

EXTERNAL REVIEW MECHANISMS:

A STUDY OF THEIR ROLE IN PROGRAM
DEVELOPMENT AND GRANT REVIEW

31599
READING ROOM

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INTERNAL SECURITY - COMMUNISM

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INTRODUCTION

Organizations employ a variety of external review mechanisms to obtain advice on program development and grant review. This study examines the use of such mechanisms at national, regional, and local levels. The specific objectives of the study were:

- to identify how external review mechanisms are used, selected and utilized;
- to describe alternative models for using external review in grant program development and grant review, and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of these models;
- to assess the potential utility of these various external review mechanisms to LHA's;
- to provide suggestions to LHA concerning possible variations in present program development and grant review operations.

ALTERNATIVE EXTERNAL REVIEW MECHANISMS

The case study analysis identified three major external review mechanisms used for program development (that is, determination of program areas which could be supported or given increased emphasis):

- establishment of a formal committee with veto authority;
- creation of a formal committee with recommendatory authority; and
- informal or ad hoc approaches.

Similarly, three types of mechanisms were identified for grant review (i.e., consideration of individual project applications):

- establishment of a standing committee with approval authority;
- creation of a standing committee with recommendatory authority; and
- ad hoc approaches.

Table 1 shows the use of these mechanisms by the organizations studied.

SUMMARY OF ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

The major advantages identified for external review mechanisms include:

- They expand the expertise of the organization's staff and permit a wide variety of viewpoints to be obtained.

- They provide increased communications between the external groups represented and the agency.
- They may serve as a buffer between the organization and groups seeking to influence its program development activities or grant awards.
- They may result in fewer arbitrary decisions by the agency.

Major disadvantages of external review mechanisms include:

- They incur costs of staff, money and time delays.
- They may result in reduced flexibility for the agency.
- They may become "closed systems," presenting only selected viewpoints to the agency and supporting only certain types of projects.
- Grant review mechanisms may lead to approval of unrelated individual projects, rather than cohesive programs.
- Program development mechanisms may have little practical effect on agency activities, unless the mechanisms are linked to planning and budgetary processes.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEAA

Program Development

The analysis of external review mechanisms used at selected government agencies and private foundations identified a number of features which might improve LEAA's program development process. These features have been incorporated into an idealized program development model for LEAA. If adopted, this approach would increase the breadth of expertise which assesses possible program priorities before implementation decisions are made. It would also insure that evaluations were conducted as programs were being implemented, rather than only as follow-up studies after the fact. A disadvantage of the approach is that flexibility to initiate programs immediately could be reduced, if the process were always followed.

The proposed program development process is an annual one having three major phases. These are:

- development and choice of program priorities;
- development and choice of programs for implementation; and
- program implementation and review.

The advice of outside experts would be solicited during each phase and incorporated into LEAA's planning, implementation and monitoring activities.

Grant Review

Although the case study analyses identified a number of features which might improve LEAA's program development process, similar findings did not occur for the grant review mechanism. The case study results did not indicate that a radically different or more formal process of grant application review and award would improve the effectiveness of LEAA programs. However, it may be useful for LEAA to conduct a limited experiment, testing such approaches to grant review as:

- a standing panel of academic experts in the field;
- formal mail review by two external advisors; and
- internal staff review only.

An assessment could be conducted in parallel with this experiment to determine whether one approach is superior to the others.

Table 1. External Advisory Mechanisms Used in Selected Organizations

ORGANIZATION	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT			GRANT REVIEW		
	Formal Committee With Decision Power	Formal Committee With Recommendation Power	Informal or Ad Hoc Approaches	Standing Committee With Approval Authority	Standing Committee With Recommendation Authority	Ad Hoc Approaches
Police Foundation	X			X		
Carnegie Corporation	X		X	X		X
Ford Foundation	X		X			X
National Science Foundation		X	X		X	X
Environmental Protection Agency		X				X
Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency		X			X	
Rehabilitation Services Administration			X		*	**

* Prospective approach.

** Present approach.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Since its inception in 1966, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) has spent substantial amounts of funds on research, development and implementation projects. Much of LEAA's budget is allocated directly to states under block grants to improve local law enforcement and criminal justice systems. However, a substantial amount of money is available for "discretionary" projects used to fund various research, demonstration and action programs around the nation.

LEAA is currently reviewing its procedures for program development and grant review to assess whether changes might increase the overall effectiveness of agency programs. One area of interest is whether revised external review mechanisms would be of value. This is of particular concern at the present time, because the proposed Crime Control Act of 1976 would authorize the Attorney General to establish an Advisory Board to LEAA to review programs for certain categories of discretionary grants. Prior to establishment of such an Advisory Board, LEAA needs to consider ways to integrate it into agency operations in an effective manner.

B. STUDY OBJECTIVES

To increase its knowledge of external review mechanisms, LEAA commissioned The Lazer Institute to study the use of external advisors by selected Federal agencies and private foundations. The specific objectives of the study are:

- to ascertain how external review mechanisms are used by selected institutions;

- to describe alternative models for using external advisors in both program development and grant review, along with the advantages and disadvantages of these models;
- to assess the potential utility of these various external review mechanisms to LEAA; and
- to provide suggestions to LEAA concerning possible revisions in present program development and grant review mechanisms.

The Lazar study addressed the use of external advisors in two capacities:

- program development, i.e., determination of program areas which should be supported or given increased emphasis; and
- grant review, i.e., consideration of individual project applications.

Although both of these areas were considered, special attention was given to external review mechanisms for program development. This emphasis reflects LEAA's particular interest in ways to improve the use of external advisors in the program development process.

C. STUDY APPROACH

The study of external review mechanisms included three tasks:

- review of relevant literature;
- assessment of external review mechanisms used by selected organizations; and
- analysis of findings within the context of LEAA operations and needs.

The literature review found a lack of published data on the use of external review mechanisms. Moreover, much of the existing literature focuses on natural science research, rather than on social science research or implementation of action programs. The literature review did, however, assist in identifying possible problem areas, which were considered in detail

during the case study analyses and later tasks.

Much of the study was concerned with analysis of the specific external review mechanisms used by seven organizations:

- the National Institute of Mental Health's Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency;
- National Science Foundation, particularly the Research Applied to National Needs (RANN) program;
- Environmental Protection Agency, especially the programs conducted by the Office of Research and Development;
- Rehabilitation Services Administration;
- Police Foundation;
- Ford Foundation's National Affairs Program; and
- Carnegie Corporation (foundation), particularly its Public Affairs Program.

For each organization Lazar considered such areas as:

- the way in which programs are developed and priorities among programs are established;
- the administrative regulations for submission, review, approval and award of specific grant projects;
- the use of external reviewers in the program development and grant selection processes;
- the structure of the external review mechanisms used; and
- the advantages and disadvantages resulting from the external review mechanisms.

To analyze these topics, Lazar conducted interviews with a variety of people having different perspectives on the external review processes. These

individuals included the directors of the organizations or knowledgeable intermediate level officials, program officers, external advisors and grantees. In addition, each organization designated a liaison who provided detailed information on external review procedures as well as relevant background data on the institution and its programs.

