A Cost Effective Way to Staff a Local Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee

A Service Provided by the Institute for Justice Planning

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**Purpose**

The Institute for Justice Planning (IJP)\(^1\) provides jurisdictions with various forms of systemwide criminal justice research, analysis, and technical assistance. IJP staff and consultants have expertise in evidence-based, collaborative solutions that help all justice system stakeholder groups meet their respective needs.

IJP supports jurisdictions in a number of ways, including by providing criminal justice planning staff services to local criminal justice coordinating committees (CJCCs). IJP staff’s expertise and experience enables local CJCCs to receive more effective staff support services than it would receive from sole reliance on in-house staff, but at approximately the same (or in some instances, reduced) cost.

**Issue**

Many local jurisdictions are creating or improving their criminal justice coordinating committees to solve crises, to address chronic problems facing the local justice system (e.g., jail crowding, budget cuts, unevaluated programs), and to manage increasing or unsustainable costs. These committees are most successful when staffed by professional criminal justice planners who provide committee members with the information (including data and analyses) and ideas (e.g., unique, innovative solutions) needed by stakeholders to make collaborative and informed decisions.

Jurisdictions often encounter challenges in staffing the committee, such as hiring and training staff, waiting for staff to overcome the steep and lengthy learning curve on the job, and staff not always being viewed as neutral and objective by CJCC members. IJP provides a service by which we contract with local jurisdictions to provide various criminal justice planning staff functions to the CJCCs.

**How it Works**

IJP provides contracted services in several different “levels” to meet the specific needs of a local jurisdiction.

**Level 1**

This service level resembles the typical shorter-term technical assistance provided by consultants. It is temporary and time-limited, with the major goal of helping the jurisdiction set up its planning function in a way that maximizes the chances of success and sustainability. After the initial assistance, the jurisdiction does not receive ongoing assistance unless it desires to do so. This service is ideal for a jurisdiction that wants to employ its own planning staff over the long-term but could benefit from outside assistance in optimally setting up the staffing function. This service typically lasts in duration from several months to a year. It is “lower dose” and temporary.

\(^1\) The Institute of Justice Planning is a subsidiary of the Pretrial Justice Institute.
Level 1 services most commonly include:
- Facilitation of stakeholder buy-in for the need for staffing support for the CJCC
- Guidance on, and assistance with, organizational placement, job descriptions, interviewing, selecting, training, supervising, and evaluating criminal justice planning staff who are employed by the jurisdiction
- Introduction of planning staff to resources, professional organizations and networks, analytical tools, and training materials.

**Level 2**
This service level resembles the typical longer-term technical assistance provided by consultants. It also is temporary or can be ongoing, but lasts longer than Level 1 services. The major goal is to assist the CJCC and/or its planning staff with strategies and techniques for addressing the jurisdiction’s identified problems and organizational characteristics of the CJCC on an as-needed basis. This service is ideal for a jurisdiction that has an existing committee or planning staff that can benefit from outside assistance to achieve a higher level of effectiveness or to approach existing challenges from a different perspective. This service may occur weekly, monthly, or quarterly, and may last from several months to many years. It is “lower dose” and either temporary or ongoing.

Level 2 services most commonly include:
- Level 1 services (see above)
- Guidance on, and assistance with, any issues related to the CJCC’s or planning staff’s work as they arise, including data analysis, research, generating cost-effective solutions, or evaluating programs or initiatives.

**Level 3**
This service level resembles the daily work typically performed by in-house planning staff, and does not resemble the typical temporary and time-limited technical assistance provided by consultants. The major goal is to meet the day-to-day planning and coordination needs of the CJCC and its constituent agencies on an ongoing and indeterminate basis. Occasionally, jurisdictions that have a newly formed or rejuvenated CJCC will select this option on a trial basis to “try out” the use of planning staff, and then later decide whether to continue it.

