

Meeting of the OJP Science Advisory Board  
September 15-16, 2016  
Office of Justice Program  
810 7<sup>th</sup> Street, NW Washington, D.C.

Attendees:

Science Advisory Board Members:

Dr. Allen  
Mr. Bueermann  
Ms. Burton  
Dr. Butts  
Dr. Chen  
Dr. Crutchfield  
Dr. Herek  
Dr. Lepkowski  
Dr. Loftin  
Dr. Mitchell  
Dr. Mulvey  
Dr. Myers  
Dr. Piquero  
Dr. Rosenfeld

DOJ Staff

Ms. Darke Schmitt  
Ms. Mason  
Ms. McGarry  
Ms. Henneberg  
Dr. Browning  
Ms. James  
Ms. Wyckoff  
Mr. Hunt

DOJ Staff, continued

Dr. Crossland  
Ms. Miller  
Mc. McDowell  
Mr. Pestridge  
Mr. Adams  
Dr. Kelley  
Dr. Mulrow  
Ms. Frost  
Ms. Warnken  
Dr. Tillery  
Dr. Ford  
Mr. Darden  
Ms. Turkel  
Mr. Listenbee  
Mr. McGrath  
Dr. Rodrigues  
Mr. Merkle  
Dr. Wyrick  
Dr. Spivak

Other

Mr. William Ruch (member of the public,  
registered to attend)

Designated Federal Official Katherine Darke Schmitt called the meeting called to order at 3:35 p.m. and reviewed the agenda

Office of Justice Programs Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason issued a welcome to the Board members and staff in attendance.

Chair Edward Mulvey thanked attendees and reiterated the goal for the meeting: to discuss draft advisory statements and other products produced by the subcommittees.

Each subcommittee made a presentation of its draft advisory statements and received comments from the Board members present.

## **DATA COLLECTION & STATISTICS SUBCOMMITTEE**

Dr. Rick Rosenfeld presented the work of the Data Collection & Statistics subcommittee and sought the Board's comments on the following:

***1) Enhance participation in OJP Surveys; enhance response rates***

Participation rates in OJP surveys of organizations have fallen precipitously over recent years. Declining response rates to government and private surveys is a problem cross the board. We think it is useful for this Board to consider the problem and possible remedies. We propose an interagency working group or committee meet to consider the question why have response rates dropped over the years. The group would need to review the literature about what is known about non-response to surveys. The groups would also be charged with assessing whether falling response rates are biasing the results of the surveys. We propose some remedies be implemented in the short-term. We propose outreach among survey recipient groups on the problem and potential remedies so we can begin to determine the effectiveness of particular strategies to improve participation.

The Board debated methods for increasing response rates to surveys.

Chair Mulvey called for any objections from Board members to the subcommittee proceeding with developing an advisory statement on enhancing participation in surveys, and hearing no objections, directed the subcommittee to proceed with their work.

***2) Developing a Rapid Response Capability at OJP***

On occasions, a crime issue that emerges that sparks heated public debate, and there is often an evidence void with respect to that discussion: e.g. police use of force against unarmed minority suspects, or whether there was a significant crime rise in the US during 2015 and if there was what was the source. Currently OJP and the AAG do not enter those conversations with pronouncements about the quality and the quantity of the data.

OJP does operate reactively when data requests come from the White House or Congress. This proposal suggests an interagency structure at OJP assess and respond to issues that have become important matters of public concern and debate, and which have been subject to data collection efforts by journalists or advocacy organizations. This group would recommend to the AAG that a statement be made about the evidence base undergirding the debate—not to weigh in substantively about policy. If data is lacking the group could encourage the creation of that data. If advocacy groups or journalists collect data of their own then we are not asking that OJP criticize particular data collection efforts, but instead call attention to the general standards for collecting and evaluating data and urge readers to be cautious about the evidence that has been disseminated.

We are asking for a general statement from OJP about what credible evidence-based discussion should look like—what “good evidence” looks like and encourage new data collection where such data is unavailable. The group would also advocate the use existing data that have not been informing the discussion. The group would encourage greater timeliness of data dissemination by federal agencies where more timely data could inform discussion.

The Board discussed the advantages and challenges of OJP being able to supply data more rapidly in response to justice and public safety issues elevated in the public attention. Following the discussion the subcommittee chair determined that the subcommittee needed to explore alternative ways that OJP can deal with this issue of how to respond to issues of public significance in the absence of good data.