These case study analyses permitted identification of several alternative models used for external review mechanisms. In practice, a specific organization may adopt an external review mechanism which combines two or more of these models. However, consideration of the models in an abstract manner helps clarify the advantages and disadvantages of various approaches. Therefore, this report:

- describes alternative models for external review mechanisms in both the program development and grant review areas (Chapter II);
- considers several major policy issues related to adoption of any external review mechanism (Chapter III);
- discusses possible external review mechanisms within the context of LEAA activities (Chapter IV); and
- presents suggestions concerning program development and grant review for LEAA consideration during implementation of any revised advisory mechanisms (Chapter V).

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CHAPTER II
ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES
FOR EXTERNAL REVIEW MECHANISMS

A. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Program development refers to identification of activities which an organization should support. Program development processes make use of external advisors in a number of ways. For example, their opinions may be formally integrated into the planning process which determines the overall allocation of funds among different topic areas. Alternatively, external advisors may be used informally to identify special areas which deserve increased attention. To fulfill their program development responsibilities, external advisors must necessarily engage in some review of an organization's existing activities. This, too, may occur in different levels of detail and through formal or informal processes.

The case study analysis identified three major external review mechanisms used for program development:

- establishment of a formal committee with decision power;
- creation of a formal committee with recommendation authority; and
- informal or ad hoc approaches.

Each of these mechanisms is discussed below, along with important features identified during the analyses of specific organizations. Table 1 indicates the mechanisms used by the various institutions studied.

1. Formal Committee with Decision Power

A formal committee with decision power has actual control over the activities the organization can initiate. This external review mechanism was observed only at private foundations, not at Federal agencies. At the foundations

Table 1. External Review Mechanisms Used for Program Development at Selected Organizations

Organization	Formal Committee with Decision Power	Formal Committee with Recommendation Power	Informal or Ad Hoc Approaches
Police Foundation	X		
Carnegie Corporation	X		X
Ford Foundation	X		X
National Science Foundation		X	X
Environmental Protection Agency		X	
Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency		X	
Rehabilitation Services Administration			X

the "external reviewers" consist of the Board of Directors. Consequently, their power to control the institution's programs stems from the Board's power to set overall policy for the organization, rather than from authority specifically delegated to an external review mechanism in and of itself.

The most comprehensive Board role was found at the Police Foundation, where the Board both provides an overall "framework of guidance" (through comments on appropriate Foundation activities) and approves each project above \$5,000, thus assuring that its guidance will be heeded. At Carnegie, the Board of Trustees holds an annual two-day meeting to discuss program priorities. Although the Board approves all projects above \$15,000, it is less familiar with Carnegie's day-to-day operations than is the Police Foundation Board with the Police Foundation. To some extent this probably reflects differences in the two foundation's budgets: Carnegie spends approximately \$15 million each year, while Police allocates about \$3 million annually. Consequently, it would be more difficult for the Carnegie Board to be knowledgeable about each individual foundation project. In addition, Carnegie's activities are more diverse than those of the Police Foundation.

Similarly, the size and diversity of the Ford Foundation programs preclude detailed Board involvement in all aspects of program development. Aside from a budget review every two years, the Board usually confines its role in program development to assessment of whether Ford should sponsor work in an entirely new area (as when it funded the Drug Abuse Council) and to analysis of whether a particularly risky venture should be undertaken (e.g., supporting local economic development corporations in ghetto areas).

A foundation's use of the Board of Directors for external review insures that reviewers are familiar with the organization's goals and operations. Indeed, the Board's institutional role of providing policy direction requires a certain level of understanding of foundation activities and interests. If

decision power is to be provided to a group of external advisors, it is obviously important for those advisors to have a high level of knowledge about, and commitment to, the organization. The fact that the only external review mechanism studied which provided program development decision power to external reviewers occurred when the review group consisted of the Board of Directors may reflect the difficulty of obtaining sufficient external reviewer commitment in the absence of other, more binding ties to the organization. In any event, most of the institutions analyzed, and all of the Federal agencies studied, use external review mechanisms where decision power is retained internally.

2. Formal Committee with Recommendation Power

Establishing a formal committee with recommendation power provides a mechanism for an organization to obtain expert advice on its programs and priorities while retaining final authority (and responsibility) for program development. However, even though the external reviewers may have no formal decision power, if they are an influential group which presents strongly worded recommendations and publicizes them widely, it may be difficult for the organization to reject the recommendations. Consequently, an external review committee may come to have de facto decision power even if its formal role is limited to recommendation power.

Two agencies which make extensive use of formal committees with recommendation power over program development are the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). NSF has several levels of external review committees which provide program development recommendations. A National Science Board sets science policy for the nation and thus provides general policy guidance relevant to NSF's overall activities. Major parts of NSF, such as the Research Applied to National Needs (RANN) program, also

have external advisory committees which assist in development of program strategy. Finally, individual divisions within a program such as RANN may have external review committees which recommend activities pertinent to the division's objectives and programs.

This structure provides for program development guidance which is more and more narrowly defined as the committees are located lower in the organizational hierarchy. In all cases except the National Science Board, which is appointed by the President and approved by the Senate, NSF staff appoint the external review committees. This, along with the fact that the committees have only recommendation power and not decision power, helps NSF staff retain control over program development. In addition, a committee's ability to attract publicity for its recommendations usually decreases as the scope of its organizational review responsibility decreases (e.g., it would probably be more difficult for NSF to ignore strongly held views of the National Science Board than those of "lower level" advisory committees).

EPA also has different levels of external advisory committees. However, while at NSF the different levels of committees are appointed and to a large extent function independently, at EPA the committees are being integrated into one overall structure. A Science Advisory Board has been established with membership between 75 and 100 persons. This Board consists of several subcommittees which provide scientific and technical advice in specific functional areas. The chairman of each subcommittee is part of the Executive Committee of the Science Advisory Board, thus providing a measure of cohesiveness to advisory committee activities.

3. Informal or Ad Hoc Approaches

A variety of informal or ad hoc approaches are used to obtain external review in the program development area. Often informal approaches supplement more formal ones which also exist.

One particularly interesting ad hoc approach is used by the National Science Foundation. In addition to the formal committees which provide external advice on broad aspects of program development, NSF may award a grant for preparation of a research agenda in an area where it is considering increasing its activities. The grantee who prepares the agenda may establish a panel of external advisors to assist in topic selection and other aspects of research design. This permits outside advice to be obtained on specific program areas without requiring the establishment and maintenance of a formal committee.

Although this mechanism is a very flexible one, it requires a fairly high level of staff expertise to be effective. Staff members are instrumental in identifying areas where research agendas should be developed, selecting the organizations which will prepare them and taking the necessary steps to review and implement them. More formal mechanisms for program development may reduce the burden on staff expertise by providing a known structure which is always used for external review.

B. GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW

Grant application review refers to the procedures for deciding whether to fund a specific proposal. In some cases this decision is made at an earlier processing stage than a formal application. For example, concept papers may receive a preliminary review which either encourages or discourages submission of a formal application. A variation on this approach occurs when work is funded in stages, with continued support dependent on satisfactory completion of each stage.