Level 3 services most commonly include:
- The local CJCC is provided with one or more criminal justice planners who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to work on that committee’s specific issues. This staff person typically serves as the on-site contact/face-person to the CJCC, and ideally lives in the local jurisdiction to maximize his/her accessibility to committee members. The person is hired by IJP in collaboration with CJCC members to assure the CJCC is satisfied and comfortable with the selected person. The staff person is then trained by IJP while he/she builds relationships with local stakeholders and learns the unique culture and practices of the local justice system. Although the person directly reports to a supervisor at IJP, the person works for the local CJCC by focusing on the committee’s priorities and projects,

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2 See section on Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities for a detailed description.
and is accountable to the committee. The CJCC, and not IJP or the staff person, determines the committee’s priorities and which initiatives are pursued.

- As the number of staff persons are hired in different jurisdictions in a region, state, or across the country, the knowledge and experience of IJP’s planning team grows proportionally. Each on-site planning staff functions much the same as would a planner hired as a county/city employee to work for the CJCC, except with instant access to a large, nationally networked team with great breadth and depth of knowledge and experience in many areas, thus increasing the quantity, quality, and timeliness of information, analyses, experience, and problem-solving that can be provided to the local CJCC.

- The on-site and other planning staff members are supervised by Michael R. Jones who, in the early 2000s built the Jefferson County (Colorado) Criminal Justice Planning Unit into one of the nation’s most accomplished and respected local criminal justice planning units. Dr. Jones has over seven years of experience supervising criminal justice planning staff and consulting to dozens of jurisdictions, and has written a guidebook on staffing local CJCCs soon to be published by the National Institute of Corrections.

- Both the on-site planning staff and supervisor coordinate directly with the County Manager/Administrator or equivalent3 to assure the executive level of local government is directly knowledgeable and supportive of the committee’s and staff’s work.

- Within this service level, the on-site and off-site planning staff provides professional and technical work for the local CJCC. Their work includes facilitating coordinated systems planning and meetings, data and policy analysis, legal and scientific research, oral and written presentation of material, oversight of long- and short-term projects of high complexity, collection and distribution of information, and consultation to entities in the local criminal and/or juvenile justice systems.4 The planning staff exercises considerable tact and courtesy in frequent contacts with local and state elected officials; judges; municipal, county, and state department heads; community-based professionals; county/city residents; adult and juvenile clients in the justice system; and the media.

**Advantages of Contracted Planning and Coordination Services**

- The jurisdiction avoids creating a full-time equivalent (FTE) position and the recurring obligation for annually funding the position. Services are obtained through contract.

- The jurisdiction avoids incurring the costs of often expensive public sector fringe benefit packages associated with FTE positions.

- Flexibility is enhanced because the IJP staff could serve in a temporary, specific role, such as that of a consultant, or could be available on a full-time daily basis to work on the CJCC’s initiatives, as a full-time staff would do.

- Planning staff is hired, trained, and supervised by an IJP manager who is an expert at local criminal justice planning and coordination.

- A new or rejuvenated CJCC could begin its policy planning work immediately and not have to wait for a new staff person to progress through the steep learning curve

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3 This function is sometimes performed by one member of the Board of County Commissioners/Supervisors or City Council.

4 See section on Job Responsibilities for a detailed description.
associated with the position (i.e., typically two to three years, even for persons with justice system knowledge and experience). A team of experienced, professional planning staff who specialize in facilitating and supporting systemwide criminal and juvenile justice policy planning can help a new or rejuvenated CJCC begin functioning in a few months, thus capitalizing on members’ current enthusiasm and willingness to partake in systemwide analysis and coordination and enabling them to experience system improvements in a relatively short time frame.