***3) To establish at OJP something like a sentinel data inventory capacity (like exists at CDC) to compile and disseminate data on crime and justice issues in a timely fashion.***

Most law enforcement agencies have access to daily local crime stats. But these agencies do not know how other cities are doing- they had no readily available comparative database to determine if local increases are a local phenomenon or tied to a national increase. These data are important for diagnosing the problem and generating remedies. Data could be shared monthly or quarterly, based on a representative sample of agencies. Eventually, these data could be collected and reported for other criminal justice issues as well e.g. spikes in local jail populations.

The Board discussed sentinel data capacity and Howard Snyder, BJS, informed the Board that BJS is working on those issues right now through the NCISX and through rapid response survey- short surveys on hot topics with a 6-month turnaround.

Subcommittee chair Rosenfeld concluded that the subcommittee would endorse such options and propose expansion of the plans at BJS.

***4) We recommend that all OJP surveys of individuals include questions on the sexual orientation and gender identity of responses, except where doing so would pose harm to the respondent.***

Part of the OMB process to clear such items is to look at the reliability and validity of the items. For the last couple of decades these kinds of questions have been included in a range of surveys.

The Board discussed how to get valid responses to this kind of question.

***5) We recommend that OJP facilitate the use of OJP-sponsored data collections by state and local governmental researchers.***

State and local governmental researchers do not always have access to the data sets that they need to answer questions in their own jurisdictions. These data are available in ICPSR. But others are not, or are restricted on ICPSR. Can OJP find a way to facilitate access to those data for government researchers who have a genuine need for them?

The Board discussed the restrictions of states accessing data submitted to BJS.

Subcommittee member Sue Burton agreed to query her State Statistical Analysis Center colleagues and report to the Board on what kinds of impediments they face in accessing their own data.

***6) In the design of OJP surveys and other data collection instruments there should be more widespread inclusion in the design of relevant constituencies—those for whom the***

*information being collected is particularly important. E.g., that there be sufficient racial and ethnic diversity, language access, practitioners.*

Subcommittee chair Rosenfeld said that the subcommittee was not prepared to produce a one pager on this issue yet; one of the members is going to work on draft language first.

Brecht Donoghue of OJJDP reported that OJJDP has been working on these issues, including sending data and graphics out to the media to help them understand our data.

Howard Spivak of NIJ reported that NIJ has an interest in how to make data available and available in the usable format. There is discussion across OJP about availability of data via a mapping platform, which is important for non-researchers.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

September 16, 2016

Designated Federal Official Katherine Darke Schmitt called the meeting called to order at 8:35 a.m.

AAG Mason welcomed the Board back for the second day of the meeting. She introduced OJP OCIO Brian McGrath, attending his first meeting of the Board. AAG Mason charged the group to continue with their work supporting OJP and DOJ.

Chair Mulvey thanked the AAG for her remarks and for her support and openness to engaging in discussion with the Board; and reviewed the day's agenda.

Subcommittees continued with their presentations of draft advisory statements and received comments from the Board members present.

#### **JUSTICE SYSTEM TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY SUBCOMMITTEE**

Subcommittee Chair Bob Crutchfield proposed three items for discussion: a memo on what is known about transparency and accountability; a checklist of metrics; and a policy statement of data archiving.

Currently, the criminal justice system is perceived negatively by a wide swath of the American public. For example, public opinion polls report that:

- Confidence in the police is at its lowest levels in more than 20 years (Begley, 2015);
- Most Americans believe that the criminal justice system is unfair towards minorities (Cox and Jones, 2015); and,
- Most voters think that the criminal justice system is in need of reform (Dizard, 2016).

Over the past few years, and with the advent of social media, long-standing tensions between police and segments of the African American community have boiled over into protest and even violence. Unsurprisingly, the US criminal justice system is facing a crisis of legitimacy, particularly in minority communities. Yet, the extent to which these problems are factual or perceived remains a matter of debate—though the answer may be irrelevant because the public needs to

feel that they can trust agents of the criminal justice system to act fairly and transparently and be accountable for their actions and decisions.