In most of the organizations studied, the external review mechanisms for program development and grant review operate independently of each other. To some extent this occurs because most grant review mechanisms

have been established to handle unsolicited applications which are submitted to an organization. If work is also solicited, perhaps in response to the program development recommendations of external advisors, these applications are likely to receive a staff review, which at some organizations is supplemented with the ad hoc use of external reviewers.

Three types of mechanisms for obtaining external review of grant applications have been identified. These are:

- establishment of a standing committee with approval authority;
- creation of a standing committee with recommendation authority;
- and
- ad hoc approaches.

Each mechanism is discussed below, along with important observations from the case study analyses. Table 2 indicates the mechanisms used by the various organizations studied.

1. Standing Committee with Approval Authority

Standing external review committees with approval authority exist at foundations, where these committees consist of the Board of Directors. At the Police Foundation, for example, the Board of Directors provides external review for both program development and individual grant applications. The Police Foundation also has a formal procedure for having work done and reviewed in stages. For example, preliminary analysis by internal staff may indicate that a particular topic area should be examined in greater detail. If so, a concept paper may be prepared, perhaps with the help of an outside consultant (at a cost not exceeding \$5,000). If the activity still looks promising after this study, it may be pilot tested at a funding level of \$50,000 or so. If the pilot test results are favorable, the Foundation may proceed to full-scale implementation, at a level of as much as \$250,000.

Table 2. External Advisory Mechanisms Used for Grant Review at Selected Organizations

Organization	Standing Committee with Approval Authority	Standing Committee with Recommendation Authority	Ad Hoc Approaches
Police Foundation	X		
Carnegie Corporation	X		X
Ford Foundation			X
National Science Foundation		X	X
Environmental Protection Agency			X
Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency		X	
Rehabilitation Services Administration		*	**

* prospective approach

** present approach

Since the Board must approve all projects above \$5,000, their involvement is assured at all except the most preliminary concept development stages.

This approach to grant review provides considerable flexibility concerning funding decisions and minimizes the likelihood of incurring major losses. However, it consumes a certain amount of staff time, because a project which is fully implemented will have required three reviews and two formal Board approvals. This may account for the fact that most of the organizations studied used less extensive grant review procedures. Most also retained internal approval authority over projects.

2. Standing Committee with Recommendation Authority

The Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency provides an example of the use of a standing committee with recommendation authority for grant review. A formally designated committee of external advisors reviews and rates each grant application in terms of overall technical merit. Approval by a second group, the National Advisory Mental Health Council, is required before an application can be funded. However, the Council rarely withholds approval of grant applications which have been favorably reviewed.

Although the review committees must approve an application before it can be funded, such approval does not assure funding. If the Center's budget will not permit funding of all approved applications, projects are usually funded in order of the ratings they received from the review committee. However, the Center's staff may recommend changes in this order due to programmatic considerations. It is primarily the existence of this possibility which causes the Center's grant review mechanism to be classified as one where external advisors have recommendation authority, rather than final decision power over proposed projects. It should be noted, however, that the external review mechanism does provide a "veto power" for reviewers: a project which

is not approved by the external reviewers cannot be funded under any conditions.

3. Ad Hoc Approaches

Most of the organizations studied used some type of ad hoc approach to obtain external review of grant applications. These approaches ranged from an individual program officer having virtually complete responsibility to decide whether an application should receive external review and, if so, by whom, to a more structured system where a certain number of external reviews are required and procedures for selecting reviewers are specified.

At the National Science Foundation unsolicited grant applications may be reviewed in a number of ways, including by panels which meet to discuss them, through site visits to the applicants to obtain more detailed information on the proposed work or by mail review. The number of reviews is usually a function of the dollar amount and quality of the application, with larger projects receiving more extensive review and poor ones less. If the reviewers are in agreement concerning the project's worth, their funding recommendations are usually followed. If the reviews are mixed, NSF staff has considerable discretion. Staff may, for example, suggest that the applicant modify the proposal to meet any criticisms raised by the reviewers, reject the application or quietly discourage any further pursuit of the project.

The Environmental Protection Agency has a somewhat more structured, but still ad hoc, approach to grant review by external advisors. An unsolicited proposal receives a mail review by three people. Two reviewers are selected by the EPA laboratory working in the proposal's subject area. The third reviewer is chosen by the Washington, D. C. office from a standing list of experts in environmental protection matters.

These external reviews occur only after a proposed project has passed internal EPA reviews which assess the relevancy of the proposed work to EPA's mission and priorities and the availability of funds to support the project if it were to be technically approved by the external reviewers. In addition, once the external reviews are received, the EPA staff has final decision authority over project approval.

Ad hoc approaches provide considerable flexibility to an organization's staff. Typically, these approaches result in a substantial degree of staff control over project decisions. While this helps insure the relevance of projects to the organization's goals, it also raises the possibility that applicants may be treated in arbitrary or inconsistent ways. In certain circumstances, this disadvantage might make ad hoc approaches less desirable than more structured review mechanisms.

CHAPTER III
ISSUES RELATED TO USE OF
EXTERNAL REVIEW MECHANISMS

Analysis of alternative external review mechanisms requires consideration of a number of salient issues. These issues include:

- the efficiency of the various mechanisms (e.g. their staff, budget and time needs);
- the impact of the different approaches on agency effectiveness;
- the implications of alternative external review structures (e.g., the effect of different selection criteria for reviewers); and
- the extent to which the mechanisms can serve as buffers between the agency and other groups interested in its activities.

These issues are discussed below, in terms of both program development and grant review functions. The issue discussions are followed by a summary of the major advantages and disadvantages associated with the use of external review mechanisms.

A. MECHANISM EFFICIENCY

Any external review mechanism requires a certain amount of internal staff time to administer it. In addition, such mechanisms may have both immediate and long-range budgetary implications. Immediate costs may include payments to advisors, while long-range costs can result from implementing their recommendations about program development needs or grant awards.

Another efficiency consideration is the time required to make use of external advisors. Although some additional time usually elapses when internal processes are supplemented with external review, the length of this delay--and the extent to which it is associated with improved decisions--

differs substantially for various external review mechanisms.

These and similar efficiency considerations related to alternative external review approaches are discussed below, first for program development mechanisms, then for grant review.

1. Program Development

a. Staff. External review mechanisms which use formal committees require internal staff time to develop meeting agendas and handle administrative details, such as notifying members of meeting dates, transmitting any materials which should be reviewed before the meeting and arranging for reviewer payments. In some cases these staff functions are handled by a special unit. This may consist of one senior staff person and a secretary or may require six or eight professionals, if the external reviewers are heavily involved in agency planning. In other cases, particularly at smaller organizations, no special staff are designated to handle the external review mechanism. For example, at foundations various top staff sometimes share responsibility for bringing important program development matters to the attention of the external review group (which is also the Board of Directors).

In all cases there is at least one senior staff person who has continuing contact with the external review group. Since external reviewers are usually distinguished individuals who are well known and highly regarded in their fields, they require a staff liaison who can deal with them intelligently, diplomatically and as equals.

If the external review mechanism is to have an effect on the organization's activities, staff time will also be needed to communicate the reviewers' comments to appropriate internal staff. Otherwise, the program development guidance and expertise of the external reviewers may have little impact on agency activities.

