would be capable of extracting the workforce data from ATMS and COPES. Second, there was not adequate staff or time for the agencies who maintain these systems to complete the extraction process. All that could be expected from the staff who maintain ATMS and COPES was to copy their data onto tapes in the format as it exists on their systems. Then, contract programmers would be reimbursed through the grant to develop the programs necessary to extract the data for the research files.

MIS Software Development (MSD) was selected to conduct the system design, extraction and documentation work for the grant for several reasons. First, they conduct programming for the Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) on a regular basis and are known for producing high quality products. Second, they have built extraction programs the FDC researchers in the past and are therefore familiar with the types of files which researchers require. Third, MSD has past experience with working on personnel transaction systems.

While we were ultimately successful in obtaining the COPES data necessary to complete the project, this process would have been more efficient if project staff had been more knowledgeable of the COPES transaction system from the beginning. Those seeking to replicate this project are encouraged to become operationally proficient in any personnel management system which will be used to extract workforce research data. This learning process should include both the staff conducting the data extraction and the staff who will ultimately analyze the data for reporting purposes.

2.   Pilot Test the Concept

As far as we know, the FCJWRIS is a novel concept in the country. For decades, researchers have been using data relating to offenders, sentencing, and criminal justice processes which are extracted from various types of management information system. This project has proven that research files can also be created through the extraction of personnel management systems data. The knowledge that this concept can be actualized in other localities within and outside Florida is one of the major accomplishments of this project.

3.   Forging Inter-Agency Partnerships

The project was jointly conceived, designed, and completed by two state-level criminal justice agencies with diverse missions and responsibilities. These were Florida's state law enforcement agency, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and the state correctional agency, the Florida Department of Corrections (FDC). FCJWRIS will be a valuable tool to both FDLE and FDC for years to come. Additionally, the professional relationships and mutual respect developed between FDLE and FDC staff will likely result in future collaborative projects between these two state-level criminal justice agencies.

4.   Workforce Research Files

The final research tools resulting from the project are research files that can be readily accessed and analyzed by internal and external researchers. While these files are available, the ease with which they can be understood and appropriately used remains in question. Extensive use of the workforce research files for analytical purposes was not included in the grant award and this analysis was to be completed by existing FDC staff. However, other pressing priorities existed during the period between the time the data became available and the date the grant period ended. Therefore, only rudimentary analysis was possible. Optimally, extensive analysis of the workforce files would have been possible. What was possible was for the DC researcher to thoroughly test the accuracy of the research files relative to the transaction management systems of ATMS and COPES. However, it was not possible to compare summary statistics from the research files to other sources of information on the workforce to ensure that published reports would be consistent.

It is recommended that any state attempting to replicate the workforce project should ensure that a researcher be allocated solely for the purpose of analyzing the new workforce datasets. The optimal situation is to have a researcher who is involved in the design, creation, testing, and analysis of the workforce database and who will liaise with the staff extracting the data from the transaction systems. They will then better understand the product necessary for researchers to conduct their analysis. Also, the researcher can better understand the transaction management system and how data was extracted. This will enable both parties to understand the relationship between the research data and the management system.

The programmer/researcher linkages were established only during part of the extraction phase and the testing phase of this project. While the researcher is now in a position to conduct the analysis on the workforce database, a more complete understanding of the data and how it can be analyzed would have

resulted if continual, dedicated research resources had been allocated to the workforce project.

It is recommended that states attempting to replicate this project seek enough funding to hire a dedicated researcher to assign to a project of this type if they do not have the in-house resources.

5.   <u>Documentation of Methodology to Enable Replication by Other States</u>

Any state which attempts to create it own workforce database will have unique situations that will differ from that experienced during this project in Florida. However, the documentation presented with the final grant product is sufficiently detailed to enable others to understand how Florida created its workforce database so they can apply many of the same techniques to their situation. Also, those individuals at FDLE and FDC who worked on this project will be available to other states to assist them in the development of workforce research systems.

II. Data Analysis Issues

As discussed previously, the grant did not contain funding specifically for analysis of the final workforce data and report production. The FDLE and FDC hoped to have the staff time available to perform these two functions. However, this was not possible due to other ongoing priorities.

The FDC will use existing staff for the purpose or attempt to secure a new position dedicated to the analysis of the workforce database in the future. The level of complexity in this data is such that it requires dedicated attention and focus.

There were three noteworthy problem areas which were discovered as the workforce database was developed and which must be dealt with in the future. First, replicating the active workforce population on a given day in the past has proved to be problematic. Additional programming and testing will be necessary to perfect this critical component of the research structure. Second, the salary data on the ATMS system is not routinely updated. Therefore, for non-state employed certified officers, it is not possible to report the critical variable of salary. This component of workforce data is needed to address the issue of state-level officers who are recruited by local agencies offering the benefit of higher salaries. Without accurate salary data, this important issue cannot be addressed. Third, it was discovered that ATMS did not contain complete transaction records for all certified officers. Therefore, it is not always known in specific instances what occurred between entry and exit from the workforce.

III. Future Development of FCJWRIS

The workforce database developed under this grant is only the precursor to many future iterations of workforce data tools to be developed in the future. There are other sources of workforce data that have already been identified and will likely be mined for research purposes. For example, the Department of Labor and Employment Security (DLES) maintains data on all workers in Florida. DLES data can be extracted and merged with the workforce database to enhance the salary data and obtain information on prior or subsequent employment events inside and outside the criminal justice field.

In the future, more analysis of the workforce data will be conducted and a more thorough understanding developed of how to turn the data into useful information for policy makers. This will lead to changes in the data elements necessary for extraction from the transaction management systems and how the data is defined and formatted. Additionally, policy makers will be given the opportunity to see what data is not included in the personnel management systems and what data is incomplete or in error. If there are critical questions which cannot be answered with workforce data due to limitations in the personnel management systems, changes to these systems can then be addressed.

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