THE EVALUATION OF THE

ARTS-IN-CORRECTIONS PROGRAM

A Concept Paper

Submitted to

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I. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

One objective of this evaluation approach is to provide a single, uniform, comparable evaluation of a wide range of Arts-In-Corrections projects funded under the Arts-In-Corrections Program.

A second objective would be to disseminate information on successful programs in this series that could lead to adaptation in other correctional institutions. Finally, if elements of the program are to be considered for refunding, the information generated by the evaluation could be useful for refunding decisions.

II. ASSUMPTIONS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ARTS-IN-CORRECTIONS PROGRAM

A. What the Program Proposes To Do

Throughout the United States a great many arts and crafts projects are carried out in a number of correctional institutions. It is believed that these efforts favorably impact inmates as well as the correctional institution. The Arts-In-Corrections program seeks to expand and institutionalize this kind of programming.

The specific objectives of this program fall into three categories:

1. Change objectives for the inmate. It is assumed that confinement has serious negative effects for most inmates. Creative self-expression is seen as a possible method of counteracting these negative effects. Some of the change objectives for inmates that the evaluation proposes to assess would include:

   a. The sense of self-worth or self-esteem.

   b. The constructive release of negative emotions.

   c. The ability to better communicate.

2. Change objectives for the institution. Artistic activity in a correctional setting can enrich the environment of the institution and may help to reduce tension and unrest. Some of the change objectives for the institution that the evaluation proposes to assess, would include:

   a. The general morale of the institution.

   b. The relationships and understanding among staff and residents.

   c. Institutional tension and unrest.

3. Change objectives with regard to the interaction between community and institution. It is hoped that bringing in outside persons as instructors, audiences, and consumers of the arts would increase community awareness of offenders and the correctional system and help to improve institution/community relations.

B. What the Program Does Not Propose To Do

It is common for proposed innovations in the correctional setting to approach rehabilitation in a medical or therapeutic sense and to represent themselves as a form of "therapy." The Arts-In-Corrections program is noteworthy in that it is not proposed as a "therapy." If some of the projects funded under this program are art therapy projects, they will be evaluated not in terms of their therapeutic objectives, but with respect to their ability to fulfill the overall objectives of the program.

Also, the program does not propose to reduce recidivism. The time and sources available for this evaluation make adequate post-release follow-up impossible.

Since we know so little about what does affect recidivism, and since this type of programming appears as likely as most others to have an impact on the recidivism rate, it might be worthwhile to establish a separate exploratory experiment. To test the post-release impact of those projects that seem particularly effective in producing the kinds of change described above, a simple Uniform Parole Reports type data collection could be initiated. Long-term follow-up of a post-release cohort (both treated and controlled) could be used to test a small number of these projects outside the scope of this evaluation to see if they have any lasting salutory impact on the recidivism rate.

III. GENERAL IMPLICATIONS OF THESE OBJECTIVES FOR THE EVALUATION

Five important implications for the evaluation should be kept in mind.

1. The various Arts and Crafts projects that will be carried out under this program are only a small part of the total program and environment for a particular inmate. Expectations for program impact should therefore be kept on realistic levels.

2. Changes that we expect to occur can only occur during a period of active programming during which

a project is actively providing direct services.

3. Assessment dimensions can only be useful if they can be reasonably well-defined, measured and readily interpreted.

4. Lack of underlying theory makes it difficult to establish causal relationships between project activities and measured or observed change. Since we have testable project objectives we can at least impressionistically estimate relationships.

5. A relatively large number of projects may be funded in a broad geographic area providing a great variety of types of projects. The evaluation has to be based on project level considerations while also providing features that allow comparisons between a variety of types of programs.

IV. UTILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE EVALUATION AS THEY APPLY TO RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS

Given the possibility that there may be a relatively large number of individual projects, the sum allocated for this evaluation is rather modest. A principal challenge in the design of the evaluation, therefore, is the allocation of the limited resources.

1. The Need for Project-Collected Data. The success of the evaluation effort will depend on being able to have each project staff team perform a limited amount of data collection in all institutions which are part of the evaluation. It is assumed that each project will have a single individual designated as project director with overall administrative responsibility for the project. It is also assumed that the project grants provide resources which would require that these allow the project directors to carry out the collection of certain evaluation data. The evaluation team in turn will provide a set of simple instruments that can be administered by persons who have little familiarity with psychological testing and will establish a reporting system for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of these data that places a minimum burden on project staff.