Unlike formal external review mechanisms, which can be structured so

that staff demands are concentrated in a few individuals, effective ad hoc approaches usually require staff attention throughout the organization. There is typically widely dispersed responsibility for analyzing program development needs, calling important areas to the attention of appropriate officials and developing various external review mechanisms as they are needed. A completely ad hoc approach to external review of program development probably requires an especially well qualified internal staff to work effectively, since there is no standing external structure designed to force periodic consideration of program development needs.

b. Budget. Immediate budget requirements related to external review approaches consist of expenses incurred as a direct result of the mechanism's operations. These expenses include payments to reviewers and the costs of internal staff time associated with the external review mechanism. Additional immediate expenses would occur in those cases where a formal external review committee had its own technical staff or a budget to commission special studies designed to increase its capability to make appropriate program development recommendations.

More significant budget implications arise if the external reviewers' comments on program development are reflected in the activities funded by the organization. Although this must occur only if the external review committee has decision power over programs (as is the case at some foundations), it may occur under other mechanisms as well. Indeed, the primary reason for establishing external review for program development is often the belief that this will help improve the organization's allocation of funds among different activities. To achieve this usually requires development of a procedure to integrate the reviewers' recommendations into existing planning and budgeting processes.

In addition, in those cases where reviewers do not automatically control the organization's implementation decisions, systematic efforts are often needed to insure that financially practical recommendations will be made. Program development suggestions which could not possibly be accommodated by the organization's budget will be of little value, no matter how exciting or meritorious the proposals may be.

One way to control the financial implications of program development recommendations is to implement the proposals in stages. For example, a detailed feasibility study and program agenda could be developed (similar perhaps to the research agendas sponsored by the National Science Foundation), followed by small scale pilot tests before major funding allocations were made. Although such an approach would minimize financial waste and provide for "phased in" budget requirements, it would take longer to initiate new programs on a nationwide basis. Thus, timing considerations must also be addressed.

c. Time. Use of any external review mechanism will always result in some delay. The length of this delay depends on:

- the degree of control which external reviewers exercise over program development;
- the frequency with which the review group meets; and
- whether programs are initiated in stages.

If external reviewers have decision power over program development and if they meet infrequently, long delays may occur before programs can be implemented. However, if external reviewers have only recommendation and advisory power, their views can be solicited on topics where they would be helpful without precluding the use of other methods of program development and implementation.

In general it is probably true that more extensive reviews and better program planning are likely to lead to more effective programs. The issue to

be addressed is whether, in specific cases, programs are likely to be sufficiently improved to warrant the time delays and costs associated with more comprehensive review. Since this issue is difficult to address in the abstract, many organizations attempt to retain as much flexibility as possible in their external review mechanisms for program development.

2. Grant Review

a. Staff. As in the case of program development, use of a formal committee for grant review requires internal staff to handle the administrative details of the committee meetings. Often this function is performed by a small staff serving as Executive Secretariat to the committee and responsible for mailing applications to committee members for review, assigning reviewers, developing meeting agendas and otherwise assuring that the committee is able to operate smoothly.

Grant review by a formal committee is usually a fairly well defined process, with only a few possible outcomes for each application considered. Therefore, communicating the results of committee deliberations to the rest of the organization, which may be a crucial staff function in the case of program development, is rarely a problem with grant review.

Ad hoc procedures for grant review usually do not require a special staff. Rather, appropriate staff throughout the organization obtain whatever external reviews are needed and handle all related administrative details.

b. Budget. Although there will be some administrative costs associated with external review of grant applications, the major budget demands arise when approved projects are funded. If the same people are responsible for grant review and budget allocation, as occurs at some foundations, there is an automatic link between project approval and project funding. If, however, grant review and budget allocation are separate processes, then a linkage mechanism must be developed. Under ad hoc approaches budgetary constraints

could be considered before applications were sent out for technical review by external advisors. A variation of this approach might require external review only for very large projects and leave outside review of smaller ones to the discretion of internal staff.

c. Time. External review of grant applications will probably require additional grant processing time. However, this is not inevitable, since the existence of external review procedures places a constraint on internal staff. For example, if a formal review committee meets periodically, the staff must prepare for that meeting. While the committee review may create a delay if projects would have been reviewed sooner by internal staff, it may speed up an informal process which would otherwise permit staff to ignore applications for long periods of time.

A variety of time limitations can be placed on the processing of grant applications. For example, some agencies require that processing be completed within ninety days. Also, a minimum processing time is implicit in the frequency of committee meetings, when that grant review mechanism is used. If more rapid review is needed, more frequent meetings can be scheduled. Similarly, if mail review is used, deadlines can be established for completion of these reviews.

As in the case of program development, better projects are likely to be funded if careful reviews are made. However, conducting such reviews requires a certain amount of time, which may not always be available. The probable increases in quality as a result of external review must be weighed against the estimated time needed to obtain such reviews.

B. IMPACT ON EFFECTIVENESS

In addition to efficiency considerations related to external review mechanisms, it is important to assess the extent to which various approaches

are likely to increase the effectiveness of an organization's operations. Whether the efficiency costs (e.g., staff, budget, time delays) of a mechanism are worth incurring depends in large part upon the effectiveness impact which would result. The following discussion considers the effectiveness implications of various external review approaches for program development and grant review.

1. Program Development

An organization is likely to have better programs if its plans are subjected to review by persons having a wide range of viewpoints. Use of external review mechanisms is one way of insuring that many perspectives are obtained about proposed programs. Such expertise can both supplement and counterbalance staff and political opinions concerning the value of various program activities.

In addition to providing diverse perspectives on individual program activities, external review can assist in developing a more cohesive set of programs for the organization as a whole. A group responsible for overall program development review may be able to identify program gaps or overlaps which are not obvious when programs are reviewed individually.

If a formal committee is used for external review, rather than an ad hoc process, a continuing dialogue between internal staff and external reviewers can emerge. A process of mutual education can lead to development of increasingly more relevant comments by the external reviewers and, presumably, to better agency programs, if the reviewers' comments are incorporated into agency operations. In addition, if external reviewers discuss agency programs with their peers, a further communications benefit may result as more people become aware of agency activities.

The effective use of a formal external review committee depends largely on adequate staff preparation. It is important to define the topics which

the committee will consider in such a way that useful comments can result. Good staff work can help insure that external reviewers assist in strategy development, rather than merely engaging in unstructured discussions of little value to the agency.

One approach used to insure the relevance of external reviewers' comments is that of the National Science Foundation, which commissions preparation of research agendas in specific areas. Agenda development responds to identified agency needs and provides for careful planning of future activities, while requiring a low initial investment. The flexibility of this technique permits its use in as many or as few areas as seem appropriate at a given time.

2. Grant Review

External review of grant applications is likely to result in approval of projects with high technical quality. If a standing committee reviews all applications in terms of the same criteria, this may reduce the level of arbitrariness in the grant selection process. Under ad hoc procedures applications may be judged in vastly different ways, depending upon the review mechanisms favored by the particular staff persons to whom they are assigned.

Although use of formal committees for grant review minimizes the opportunity for arbitrary treatment of applicants by internal staff, it does not necessarily insure a completely equitable review of all proposed projects. Indeed, many analysts of committee review systems have commented on the fact that they sometimes become "closed" systems, favoring known applicants from prestigious institutions. Presumably, such discrimination would result in less effective overall programs, since innovative projects proposed by relatively unknown individuals would probably not be approved.