Many citizens, politicians, and members of the media have argued that greater “transparency and accountability” may help to ameliorate this crisis. In this context, *transparency* is the state of being open and reviewable such that the actions of criminal justice agencies’ are readily visible to the citizenry. And *accountability* refers to the criminal justice system—law enforcement, prosecution, defense, courts, corrections, and reentry entities—being answerable for their actions to the citizenry. In an ideal world, transparency and accountability work together to empower citizens to understand the actions of the criminal justice system, monitor these actions, and when necessary to influence these actions.<sup>1</sup>

While transparency and accountability are vital normative values in a democratic society, there is little empirical research examining the effects of efforts to improve the transparency and accountability of the criminal justice system on important outcome measures such as perceptions of legitimacy, perceptions of fairness, willingness to cooperate with criminal justice officials, and crime rates. In fact, since an important commentary by Wolfgang (1982) on criminal justice system accountability, we could find no rigorous empirical research that assessed the effect of making the criminal justice agencies more accountable to its citizens—for example, by instituting a citizen review board. There is somewhat related body of research examining the effect of transparency. Most of this research is draped in the procedural justice paradigm. Procedural justice posits that citizens will have more positive perceptions of the criminal justice system and are more likely to comply with their orders, if criminal justice agents treat citizens with dignity and respect, allow citizens to participate in the decision-making process by allowing them to voice their perspectives, display *neutrality* in decision making which requires that decision be *transparent* so that citizens can judge the neutrality of decision-making, and if criminal justice agents are believed to be trustworthy decision makers (Tyler, 2004). A considerable body of research finds support for this prediction and relevant studies are important as they suggest that improving the transparency (“neutrality”) of the criminal justice system would improve relations between the criminal justice system and the citizens it serves, as well as increase citizen compliance. Although examples of transparency exist, e.g., Dallas City Police Chief Brown releasing use of force data, this line of research generally does not directly examine the effect of taking efforts to increase transparency (or accountability) as defined above on important outcomes; instead, the existing research simply finds that individuals who perceive greater procedural justice have better perceptions of decision-makers and the decision-making process. In sum, there are examples of research on transparency and accountability strewn throughout the literature, but they do not yet occupy a common space within a criminological context.

We believe that the Office of Justice Programs, and the National Institute of Justice in particular, is well positioned to convene a meeting/workshop in which they bring together scholars and practitioners in a forum that would include the commission of white papers on the current state

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<sup>1</sup> To be sure, agents of the criminal justice system would also like to be perceived as legitimate and fair in their interactions with the public, especially in the face of isolated incidents and a few ‘bad actors’.

of theory and empirical knowledge on transparency and accountability within the criminal justice system. A goal of this meeting/workshop is to recommend to the Office of Justice Programs a potential research agenda on this important issue. It is anticipated that this call for research will touch on all aspects of the criminal justice system, from the police (e.g., procedural justice in the form of police-citizen interactions, police training for implicit bias), the courts (e.g., research on the flow of cases from charges to convictions), and corrections (e.g., flow of cases, uses of various forms of confinement). The overarching aim of this line of research is to improve trust and confidence in the criminal justice system and its relevant actors.

In short, the purpose and goals of this workshop would be to summarize the state of the knowledge base and then potentially to outline a research agenda that would specifically analyze the effects of efforts to improve criminal justice transparency and accountability. For example, researchers and criminal justice agencies could potentially design local initiatives to make the actions of the partner agency more open (transparent) to the public and/or more responsive (accountable) to the public, and then assesses the effects of such efforts.

Although these are but a few examples of needed research in this area, they all form different aspects of transparency and accountability within the criminal justice system that all too often is fraught with perceptions that are not always grounded in reality. This is an unfortunate happenstance because careful, scientific descriptions of the issues noted above within the context of minority communities is necessary to not only inform the public and the system in general, but also to form the fairest and most appropriate public policies. Issues related to race/ethnicity, immigration, and crime are among the most controversial of all criminological topics (see Bersani et al., 2014; Sampson & Wilson, 1995; Piquero, 2008), yet they stand at the heart of the kind of work that needs to be undertaken.

Police chiefs wonder if enhanced transparency and accountability will improve community trust in law enforcement. We need to identify the holes in the literature so we can determine if this should be a future research priority. This analysis could be done in house within OJP. We previously discussed whether NRC could perform this, but our memo is silent on who should do the work.

Allison Turkel suggested that the Board include the perspectives of victims' interactions with police, especially issues of confidentiality as well as overall interaction with victims and how that affects transparency and community well-being, as well as be attentive to both under-served and vulnerable members of the community.