- Jurisdictions can start by contracting for the equivalent of a full-time (or half-time) planning staff person and later increase the number of staff as the CJCC’s success and commitment grows.
- The on-site planning staff is part of a growing team of nationwide colleagues who all have similar core skills, but diverse and complementary knowledge, skills, and abilities, thus enhancing a particular jurisdiction’s capacity to solve problems more quickly and effectively. This person is the CJCC’s main contact and main coordinator for all the committee’s initiatives, but still is able to access the unique talents and skills of the other planning staff when needed for any given project.
- Data, analyses, information, or ideas generated by a particular CJCC or planner in one part of the state or country is immediately available to all other jurisdictions’ CJCCs through the linkage of staff. The methods used to address an issue in one jurisdiction can be instantly shared with another jurisdiction that has the same issue (e.g., jail crowding, high recidivism rates, unsustainably increasing costs).
- A common pitfall jurisdictions encounter when hiring its own planning staff would be avoided: Oftentimes, CJCCs hire a staff person who excels at one necessary skill/talent but lacks others that are crucial for the job (e.g., person has great people/presentation skills but lacks analytical/research skills, or vice versa). A team of professional planning staff having different skills and talents complement one another and are able to excel at all of the responsibilities necessary to effectively staff a CJCC, which include the following: (1) facilitation, both traditional and systemic; (2) data analysis and empirical and legal research; (3) presentation/instruction; (4) project management; (5) information clearinghouse; and (6) consultation.
- CJCC members more easily view the planner as neutral, objective, and credible because the planning staff’s work is transparent to the CJCC through the terms of the contract, rather than being susceptible to the influences of any one particular agency in the jurisdiction (as could happen with a full-time employee who reports to just one CJCC member).
- The difficulty and confusion that sometimes arises when an in-house staff person from one department works for multiple executives in different offices or departments is avoided.
- The staff person’s findings and recommendations are typically viewed with more credibility and as more important than if they originated from an in-house staff.
- Whereas some CJCC members may initially feel uncomfortable about not having their own staff person on their payroll as a full-time employee, this situation can be addressed by having one member from the team of planning staff on-site and working for all CJCC members neutrally and equally.
Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

The criminal justice planning staff has the following Abilities, Skills, and Knowledge:

Abilities
- Think independently, rationally, analytically, and critically
- Relate effectively to a variety of people (e.g., elected officials, judges and attorneys, police officers, department heads, case managers, offenders, victims, citizens) in a variety of contexts
- Motivate self and others to pursue and accept change to the status quo, when appropriate
- Tactfully manage the concerns of policy-makers who sometimes have competing priorities
- Empathetically listen to others
- Maintain a systemic perspective of the justice system

Skills
- Manage supervisees’ (e.g., interns or temporary employees) performance on academic or other projects through teaching, mentoring, and feedback
- Conduct original research using the scientific method
- Collect and synthesize existing and relevant research literature
- Apply principles of the scientific method to research and analytic activities
- Analyze data using basic or advanced statistical procedures and tests
- Perform legal research, analysis, and writing
- Clearly and concisely communicate complex ideas orally and in writing
- Use word processing, spreadsheet, database, presentation, statistical (SPSS), email, and internet software applications
- Develop and maintain electronic or paper documentation of short- and long-term projects in an organized manner
- Consistently meet deadlines
- Convey to stakeholders a sense of professionalism, neutrality, and technical expertise
- Seek-out and supervise the work of outside contractors (e.g., consultants) for special projects or activities, when needed
- Combine new information and data with existing information and data into an integrated whole, and recommend future actions
- Apply individual and group problem-solving and decision-making processes to novel situations
- Cultivate in others the perception of one’s objectivity and credibility
- Work as a consultant or technical resource provider to professionals at various levels of authority and influence
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships as necessitated by work assignments
- Perform duties with a minimal level of supervision
Knowledge