A related problem limiting the effectiveness of formal committees for grant review is that reviewers are likely to consider each application independently and mainly in terms of technical merit. Consequently, the projects

which are approved may have little relevance to agency policy concerns. Moreover, the projects are unlikely to constitute major programs but rather are apt to be only individually interesting, but unrelated, activities. The impact of these individual projects can, however, be maximized, if utilization of results is stressed, both by external reviewers and by internal staff.

C. ALTERNATIVE REVIEW STRUCTURES

Assessment of external review procedures requires consideration of alternative structures for the review mechanisms. Such factors as the criteria for selecting reviewers and the procedures for avoiding conflict of interest problems will affect the nature and impact of the review mechanism. These and similar factors related to the internal structure and organization of external review mechanisms are discussed below.

1. Program Development

One factor affecting the operation of formal committees for external review of program development is the size of the committee. Although a large committee can provide representation for a variety of groups, it will probably be unable to function effectively except through smaller subcommittees. Thus, large committees (i.e., above 20-25 members) must consider how best to organize into subcommittees as well as appropriate functions for the umbrella committee as a whole. Since the use of subcommittees increases the complexity of advisory committee operations and may require substantial effort to coordinate subcommittee activities, it may be advantageous to have a relatively small advisory committee (e.g., 15-20 members). Such a group could function effectively as a single committee and would be able to devote its full attention to advising the agency, rather than requiring time to administer and review subcommittee activities.

Closely related to the issue of committee size is determination of individual committee members. Organizations with formal external review committees

may try to have their membership provide broad representation across:

- the subject matter areas of concern to the organization;
- the technical disciplines required by those subject areas;
- the clientele of the agency; and
- geographic regions.

Particularly in the case of program development review committees, members are likely to be well-known and highly regarded individuals as well as technically qualified in their field. This is because program development may be a very public activity, which can affect the entire operation of the organization. Consequently, external reviewers of stature are needed, so that their advice will be influential outside the agency as well as internally.

The issue of external reviewer accountability is also an important one, especially for formal committees. Should reviewers be accountable to the person who appoints them, to the organization they advise, to the "nation" or, in the case of research program review, to "science"? Although there is no obvious answer to this question, it is important to minimize differences in perception concerning the role of external reviewers if they are to be used effectively.

The length of time that external reviewers should serve on formal committees must also be considered. Although a group reviewing program development probably needs to maintain contact with an organization over a reasonable period of time (e.g., several years), it is also important to introduce "new blood" into the review system. One way to balance the needs for committee continuity and new sources of ideas is to stagger the membership terms, so that, for example, one-third of the members are replaced each year. However, if replacements are chosen from a relatively small group of persons, the committee may still be a somewhat "closed" system, no matter how often new members are added.

Conflict of interest problems may arise if the external reviewers also have grants from the organization. The reviewers may recommend expanded program activities in areas where they are personally most knowledgeable

or in fields where their own institutions specialize. Although individuals could be excluded from the external review process if they had a grant from the organization, or could be considered ineligible to obtain grants while they served as external reviewers, this might not be a good solution to the problem. Since almost any field has a shortage of high level expertise, the people who are the best qualified to serve as external reviewers may also be the individuals who are best equipped to conduct the work sponsored by the organization. Precluding such persons from participating in both processes could reduce the effectiveness of the process they rejected. However, permitting participation in both provides for the possibility of conflict of interest to arise. Again, there is no one obvious solution to this problem.

The problems discussed above may be less troublesome for ad hoc program development approaches than for mechanisms using formal committees, since ad hoc approaches permit great variety and flexibility of response. However, ad hoc approaches must also consider such factors as the desired size of the committee, the representation wanted on it, to whom it should be accountable and how to minimize conflict of interest problems.

2. Grant Review

Many of the structural considerations concerning external review of grant applications are similar to those for program development. For example, the size of a formal committee will affect whether it can function best as one body or needs to be divided into subcommittees. Since grant review is usually a more straightforward process than program development, committees may sometimes assign special review responsibility for subsets of applications to individual members. Their comments may form the basis for review and discussion by the full committee.

Although program development requires face-to-face meetings of external advisors, grant review is sometimes done by mail. In this case the opportunity

for exchange of ideas among reviewers is lost, but the logistical problems of scheduling a meeting are not faced. In addition, in some cases mail reviews have been obtained without paying the reviewers. This savings is usually not possible when reviewers are required to attend meetings.

The accountability of external advisors may be an issue for grant review as well as program development. Usually, external advisors are asked to review applications in terms of technical merit. Sometimes specific criteria are provided to guide the review. However, opinions may differ on the definition of technical merit, depending upon the reviewers' perspectives of their own and the agency's mission. External advisors trying to "advance science" may rate projects very differently from reviewers trying to help a specific program manager implement a balanced program.

Members of formal grant review committees are often selected to provide representation of relevant subject matter areas and academic disciplines. A problem which sometimes arises is that the committee may become a "closed system" which largely approves only the applications of certain types of individuals or from prestigious institutions. There may also be a tendency for reviewers to approve the applications submitted by colleagues from their own institutions or by other persons known to the reviewers. Consequently, possible ways to minimize the influence of the "old boy school" on the grant review process may need to be considered as committee members are nominated.

Conflict of interest problems may also arise during the grant review process. Formal rules are often established to preclude an external advisor's presence during the review of an application which directly affects the advisor. However, to some extent the integrity of individual reviewers must be relied upon to supplement any formal rules. The influence of

friendship patterns which might interfere with objective judgements of an application's merit can never be completely controlled through formal rules alone.

D. BUFFER EFFECTS

A major advantage sometimes associated with the use of external review mechanisms is that these mechanisms can provide a buffer against various pressures to implement certain programs or fund specific projects. It may be difficult for staff alone to withstand pressure from politicians or strong lobby groups, even if the proposed activities appear to have little merit. If the proposals receive a negative review by a group of objective, influential external advisors, it may be easier to convince the proponents that the activities should not be supported. Even if they are not dissuaded, they may be somewhat more subdued in their criticism of the agency for failure to implement the proposed activities.

External review groups may also sometimes serve as "lobbyists" for an organization's activities. If the organization, or part of it, comes under attack, it may be helpful to have a prestigious group of external advisors available to help defend the activities they reviewed and supported.

An organization may be more able to use external reviewers as a buffer if formal review committees are established, particularly for program development. However, even ad hoc review procedures for individual grant applications will provide some degree of protection for internal staff against allegations of arbitrary or incompetent treatment. Consequently, organizations making decisions which are likely to be controversial may wish to establish external review mechanisms as one way to help develop public support for their activities.

E. SUMMARY OF ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

The major advantages of external review mechanisms include:

- They expand the expertise of the organization's staff and permit a

wide variety of viewpoints to be obtained.

- They provide increased communications between the external groups represented and the agency.
- They may serve as a buffer between the organization and groups seeking to influence its program development activities or grant awards.
- They may result in fewer arbitrary decisions by the agency.