Director Nancy Rodriguez of NIJ suggested that a more robust discussion accountability and of fostering of partnerships between researchers and justice agencies be included in the subcommittee's deliberations.

The Board discussed the need to build out a research portfolio, and address gaps, after a thorough review of the literature.

The next document the subcommittee shared focused on practical suggestions for communities desiring to measure accountability and transparency.

# Transparency and Accountability Checklist

DRAFT

## Preamble

The objective of this tool is to provide local agencies with suggestions that they may elect to use to increase their transparency and accountability. Local agencies should adapt the tool for their own use, including items that are relevant for them, excluding those that are not. This tool is NOT intended to be an evaluation tool to be imposed on agencies, but it is reasonable for agencies to use it internally to assess how they are doing over time in their efforts to improve their transparency and accountability. When first using this tool, it is recommended that an agency score itself using the tool, and then periodically restore their efforts to track if they are becoming increasingly or decreasingly transparent.

## Policing

### Arrests

Does your agency record computerized data on arrests? **Yes/No**

If so, does your agency post online summary statistics describing arrests (e.g., number of arrests for major crime types)? **Yes/No**

If so, are these summary statistics reported by geographic area (e.g., police districts/precincts) and demographic variables (e.g., race/ethnicity) (YES, I REALIZE THAT THIS IS A DOUBLE-BARRELLED QUESTION) **Yes/No**

### Traffic Stops

Does your agency record computerized data on traffic stops?

If so, does your agency post online summary statistics describing traffic stops (number of stops)? **Yes/No**

If so, are these summary statistics reported by geographic area (e.g., police districts/precincts) and demographic variables (e.g., race/ethnicity) **Yes/No**

**Yes/No**

### Field Stops/Street Checks

Does your agency record computerized data on field stops/street checks?

If so, does your agency post online summary statistics describing stops/street checks (number of stops)? **Yes/No**

**Arrests**

If so, are these summary statistics reported by geographic area (e.g., police districts/precincts) and demographic variables (e.g., race/ethnicity) **Yes/No**

**Yes/No**

**Post-Stop Searches**

Does your agency record computerized data on post-stop searches? **Yes/No**

If so, does your agency post online summary statistics describing post-stop searches (e.g., number of searches, outcome of search)? **Yes/No**

If so, are these summary statistics reported by geographic area (e.g., police district/precinct) and demographic variables (e.g., race/ethnicity) **Yes/No**

**Citizen Complaints**

Does your agency record computerized data on citizen complaints against officers?

If so, does your agency post online summary statistics describing citizen complaints (e.g., number of complaints)? **Yes/No**

If so, does your agency post online summary statistics describing the outcomes of citizen complaints? **Yes/No**

**Yes/No**

**Internal Affairs (Probably Unrealistic)**

Does your agency record computerized data concerning internal affairs investigations?

If so, does your agency post online summary statistics describing the outcomes of these investigations? **Yes/No**

On average, are investigations resolved in 6 months or less? **Yes/No**

**Yes/No**

**Cameras**

Does your agency use dash cameras?



**Post-Stop Searches**

If so, is footage available to the general public? **Yes/No**

**Yes/No**

Does your agency use body worn cameras?

If so, is footage available to the general public? **Yes/No**

**Yes/No**

**Citizens Review**

Does your agency have a citizen review/advisory board?

**Yes/No**

**Community Meetings**

Does your agency hold scheduled public meetings with citizens on at least a quarterly basis?

**Yes/No**

## COURTS

Typically, the only statistics that are openly shared are conviction rates, which include plea bargains. Other forms of data could be shared about how cases proceed through the CJ system from arrest through disposition, and which cases continue to what form of disposition, including:

Do you collect data on charges filed, including enhancements?	Yes/No
Do you collect data on charge reductions?	Yes/No
Do you collect data on dropped charges?	Yes/No
Do you collect data on pleas entered by defendants?	Yes/No
Do you collect data on plea bargains offered, accepted, and declined?	Yes/No
Do you collect statistics on jury selection and composition?	Yes/No
Do you collect demographic characteristics of the defendant, prosecutor(s), judges, and jurors (if applicable) for each case?	Yes/No
Do you make public information about internal policies, if any, regarding charging, charge reduction/dropping, enhancements, and plea bargaining?	Yes/No

Jurisdictions could share information about the extent to which any of this information is made public

- Do you collect data on how cases proceed through the court system?
- Is it collected in electronic form?
- Are multiple years of data available?
- Do you share (aggregate) data on court cases with the public online?
- Is (aggregate) data on court cases available by request in a timely manner?