2. Field Work in a Limited Sample of Projects. Although most data will be collected by means of a

reporting system, field work will be undertaken on small sample of projects. Approximately half of this sample will consist of those projects whose initial reports indicate that they are likely to be among the most successful, while the other half will be randomly drawn from the remainder of the projects. In this way, the field work is likely to result in both an understanding of the reasons for the success of selected projects and overall assessment of the accuracy and significance of the data received the reporting system.

During the course of the field work, three evaluation objectives will be addressed.

a. An audit will be made of the accuracy of the overall reporting system.

b. Additional data on individual change will be collected by the evaluation team, particularly psychological measures which are too complex or time-consuming for administration by project staff.

c. An attempt will be made to identify and understand the character of activities carried out by particular projects and how these activities are likely to produce the observed results. This will represent a limited attempt to empirically test possible causal links between project activities and results.

In this way, the evaluation approach will seek to strike a balance between the collection of data on all projects evaluated through the reporting system and more in-depth analysis of data on a small number of projects.

3. The Need for Data on Short-Term Impact. The kinds of change proposed for assessment, fortunately, are changes which are likely to show up as short-term results. This means that the evaluation can hope to observe project impact within three to six months of full project operation. Of course, it is assumed that the degree of impact is likely to be greater after a year or more in operation. One requirement of the evaluation could be to produce as much impact data as possible to assist in decision-making about refunding. Additionally, immediate feedback on project performance through

the rapid development of short-term results could assist in efforts to improve the evaluation system. Modifications in the evaluation procedure could be made and immediately assessed for use in a systematic improvement of the evaluation capability.

4. Resource Implication for the Evaluation Research Design. The very tight resource limitations noted above make it necessary that the evaluation system be developed largely from existing knowledge about the measurement of impacts of correctional programming and based largely on adaptations of proven psychological instruments. The focus on short-term results will facilitate systematic improvement in the quality of the evaluation system over time, but will not constitute a true research foundation. Resource limitations also will preclude the conduct of experimental research during the course of the evaluation, however a quasi-experimental design can be adopted.

This research design would feature a quasi-experimental design incorporating a matched comparison group for comparison with the experimental group. These comparison groups could either be constituted through pairing of persons in the program with persons matched on various characteristics that are not in the program or the comparison could be based on the experimental group being compared to a selected group of persons in another program.

We cannot rule out the possibility that some institutions may have staff researchers with the time and resources to experimentally test more rigorously the effectiveness of an arts-in-corrections project. Where cooperation can be developed, we will provide as much support as possible to the on-site researcher, since this would greatly enhance the significance of the data collected. However, although we will encourage such efforts, we cannot guarantee that any experiments will be carried out under local initiative in conjunction with the evaluation.

V. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

A. Development of the Instrument Array

The selection of dependent measures for the evaluation of specific projects will be guided by: (1) Evaluation objectives and program hypotheses; and (2) criteria established to identify instrument administration responsibility as appropriate to project personnel (first instrument package) and to evaluation personnel (second instrument package).

1. Evaluation Objectives and Program Hypotheses. The identification of measures to assess program impact will proceed with reference to evaluation objectives along three dimensions: rehabilitative (inmate), environmental (institution), and community. Assuming that post-release information (including recidivism data) is not available during the project period and a true experimental research component also is not feasible, there must be major reliance on instruments which imply a self-reported transition that is at least similar to the implications of the impact objectives. By approximating impact objectives, specific measures can be identified as surrogates for the evaluation objectives. Measures which might be used to evaluate objectives in each of the three dimensions are suggested below.

a. Rehabilitation Impact. Change objectives for the individual inmate rest on the hypothesis that creative self-expression can ameliorate the negative effects of incarceration. As stated earlier, the kinds of change expected in individual inmates active in the programs and proposed for evaluation include acquiring a heightened sense of self-worth, self-esteem, improved communicative skills, and increased interaction. Some instruments that could be used to measure goals for the individuals include the following:

1. Improvement of self-concept or self-esteem: The preferred instrument is the self-esteem scale developed by Coopersmith and adapted to correctional environments by Bennett. Other candidates for this assessment could be the standard measures of self-concept including the Adjective Check List (ACL) and the Semantic Differential. The Semantic Differential could easily be adapted by revising the evaluative potential of the bi-polar ajectives as suggested by Osgood. The ACL could be administered as it exists, although a shortened form might be used. In addition consideration should be given to an excellent multi-dimensional measure

of self-esteem designed by Norem-Hebeisen could provide an extensive determination of self-esteem based upon several factor-analyzed dimensions entitled well-being, being known, showing feelings, self-evaluation, etc. Another instrument which could provide a hypothesized adjunct to self-concept is Rotter's External-Internal Locus of Control Scale, which yields a measure of perceived self-independence. This instrument has been applied in correctional treatment. While the evaluation will employ probably only one such instrument in this area of assessment local researchers in various institutions may want to supplement this part of the assessment with an additional instrument of their choosing.