Major disadvantages of external review mechanisms include:

- They incur costs of staff, money and time delays.
- They may result in reduced flexibility for the agency.
- They may become "closed systems", presenting only selected viewpoints to the agency and supporting only certain types of projects.
- Grant review mechanisms may lead to approval of unrelated individual projects, rather than cohesive programs.
- Program development mechanisms may have little practical effect on agency activities, unless the mechanisms are linked to planning and budgetary processes.

Effective use of external review mechanisms probably requires a substantial degree of participation by internal staff. Otherwise, external reviewers are unlikely to become sufficiently familiar with agency operations to provide relevant comments. Moreover, the lack of adequate staff participation may result in external review mechanisms which operate in a vacuum, rather than as an integral part of agency activities. Consequently, one way of maximizing the advantages and minimizing the disadvantages of external review approaches may be to insure appropriate levels of staff participation in whatever mechanisms are adopted.

CHAPTER IV
POSSIBLE EXTERNAL REVIEW
MECHANISMS FOR LEAA

In addition to analysis of external review mechanisms used at selected organizations and consideration of associated policy issues, Lazar assessed the potential usefulness of these mechanisms to LEAA. Since an approach which works well for one organization may be ineffective at another, it is important to consider the specific environment within which an external review mechanism would operate. This chapter presents the results of Lazar's assessment of various mechanisms within the LEAA context.

A. CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING MECHANISM SELECTION

An important constraint affecting LEAA's use of external review mechanisms consists of the various provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Public Law 92-463). For example, this Act stipulates that the function of advisory committees should be advisory only, and that all matters under their consideration should be determined by the agency involved. Consequently, providing decision power to external reviewers, as occurs at some foundations, cannot be done at LEAA.

The Act also sets forth certain structural and procedural requirements for advisory committees. These requirements include:

- preparation of a written charter, prior to the first committee meeting;
- designation of an agency official or employee as a committee member, responsible for attending each meeting;
- provision of adequate advance notice of committee meetings, which must be open to the public; and

- provision of the minutes of committee meetings, as well as any documents made available to the committee, for public inspection and copying.

Besides the limitations on external review mechanisms imposed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act, certain limitations stem from the nature of LEAA's mission. For example, the agency is oriented toward strengthening and improving law enforcement and criminal justice, rather than toward supporting individual research projects which have high technical merit but may lack policy relevance. Consequently, elaborate external review mechanisms, such as the one used by the Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency, to select grant applications on the basis of high technical merit alone would be inappropriate for LEAA.

Since the agency must deal with many difficult problems, often in areas relatively unexplored, it would be desirable to plan and implement new initiatives in stages. This approach to program development is used at the Police Foundation, where small feasibility studies and pilot tests precede full-scale implementation of new Foundation-supported activities, and the National Science Foundation, where detailed state of knowledge reviews and agendas for further work are developed prior to large-scale support of new areas.

Such phased program development processes require somewhat more time and effort but result in better designed programs at the point of implementation. These processes also reduce an agency's financial risk, since program flaws are more likely to be identified and remedied during the planning stages. The advice of external reviewers could be solicited throughout the various planning stages to insure that proposed programs were analyzed from a variety of expert perspectives at several points in time.

An additional consideration of importance to LEAA is the changing nature of the problems it was established to handle. As a result, external review mechanisms must permit a flexible response to new areas of concern as they arise. This probably means that ad hoc review mechanisms will be needed to some extent. However, these mechanisms could be linked to a more formal one, so that the agency obtained the advantages of flexibility without sacrificing the benefits of an integrated review.

Reserve constraints must also be considered during analysis of possible external review mechanisms. Limitations on staff and time preclude use of overly elaborate review mechanisms at LEAA. For example, a group similar to EPA's Science Advisory Board, with 75-100 members and several subcommittees, would be too cumbersome for providing expert advice to LEAA.

B. PROPOSED EXTERNAL REVIEW MECHANISMS

These various considerations have been incorporated into the external review mechanisms proposed for LEAA use. An important component of these mechanisms is the LEAA Public Advisory Committee on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. This Committee would have between fifteen and twenty members, with varying backgrounds. It could represent the public at large, academic specialists, and practitioners in the courts, corrections and police program areas as well as provide representatives who specialize in management. The Committee would also have one member who was an LEAA employee. A possible division of representation on the Public Advisory Committee is presented in Figure 1.

Committee members would be appointed by the Attorney General. Initially, all members could be appointed for two years. If the Committee were continued at the end of that time, some of the initial members (perhaps one-third to one-half of the total) should probably be reappointed, so that

FIGURE 1

POSSIBLE LEAA ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION

(Note: The Committee would also have one member who was an LEAA employee).

Characterization*	Number of Representatives
Police (academic)	1
Courts (academic)	1
Corrections (academic)	1
Management (academic)	1
Police (practitioner)	1
Courts (practitioner)	1
Corrections (practitioner)	1
Legislative (practitioner)	1
Management (practitioner)	1
Federal Government Official	2
State Government Official	2
Local Government Official	2
Business	1
Problems of women	1
Problems of minorities	1
TOTAL	18

*Either past or present experience.

there would be continuity of Committee perspective as well as the fresh insight provided by new members.

The Committee could meet three times a year, with members paid a stipend for their participation. Absence from more than one meeting per year might be considered equivalent to resignation with a replacement automatically appointed. At each meeting the Committee would offer comments on a wide range of program issues, including:

- . Which topics should receive greater attention for program development? For program implementation?
- . What is the implication of evaluation results?
- . What can be done to increase the effectiveness of LEAA's activities?

Although the Public Advisory Committee will provide a systematic way of obtaining expert opinions on various program development activities, it will not meet all of LEAA's needs for external advice. The views of other experts must still be obtained on a variety of specialized topics, if programs are to be planned and implemented as effectively as possible. To meet these diverse needs, LEAA will require a variety of ad hoc mechanisms for obtaining external review as well as the ability to assimilate the information provided. Assistance with these tasks could be obtained from a knowledge review and synthesis grantee or contractor, which could analyze topics recommended for further study and, if necessary, convene panels of experts to advise on the proposed activities in a specialized area. The Advisory Committee could both suggest topics for a knowledge review and analyze the results of completed studies, so that the knowledge review activities were incorporated into the program development review mechanism.

In addition to analysis of external review mechanisms by themselves, it is important to consider the way that such mechanisms can be integrated

into agency activities. Consequently, the next chapter discusses external review in the context of an overall program development framework. It also suggests an experiment designed to assess the effectiveness of different external review approaches in the grant review area.

CHAPTER V
SUGGESTIONS FOR LEAA
USE OF EXTERNAL REVIEW MECHANISMS

A. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The analysis of external review mechanisms used at selected government agencies and private foundations identified a number of features which might improve LEAA's program development process. These features have been incorporated into an idealized program development model for LEAA. If adopted, this approach would increase the breadth of expertise which assesses possible program priorities before implementation decisions are made. It would also insure that evaluations were conducted as programs were being implemented, rather than only as follow-up studies after the fact. A disadvantage of the approach is that flexibility to initiate programs immediately could be reduced, if the process were always followed.

Three aspects of the proposed program development approach are discussed in the following sections. These are:

- major stages of the process;
- management requirements; and
- description of the specific steps of the proposed program development process.