There may be further useful information regarding certain types of cases, e.g.:

- Capital cases
- Juvenile cases
- Gang cases

Subcommittee Chair Crutchfield suggested that this tool aims to help OJP staff advise agencies on how they can be more transparency. This is not a tool for evaluation, but guidance to agencies. Some items may be more useful than others for particular agencies (e.g. cost of collecting some data). These are options for consideration. This should be considered a self-use tool.

The Board discussed other initiatives with similar aims, including [publicsafetyportal.com](http://publicsafetyportal.com).

The Board discussed the premise that more transparency is not always necessarily better in every situation. The subcommittee may elect to vet the draft tools with some law enforcement agencies before determining if they should branch out to develop tools for other parts of the justice system.

#### Data Archiving

The Science Advisory Board of the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) affirms the value of data archiving. Archiving data is an efficient way to maximize federal research expenditures because other researchers can gain access to the data. Archiving is also an important vehicle for maximizing the transparency and accountability of science and scientists. Each OJP agency should make a clear statement that is appropriate for their mission, program and portfolio, that they expect funded Principal Investigators to provide their data for archiving, unless that agency explicitly excuses a funded project from the archiving requirement. Data should be provided for archiving in a timely fashion (with understanding that PI should be allowed a reasonable period of exclusive use), and with appropriate safeguards to protect research subjects.

The Board discussed the varying policies of OJP components about data archiving, and the costs associated with data archiving. The subcommittee elected to revise the statement for future discussion.

### **PLACE-BASED AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION SUBCOMMITTEE**

Subcommittee Chair Nicole Allen introduced the subcommittee's drafts for discussion.

#### Advisory Memo

9/16/2016

The Office of Justice Programs includes many place- and community collaboration-based initiatives. These efforts are unique given their emphasis on locally informed and locally tailored processes (e.g., Violence Reduction Network – see <https://www.bja.gov/programs/vrn.html>) and the mobilization of local stakeholders to respond to complex criminal justice problems (e.g., the National Forum for Youth Violence Prevention – see <http://ojp.gov/newsroom/youthviolenceforum.htm>). Preliminary research suggests these initiatives of this nature are indeed promising. Given their nature, these efforts pose unique challenges and opportunities from a research standpoint. Often, a research and evaluation process is not in place from the beginning of these efforts. As a consequence, it is often difficult to document the effects of such efforts and to examine changes over time. This evaluation challenge is compounded by the wide variety of goals locally informed efforts may identify; that is, they may not all be aiming to facilitate the same outcomes. Finally, by their nature, these efforts are often multi-faceted in their intervention efforts. They may involve many simultaneous activities making it difficult (if not impossible) to attribute change to a single place-based, collaboration-based initiative within a given community. These demands (among others) require us to consider questions and methods that are suited to the phenomenon of interest and to attend to research-related needs, to the extent possible, *prior* to the onset of the effort.

The aim of this advisory memo is to **document a set of principles** to guide research and evaluation on place-based and collaboration-based initiatives.

*I. Building Infrastructure to Encourage Successful Efforts*

**A. Establish Upfront Data Expectations and Performance Measures**

While locally-informed and -tailored by design, place-based/community collaboration-based frequently require OJP funded sites to utilize performance outcome measures. This creates the opportunity to track desired processes and outcomes within sites (e.g., infrastructure changes, reductions in community violence), encourage attention to key change areas (e.g., requiring regular data gathering primes attention to desired changes), identify key features that may explain site to site variability (e.g., readiness for change, sustainability factors) and create potential common metrics for potential cross-site comparison. At the same time, such data gathering efforts can be responsive enough to reflect variation from one place to the next.

*Recommendation 1: Create systems to insure that all place- and community collaboration-based initiatives have systematic data gathering processes in place from the start of the initiative.*

*Recommendation 2: Create a menu of performance outcome measures and have sites complete those that are highly relevant to their efforts.*

**B. Support Local Evaluation and Research Capacity**

The local capacity of agencies to provide data will vary from site to site. This may include sufficient staff time to manage data gathering, requisite knowledge and appropriate technology. In addition, sites will often have access to existing administrative data that may provide a critical source of information regarding change over time. Given that place- and community collaboration-based initiatives may take considerable time to produce desired outcomes existing data may create the opportunity to take a “long view” and to capitalize on what is often a “natural” quasi-experimental design (i.e., interventions are introduced at particular points in time that may change important systems markers). Importantly, existing and new data sources should be structured with attention to the potential for unintended consequences (e.g., crime moving from one locale to an adjacent locale).