- Supervisory approaches
- Purpose, structure, and funding sources of government agencies at the municipal, county, and state levels
- Case processing of defendants, offenders, victims, and clients in the criminal and juvenile justice systems
- Interface among governmental and service agencies both within and outside of the justice system (e.g., social services or education system)
- Criminal and juvenile statutes
- Basic scientific research design and methods, especially those for the social or behavioral sciences, including: levels and types of data; standards of reliability and validity; structure and logic of experimental design; strategies for collecting data; assumptions of common statistical tests; standards for interpreting, reporting, and displaying statistical results
- Strategies and techniques for legal research, analysis, and writing
- Theories of criminology, and history, assumptions, and processes of the criminal and juvenile justice systems in the United States
- Evidence-based practices in adult corrections, prevention and treatment of violence, criminal behavior, and substance use
- History, models, and principles of public administration and policy
- Systems theory and group dynamics
- Techniques for effective group facilitation and presentation

Job Responsibilities

System Coordination Facilitation
For both local and statewide initiatives, person promotes the learning and practice of systemic, coordinated, strategic policy planning among heads of local and state justice agencies; helps coordinating committee members understand the importance, content, and process of strategic policy planning; provides members with a structured process for addressing issues; and assists jurisdictions and agencies in developing strategic planning capacity. Serves as coordinator for multi-county justice system improvement initiatives. Helps the jurisdiction and committee to maintain a systemic focus and not become overly focused on a single, narrowly focused issue. Facilitates two-way communication among jurisdictions and between the committee and all other justice programmatic or operational committees/task forces (e.g., community corrections boards, judges’ en banc gatherings).

Group Facilitation
Person facilitates, when necessary, meetings of groups, task forces, boards, and committees comprised of elected officials, judges, municipal, county, and state department heads, and private sector professionals; observes group dynamics and shares observations; helps address conflicts; and summarizes concepts, progress, and decisions orally and in writing. Assists with maintaining ideal committee membership by orienting new committee members. Monitors and addresses committee members’ enthusiasm and fatigue levels. Drafts strategic planning documents and bylaws. Develops meeting agendas with the chairperson and/or executive committee. Keeps records and documentation of proceedings. Documents and advertises the committee’s
achievements. Occasionally writes grants or assists agencies in writing grants that promote the committee’s work.

Research and Analysis
Person reviews peer-reviewed research literature, statutes, and case law; Performs process and outcome evaluations of programs and policies; Gathers pre-existing data (e.g., Uniform Crime Report) from published sources or local agencies’ computer information systems or collects new data, cleans inaccurate or missing data when possible, re-categorizes data into new variables, puts aggregate data into tables and graphs, interprets the data, and describes the meaning and importance of the data in simplified terms. Analyses are performed both on past trends and future forecasts. Person monitors new policies and legislation at the state and local levels and forecasts, using supporting data when possible, and informs committee members about the potential impact of legislation on local budgets.

Presentation and Instruction
Person presents complex data and information in simplified and easily understood formats using tables, graphs, and other visual aids; explains theoretical concepts in simplified terms; creates presentations and documents that can be understood by non-systems persons such as the media and the public; assumes, when necessary, a didactic role when presenting new concepts or information (e.g., explaining the theory and research underlying evidence-based practices); trains justice agency personnel in data collection and program evaluation methods; assists committee members in addressing the media and public.

Project Management
Person plans, coordinates, and achieves all components of projects from beginning to end; meets projects’ requirements such as deadlines, budget, and quality standards; produces deliverables; maintains a highly organized records system. Manages projects that often are systemwide in scope, involving county, state, and municipal agencies, the three branches of government, and their community-based partners, and affect the budgets, policies, and operations of these agencies.

Consultation
Person provides information about specialized content areas; makes suggestions to increase agency performance to committee members (e.g., how to measure outcomes of a new program or operations so that subsequent analysis is possible); conducts customized analyses of agency-specific data and creates summary reports; provides recommendations for policy, programmatic, and operational improvement.

Information Clearinghouse
Person finds and distributes information on evidence-based or best practices, published statistical reports (e.g., U.S. Department of Justice), locally generated analyses (e.g., yearly changes in the jail population or caseload size), and relevant media reports; participates in national, state, and local justice associations (e.g., American Society of Criminology, local bar association); and attends national and state professional conferences.
Contact

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