1. Stages

The proposed program development process is an annual one having three major phases. These are:

- development and choice of program priorities;
- development and choice of programs for implementation; and
- program implementation and review.

Each stage is discussed below.

a. Development and Choice of Program Priorities. In this stage topics for new or revised programs are briefly analyzed, and decisions are made about whether to develop plans for their possible implementation. Topics might include "Crime in the Schools", "Alternatives to Incarceration", or "Employment of Ex-Offenders". A short (five pages or less) issue paper would be prepared for each topic, describing the nature of the problem under consideration and briefly reviewing the state of knowledge about it. Analysis of these issue papers should permit development of a list of program areas which merit further consideration. Such a list would probably not exceed fifteen topics per year. These topics would ultimately be selected by the LEAA Administrator with the assistance of top staff, but substantial advice would be solicited from external experts during the decision process.

b. Development and Choice of Programs for Implementation. This stage requires priority program areas to be carefully analyzed, so that decisions with regard to implementation can be reached. Detailed state of knowledge reviews are conducted and program agenda options are developed, with accompanying evaluation designs. Substantial commentary is obtained from outside advisors during this phase of program development. At the end of this stage choices for program implementation are made.

c. Program Implementation and Review. In this stage detailed program implementation and evaluation guidelines are structured for each program selected for implementation. Programs are initiated with accompanying evaluations and formal feedback. Reports on program progress and evaluation are periodically provided to top LEAA staff as well as to outside advisors, and any necessary program modifications are made.

2. Management

The proposed program development approach requires a management structure which would provide careful monitoring of the development, implementation and evaluation of programs. Such a structure is shown in Figure 2. It provides major program development roles for:

- LEAA Administration;
- Public Advisory Committee on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice;
- Office of Planning and Management;
- a "knowledge review and synthesis" grantee or contractor;
- LEAA's program offices; and
- grantees and contractors who participate in program implementation.

The specific program development activities of each group are discussed below.

a. LEAA Administration. LEAA Administration consists of top staff, including the Administrator, Deputy Administrators and Assistant Administrators. This group would have final decision authority on all program development matters. It would receive formal presentations describing staff work to develop program priority options, program implementation plans, and evaluation results. The group would be action oriented, and its meetings would result in program development decisions. Examples of decisions include:

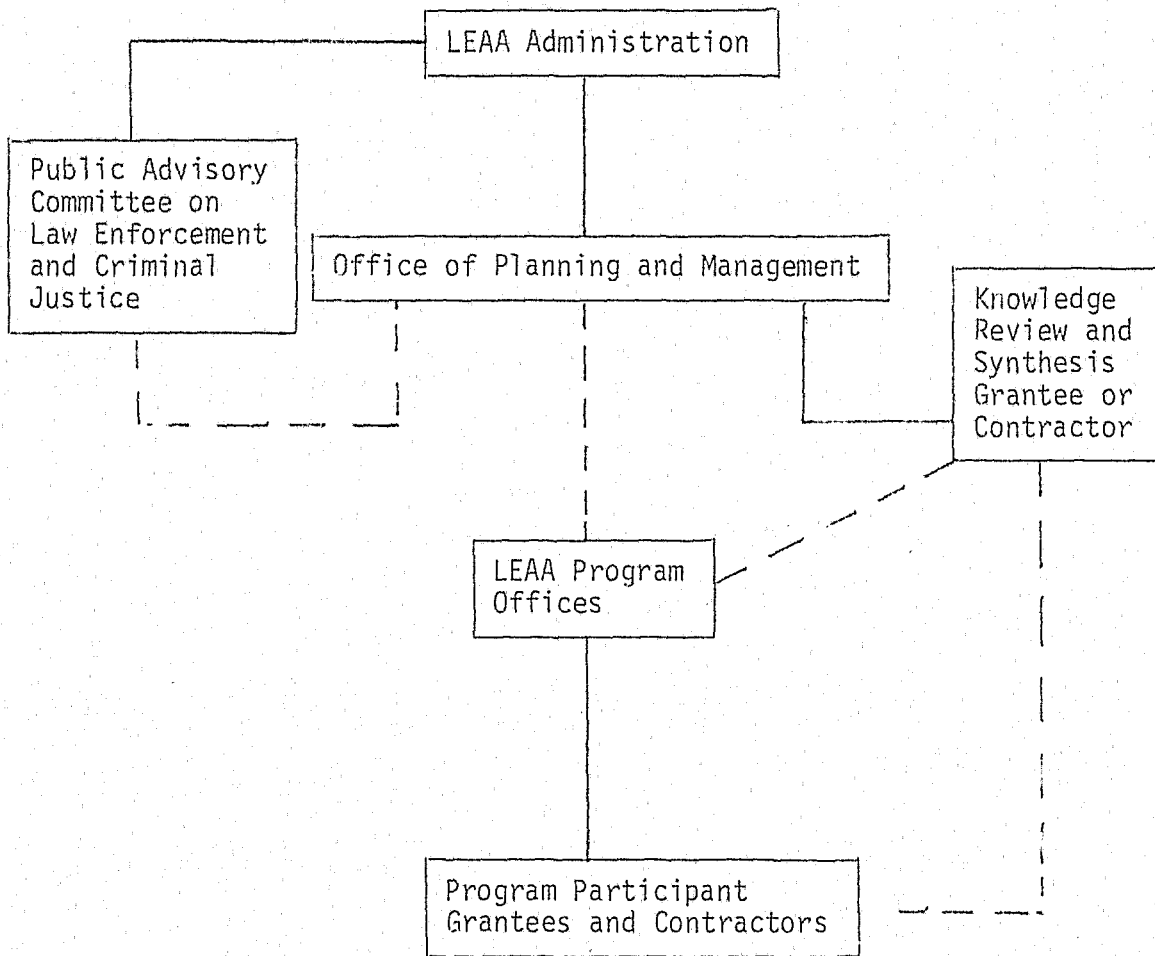
- Which of numerous candidates for "priority program" status should be subjected to a detailed state-of-knowledge review and to program agenda development?
- Which programs should be implemented and with what modifications?
- What modifications should be made in programs, based on evaluation results?

b. LEAA Public Advisory Committee on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice.

As discussed in Chapter IV, the Public Advisory Committee would provide advice on a wide range of topics, including:

FIGURE 2

POSSIBLE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE
FOR LEAA PROGRAM
DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



- - - - Information exchange and/or coordination

_____ Management flow

- Which candidates for "priority program" status should be further developed, and later, which should be implemented?
- What is the implication of evaluation results?
- What generally can be done to strengthen the effectiveness of the LEAA program?

c. Office of Planning and Management. LEAA's Office of Planning and Management (OPM) would coordinate and monitor the program development process. This should probably be accomplished through establishment of a program development and advisory committee management function within OPM. This function would include:

- review of priority options developed by program offices;
- presentation of options to the LEAA Administration and the Public Advisory Committee;
- coordination of Public Advisory Committee activities;
- selection and monitoring of a grantee or contractor to conduct brief state of knowledge reviews of initial program priority options, detailed state of knowledge studies, program agenda option reviews, and evaluation designs;
- review and coordination of program implementation options developed by LEAA program offices;
- presentation of implementation options to the LEAA Administration and Public Advisory Committee;
- collaboration with program offices on development of implementation guidelines for new program initiatives; and
- preparation of program implementation assessments for presentation to the LEAA Administration and Public Advisory Committee.