*Recommendation 3: Require an evaluation plan that indicates data gathering capacity and plans including attention to unintended consequences.*

*Recommendation 4: Provide needed support in the development of data gathering plans and processes and avoid unfunded mandates.*

*Recommendation 5: Require funded sites to identify existing sources of data and/or assist sites in inquiring about the use of those data in relation to their change efforts.*

*Recommendation 6: Foster research/practitioner partnerships and build local infrastructure to ensure (or encourage) higher quality evaluation in communities that do not have the opportunity to work directly with a researcher*

### **C. Ensure and Support Ongoing Data Use at the Local Level**

A common challenge in place- and community collaboration-based initiatives is making research and evaluation timely enough to inform ongoing practice. There is often a considerable lag between the implementation of a place-based/community collaboration-based effort and data-driven feedback regarding processes and outcomes that have implications for ongoing efforts.

*Recommendation 6: To encourage data-driven practice and continuous quality improvement, provide regular, accessible findings to funded sites regarding the data they provide.*

*Recommendation 7: Create benchmarks (within or across site as appropriate) and track progress in relationship to those benchmarks.*

### **D. Require Clearly Defined Geographic Focus**

A core concept in place-based efforts is that they are directed to a particular locale. Locales can be defined in a wide variety of ways with many possible uses of geographic space. For example, efforts could target a 10-block area, a citywide effort, or a county. Even within citywide efforts, implementation is likely to vary from one place to another. Tracking place makes subsequent data analysis more useful given that it more clearly delineates where exactly an effort took place. This could encourage cross-site comparison that is more accurate and capitalizes on existing administrative data.

*Recommendation 8: Require funded sites to define “place” in their applications. This could include a tool to draw intervention target areas.*

*Recommendation 9: Require funded sites to amend targets sites and/or account for where intervention efforts are ultimately concentrated.*

## **II. Methodology Considerations**

Given that place and community collaboration-based efforts are often aimed to create changes in systems and with attention to local contexts it is essential that methods are suited to the phenomenon of interest. For example, these initiatives are sometimes not single programs, but cross-sector partnerships (e.g., National Forum). Ideally, methods would capture processes and outcomes that engage multiple standards of evidence as appropriate and take a comprehensive approach to research and evaluation along a spectrum of evidence (while balancing attention to rigor). Essentially, evaluation methods need to fit the individual circumstances, settings and resources and not be tied to rigid assumptions of what is believed to be a methodology that supersedes the individual dynamics of any given effort. There is no one methodology that can be or should be universally applied. For example, in the study of community collaboration and its processes and outcomes, random assignment is often not possible at the level of communities. Further, equivalence is not easily established in so-called comparison communities. Rather, studies may be concerned with questions regarding a) the ways in which communities have changed since the formation of a collaborative (e.g., with regard to systems change markers, stakeholder relationships); b) the ways in which the collaborative has contributed to those changes; and c) the features of the communities that facilitate or constrain the collaborative efforts. These research aims might be assessed using a variety of methods including, but not

limited to, social network analysis, geographic information systems, survey methodology, interviews, and observation.

*Recommendation 10: Identify a range of methodological strategies that reflect the complexity of place-based/community collaboration-based initiatives. Then match the methodology or methodologies to the specific situation assuring an understanding of the limitations that need to be acknowledged with the choices made.*

### **III. Other Key Considerations**

#### **A. Commit to the Translation of Data and Findings for Stakeholders including Policy Makers, Community Members, and Practitioners**

OJP currently gathers a large amount of data from local sites across the country, and through grants and contracts, but these are not always made available to the public. Making data accessible has the potential to encourage usage to overcome silos of information within OJP, inform local action, facilitate research on place- and community collaboration-based efforts and guide policy decisions. In addition, coordinating with other non-OJP agencies to make data accessible

*Recommendation 11: Collect and prepare data in a usable and quality form and make it available to the public from OJP, and to the extent possible facilitate access to data from other relevant non-OJP agencies.*

#### **B. Assure Culturally and Contextually Responsive Implementation and Evaluation**

Place-based and community collaboration-based efforts require concerted attention to cultural and contextual variability. This could reflect issues related to race, ethnicity, class (concentration of poverty), and many other facets of local realities/history that are likely to affect the implementation of evidence-based practice, local disparities and disproportionality, and related research processes. This may also be reflected in local access to resources and undue burden with unfunded evaluation or data gathering mandates.

