

The role of planning and research units in law enforcement

2008 PERF Annual Conference




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Structure of panel session:

- Overview of Law Enforcement Organization Planning & Research Director's forum
- Key results from PERF's recent Planning and Research Directors' Survey
- Panel discussion covering areas such as:
 - Role/level of involvement of Planning & Research units
 - Matching structure of PRUs to agency context
 - What PRUs have to offer a LEA
 - Promising approaches used by chiefs to get the best use out of their PRUs



Law Enforcement Organization of Planning & Research Director's (LEOPRD) Forum

- Network of planning and research director's (PRDs) from law enforcement agencies (LEAs)
- LEOPRD is working to further the development of police PRDs by working collaboratively with the managers and leaders of LEAs (chiefs/sheriffs), their PRDs, and other individuals in related professional LEA organizations



LEOPRD (Cont'd)



- Provides PRDs with venues to share and discuss their unique planning and research issues, methodologies and promising practices.
- LEOPRD is dedicated to improving law enforcement policy, practice and performance through the promotion and advancement of the law enforcement planning and research discipline.



Why LEOPRD?

- Currently, no dedicated forum available for the planning and research directors (PRDs), working collaboratively with commanders/chiefs/sheriffs
- Help organize/foster the voice of PRDs
- PRDs have a unique perspective by having access to important data
- Recognition of collective contribution of PRDs and raise profile of PRDs within agencies
- Help PRDs stay current on new research, policy development, positive and negative trends and innovations in field of policing



What will LEOPRD do?

- Improve info sharing through website
- Enhance opportunities for networking to facilitate the above areas
- Help find ways to improve the functioning/ output of a planning/research unit (PRU)
 - Better ways to organize & manage PRUs
 - Sort out functions to be handled by PRUs
 - Promising practices in using consultants/ university partners or in-house staff



Key LEOPRD survey findings-1

- Survey sent to the 200 largest LEAs
(46% response rate, within 6 weeks, data collection ongoing)
- On average, about 8 F/T personnel in PRUs
- 60% of PRDs are sworn,
- 55% of PRDs have graduate degrees
- 66% of PRDs want training
(mostly strategic planning, statistics/methods, leadership)
- Most PRDs are neutral (neither satisfied/nor dissatisfied) about their levels of budget, training and staffing



Key LEOPRD survey findings-2

- PRDs work directly with chief/commanders on:
 - Strategy/planning (85%)
 - Evaluation of programs/strategy (67%)
 - Technology, budgets/grants/resources/staffing (~50%)
- PRDs level of satisfaction with role:
 - 55% satisfied with role in strategy/planning and resources/staffing
 - 50% satisfied with role in evaluation and technology
 - 76% satisfied with role in budgets/grants
- PRDs usually involved in only the beginning stages of these above activities



Key LEOPRD survey findings-3

- In 60% of sample, chiefs and commanders primarily determine content of PRU products and use it the most (>70%)
- Line officers use PRU products in only 16% of the agencies and district command and investigations use it in only one-third of the agencies
- Roughly one-quarter of PRDs feel that their unit's work is under-used



Issues for panel

- Discuss structure of panelists' PRUs and whether their PRU structure is matched well to their agency context
 - Relevant contextual factors (size of agency, urban setting, bureaucracy)
 - Sworn versus civilian staffing of PRUs
 - Expertise needed to work in PRU (desired education, training, experience)
- Role of PRUs in agency (completely reactive or proactive) and level of involvement with chief/command staff/line officers
 - Gathering promising practices of other LEAs (80% on survey do this)
 - Strategic planning (75% do this)
 - Catch-all (everything and anything at all times) (71%)
 - Develop agency policies (69% do this)
 - Conduct needs assessments for programs (67%)



Issues for panel (Cont'd)

- What these units have to offer (PRUs being used appropriately?)
- Recognition of PRU efforts
- Promising approaches used by chiefs to get the best use out of their PRUs
- Type of research designs and products needed in LEA context, and whether PRUs have skills and personnel to do this work (use of consultants)
- Changes needed in PRUs (major changes or tweaking?)
- Issues/next steps for LEOPRD to address