The diversity of the activities in this area may make it difficult to select an appropriate director for it. The director should have the keen sensitivity needed to coordinate a public advisory committee as well as the capability of reviewing and assessing program development efforts.

The function would require a budget for the preparation of state of knowledge reviews, program agenda options and evaluation designs. It is estimated that each program selected for development would require approximately \$125,000 for a detailed state of knowledge study, agenda option development and evaluation design. In addition, approximately \$250,000 would probably be needed to provide for synthesis of the findings from the individual studies. Therefore, if ten programs were developed as candidates for implementation, a budget of approximately \$1,500,000 would be required to support these activities (ten studies at ~~\$250~~¹²⁵,000 each plus \$250,000 for overall knowledge synthesis). It should be noted that this is a relatively small amount in comparison with certain other agencies. At the National Science Foundation, for example, as much as 25% of program dollars may be expended on program development and utilization planning.

d. Knowledge Review and Synthesis Grantee or Contractor. The knowledge review and synthesis grantee or contractor would support the activities of OPM by performing the following functions:

- conduct brief state of knowledge reviews of candidate topics for program development;
- synthesize the work carried out by subgrantees or subcontractors who develop state of knowledge studies, program implementation option reviews and evaluation designs; and

- synthesize results of LEAA evaluation studies related to program development initiatives and activities.

The grantee or contractor would necessarily make broad use of expert consultant panels as it performed these functions.

In addition, subgrantees or subcontractors would be engaged to conduct analyses of the program development areas selected by the LEAA Administration as possible candidates for implementation. Such analysis would include:

- a detailed state of knowledge review;
- development of alternative program implementation approaches, based on the state of knowledge review;
- design of a general evaluation framework which could be used in parallel with program implementation; and
- for programs selected for implementation, preparation of a detailed evaluation methodology.

To perform these tasks would necessarily require broad use of expert consultant panels in various topic areas of interest.

e. LEAA's Program Offices. LEAA's program offices would be involved in the initial program development efforts through:

- development of program priority options;
- review of brief state of knowledge papers;
- identification of areas for which detailed program development action plans are needed;
- development of program implementation options; and
- collaboration in the development of program designs and evaluation designs.

When a program area reached the point of being selected for implementation, the appropriate program office would assume complete responsibility for it.

This would include:

- development of a detailed implementation plan;
- selection and monitoring of program grantees or contractors;
- monitoring of program evaluation; and
- preparation of periodic program assessment reports.

These functions are currently part of the existing responsibilities of all LEAA program offices. However, the proposed emphasis on continuous formal evaluation might represent a change from the current program implementation approach used by some offices.

f. Program Participant Grantees and Contractors. Once a program has been selected for implementation, a variety of grantees and contractors might be chosen to conduct the actual program operations. The only recommended change in this aspect of program implementation is the requirement that specified evaluation data be collected, starting at program inception.

3. Process

As discussed previously, the proposed program development process has three stages. The first two stages involve the determination of program priorities and the development of optimal program agendas. The third stage consists of the implementation of those programs chosen as final agency priorities. The specific steps of this program development process are shown in Figure 3, along with the groups responsible for individual activities. A brief discussion of these program development steps follows.

a. Development and Choice of Program Priorities (Stage I).

- Develop Program Priority Options: This would be accomplished by the LEAA program offices, and options would be reviewed by the Office of Planning and Management (OPM). External advice could be obtained from a variety of experts, including those associated with the knowledge review and synthesis grantee or contractor.
- Conduct Brief State of Knowledge Reviews for Program Priority Options: These reviews would be prepared by the knowledge review and synthesis grantee or contractor, relying heavily on the use of expert advisor consultants. The reviews would be brief (five pages or less) and would focus on providing information relevant for determining whether the particular program area could and should be developed further.
- Determine Policy Priorities: Using the state of knowledge reviews as well as other information, OPM and the LEAA program offices would develop recommended policy priorities and present them to the LEAA Administration for discussion. After making any necessary changes, OPM would present the recommended priority areas to the Public Advisory Committee. That presentation would focus on areas where the value of further program development seemed most uncertain and, therefore, outside advice could be most useful. The comments of the Public Advisory Committee would be reviewed at the next program development meeting of the LEAA Administration. At that time a final set of program priority options would be chosen.

b. Development and Choice of Programs for Implementation (Stage II).

- Formulate Program Development Action Plan: The LEAA program offices would prepare plans for developing specific programs for the priority areas identified in Stage I. If necessary, the knowledge review

and synthesis group would provide short papers describing knowledge gaps in each program area. Such papers might provide information helpful in structuring research initiatives as well as valuable for immediate program planning. OPM would use the information from the program offices and the knowledge review and synthesis group to analyze the relationship of proposed program priorities to the management by objectives process as well as to review and modify the action plan for program development. This plan would be reviewed with appropriate LEAA program offices before it was finalized.

- Conduct Detailed State of Knowledge Reviews and Develop Program Options and Evaluation Approaches: The knowledge review and synthesis grantee or contractor would, in cooperation with OPM and program offices, choose expert consultant panels and subcontractors to assist in the development of program areas. These panels and contractors would be responsible for the preparation of detailed state of knowledge reviews as well as the development of program design options and evaluation approaches. Their work would be conducted over approximately a seven-month period and would culminate with program analysis reports. A synthesis of all work done in various program areas would also be prepared for distribution to the LEAA Administration and Public Advisory Committee.
- Develop Program Implementation Options: Using the analysis provided by the knowledge review and synthesis grantee or contractor, LEAA program offices would develop a set of options for program implementation. These options would be reviewed by the Office of Planning and Management before presentation to the LEAA Administration for review.

to provide periodic program assessment reports to OPM, which would synthesize this information and report on program progress to both the LEAA Administration and the Public Advisory Committee.

B. GRANT REVIEW

The results of the case study analyses did not indicate that a radically different or more formal process of grant application review and award would improve the effectiveness of LEAA programs. As discussed previously, numerous approaches to grant review are used by other government agencies and foundations. However, the available evidence does not indicate that an alternative process would be clearly superior to LEAA's current approach. This is particularly true in view of the fact that LEAA is a mission-oriented agency and must, therefore, have a directed program of discretionary grants. In a directed program an agency's concepts and designs would have been reviewed by the numerous experts involved in program development.

However, it may be useful for LEAA to conduct a limited experiment with various formal approaches to grant application review and simultaneously attempt to assess the efficacy of the approaches used. The National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice is a logical place to try such an experiment. Consequently, it is suggested that one portion of the Institute's program (e.g., police research) be structured so that its grant applications are reviewed through different mechanisms such as:

- a standing panel of academic experts in the field;
- formal mail review by two external advisors; and
- internal staff review only.

An assessment could be conducted in parallel with this experiment to determine whether one approach is superior to the others. Prior to the implementation of such an experiment, it should be subjected to a "program development" review

by LEAA staff and appropriate external advisors, as described in the preceding section of this report.

END

by LEAA staff and appropriate external advisors, as described in the preceding section of this report.

END