*Recommendation #12: Make awareness of local cultural and contextual realities a central facet of place-based/community collaboration-based implementation and evaluation efforts.*

#### **C. Recognize Coalitions and Collaborations as an Essential Element of Place-Based Efforts**

OJP place- and community collaboration-based efforts occur in the context of other federally- and locally-funded efforts across multiple sectors. Some efforts emphasize cross-sector coalition building. These efforts can occur, as appropriate, at multiple levels to encourage a comprehensive approach to issues and a broader perspective on outcomes.

*Recommendation #13: Encourage multi-stakeholder coalition building at multiple levels (as appropriate) to enrich OJP sponsored efforts.*

#### **D. Make Use of Advanced Available Technology to Maximize Place-Based Efforts**

There are many ways that technology can support place- and community collaboration-based efforts. In particular methods that aim to reflect “place” including visualization and mapping

(e.g., GIS). These methods capture place in a way that is accessible and visually compelling and helpful to local communities as they work to identify patterns in geographic space. In addition, such methods can illustrate how to more effectively link resources to community need, identify resource overlap for collaboration (across local and federal agencies), minimize redundancy of effort, and track resource investment.

*Recommendation #14: Utilize technology to enhance place- and community collaboration-based implementation and evaluation efforts.*

The Board discussed the challenges in timing collaboration with researchers and the establishment of a demonstration program. In addition, the difficulty in establishing shared definitions (e/g/ geographic areas, or “system”) and the difficulties inherent in some kinds of data sharing across agencies (e.g. school or juvenile justice data).

The meeting adjourned at 10:48 a.m.

The meeting reconvened 2:09 p.m.

#### **SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND TRANSLATION**

Board Member Jeffrey Butts reminded the Board that the subcommittee was asked to construct advisory statements about methodology. The subcommittee presented an initial draft of these at the last meeting, which raised some of the same controversy when discussed by the whole board as it did when discussed in committee.

Research Methodology and Evidence Translation  
Subcommittee  
Advisory Statement #1

**What types of evidence should OJP use in drawing conclusions about efficacy of programs and practices? What role should randomized experiments have in the development of an evidence base for OJP?**

It is easy to argue in favor of basing all decisions in the justice system on research evidence, but most decisions are—and will always be—made without solid evidence. There will never be enough directly relevant research to inform the all decisions made by stakeholders in the public and private justice sectors. Of course, it is imperative that the most consequential decisions be made whenever possible with a strong evidence base. The fact that research will never be able to address all questions about programs and practices suggests that the funding of research is a critical part of the evidence-generating process. Funding agencies create the evidence base of the future when they decide where, when, and how to deploy the tools of research.

**Randomized Controlled Trials**

Randomized controlled trials (RCT) are recognized to provide the strongest causal evidence in evaluation of programs. The human capital and financial resources required to implement successful RCT evaluations, however, are often limited. Funding for RCT evaluations should be managed like an investment portfolio with resources concentrated on the most effective combinations of theoretical salience, research feasibility, and social benefit. Research questions that are very difficult or expensive to answer using experimental methods still merit the necessary investment if they have widespread or profound social consequences. Research questions with only modest consequences still merit experimental investment if they can be answered easily and at little cost.

Well designed and managed RCTs provide the most convincing evidence of causality. However, the strength of causal conclusions that can be reached from a randomized experiment are dependent on the quality of the management

Office of Justice Programs  
Science Advisory Board  
Advisory Statements

The advisory statements developed and adopted by the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Sciences Advisory Board (SAB) are intended to provide advice and guidance to assist OJP's efforts in providing innovative leadership to federal, state, local, and tribal justice systems by disseminating and promoting state-of-the art knowledge and practices across the country.

The recommendations are grounded in the current body of scientific knowledge and developed via consensus among the SAB Board member practitioners and scholars representing a wide array of criminal and juvenile justice fields. However, the statements are not intended to substitute for OJP staff's expert judgment nor are they intended to be exhaustive of all possible situations and scenarios. It is anticipated that during the term of the SAB, multiple Advisory Statements may be adopted, so they should be considered in their entirety as a complimentary and cumulative volume of recommendations.



Research Methodology and Evidence Translation  
Subcommittee  
Advisory Statement #2

**What policy should be used to define the level of evidence necessary for OJP investment in criminal justice programs?**

The Science Advisory Board was asked by the Assistant Attorney General to consider what general policy should be used in defining the level of evidence needed for OJP investment in criminal justice innovations. While this topic is one of great debate among evidence based scholars, the SAB wanted to provide a general basis for decision making that would fit broad parameters of what is acceptable research and practice today.

**Nature of OJP Investments**

The first question that needs to be considered is the nature of an OJP investment. Is it for the purposes of investment in pilot projects to examine promising new innovations? Or is it for wide scale support for programs and practices. The former investment is much less than the latter and would require a different level and type of evidence.

For OJP investments in new innovations we recommend that the OJP require some basic research evidence supporting the logic of a practice. For example, if a jurisdiction proposes to develop a new way of managing offenders after release from prison, it should be able to document why this approach would be expected to have some impact based on what is known about release after supervision and basic research about recidivism. In this case, the proposer might show that there is a strong correlation in prior research between the proposed innovation (e.g. drug treatment) and recidivism. The level of evidence needed to support this type of innovation is credible basic research that supports the logic model for the program.

The OJP might also support innovations for which the jurisdictions requesting funding can show initial evidence of success using credible evaluations of pilot or test programs. In this case, the proposer should be able to show that the innovation has been tried and has been evaluated using

Office of Justice Programs  
Science Advisory Board  
Advisory Statements

The advisory statements developed and adopted by the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Sciences Advisory Board (SAB) are intended to provide advice and guidance to assist OJP's efforts in providing innovative leadership to federal, state, local, and tribal justice systems by disseminating and promoting state-of-the art knowledge and practices across the country.

The recommendations are grounded in the current body of scientific knowledge and developed via consensus among the SAB Board member practitioners and scholars representing a wide array of criminal and juvenile justice fields. However, the statements are not intended to substitute for OJP staff's expert judgment nor are they intended to be exhaustive of all possible situations and scenarios. It is anticipated that during the term of the SAB, multiple Advisory Statements may be adopted, so they should be considered in their entirety as a complimentary and cumulative volume of

Research Methodology and Evidence Translation  
Subcommittee  
Advisory Statement #3

**What types of outcomes should OJP consider in drawing inferences about the effectiveness of justice programs and practices?**

OJP has a national leadership role in the justice field that includes criminal justice, juvenile justice, and crime victim services. One prominent element of the OJP mission is to develop, evaluate, and otherwise identify promising and effective justice programs and practices<sup>1</sup>. This is often distilled in terms of answering the basic question: “does it work.” This advisory statement is focused on: what types of outcomes should be considered in drawing inferences about effectiveness.

Justice programs are generally designed to achieve specific purposes, and produce intended effects. The effects of an intervention on the target population, both intended and unintended, are known as outcomes. Recidivism is the most common outcome of interest within the justice field. But many other measures have been used in assessing programs from satisfaction with services, to impacts on drug use, employment, and legitimacy of criminal justice agencies. Identifying measurable outcomes is a fundamental task associated with program development, performance measurement, and program evaluation.

There are a number of factors related to outcomes that OJP should consider in drawing inferences about the effectiveness of justice programs and policies. These include: primary and secondary outcomes, unintended outcomes, cost/benefit, implementation fidelity, and efficacy versus effectiveness research.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “programs” will be used for the remainder of this paper to indicate programs, practices, and interventions. This decision is made for the sake of simplicity with recognition that there is great variation in the level of development and specificity of programs and similar activities across the justice field.

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The Board debated the language about “proof of causality” and whether that standard reflects the true complexity of criminal justice programs. The Board discussed problems of external validity in RCT’s and the issue of the level of analysis. If the unit of the analysis is the individual (and changing behavior) then a RCT may be possible, but if the unit of analysis is a community, community outcomes cannot necessarily be achieved by changing individuals’ behavior.

Twelve Board members present were in favor of accepting all three advisory statements, and allowing the subcommittee to make final revisions. None were opposed.

Chair Mulvey thanked AAG Mason for her participation in the meeting, and thanked the Board members, and the contributions of staff in preparing for the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.