2. Reduction of negative emotions could be measured by application of the Your Opinion Scale, an instrument designed by Research Center staff to assess felt hostility towards the correctional setting. A behavioral measure would be the change in

disciplinary involvement of the inmates as recorded by the institution.

3. Improved communication and interaction among the artist, instructor, guests, etc. A relatively simple measure of this could be provided by revising the assumptions of sociometry in which a simple process of nomination might allow the assessment of changing communication patterns and any increase in the number of persons considered as desirable associates.

2. Institutional Environment Impact. Change objectives for the institutional environment rest on the hypothesis that artistic activity can enrich the environment of the institution and result in a reduction of tension and unrest. Measurement of this objective rests upon the phenomenological assumption that the best measure of a program's impact upon an environment is the reported perception of individuals within that environment.

a. Improved relationships between staff and residents would be assessed with Correctional

Institutional Environment Scale (CIES). Extensive prior research by Research Center Staff with the CIES indicates that this instrument can provide an assessment of the changing nature of interaction and relationships as measured by certain instrument subscales. Three of these instrument subscales deal with relationship dimensions providing a measure of perceived quality of interaction.

b. The improvement of morale in the institution, might be assessed by the Inmate Satisfaction Scale developed earlier during the standardization of the CIES. This would provide a crude approxiamte measure of changing morale. Another consideration is the possible administration of revised employee attitude and morale scales. One such device might be utilized without major revision, although pretesting would be important.

c. Prison tension and unrest could be assessed by measures of the social climate as reflected in the results of the CIES. For instance, the congruence or incongruence between staff and inmate perceptions could be taken as a sign of

3. Community Impact. Evaluation of this objective would involve the assessment of the interaction between the community and institution and any changes in the "community's awareness of offenders and the correctional system." A simple tabulation of institution/community contact would be compiled with special attention to the arts activity program. A description of the changes in contacts would be provided.

4. Responsibility for Instrument Administration. While all instruments will be provided, scored and interpreted by Research Center staff, responsibility for administration of some instruments will be shared with project-level field personnel. Project-level staff responsibilities will involve the administration of relatively simple instruments.

Project personnel typically will be responsible for collection of:

a. Measures which are assessed as being within the administrative capability of project staff as determined by the decision criteria. E.g., Self-esteem Scale, the Correctional Institutions Environment Scale, the Your Opinion Scale etc.

b. The continuing record of disciplinary incident information, including disruptions, art showings, etc.

c. Continuing record of status indicators, e.g., project participant turnover, changes in program size, etc. The instruments to be administered by project staff constitute the first instrument package.

The second instrument package, which is the responsibility of evaluation personnel, includes instrument administration tasks which go beyond the anticipated responsibilities of project staff. Evaluation staff will have responsibility for the following duties:

1. Administration of all instruments assessed as being too difficult or time-consuming for administration by project personnel.

2. Monitoring of the accuracy of data collection efforts of project personnel during site visits, including an assessment of data collection accuracy and appropriateness.

3. During site visits, providing an overview of the project and its activities and assessing

the reasons for apparent success or failure based upon an unstructured analysis of project components.

B. Classification of Projects

As indicated the evaluation will have to deal with considerable inter-project variation along several key dimensions. Classification of projects in terms of some of these dimensions of variation will be necessary in order to select the project to include in the evaluation. Since for the purposes of classification it will be necessary to obtain preliminary information from the projects, it is suggested that grant applicants receiving serious consideration for funding be required to supply preliminary descriptions of their projected activities in terms of clearly delineated objectives.

After a grant has been awarded, the evaluation team will determine whether all of the intended projects have been identified and then proceed to select the project to be evaluated. In this way, as the projects come into being, they can be fitted immediately into the classification scheme. As the classification scheme evolves, it will be possible to create a number of types of projects and to form from these projects a project pool of comparable candidates for inclusion in the evaluation.

Once a classification scheme has been established and most of the projects have been categorized, then a systematic routine for the assignment of instruments to projects can be worked out and all future projects can be dealt with in a clearly defined manner.

C. Establishment of an Evaluation Reporting System

Because of the relatively large number of projects which must be covered by the evaluation, it is hoped that the grant conditions can clearly specify the responsibility of each individual project to supply the necessary data directly to the evaluation study in a timely manner. If a dependable flow of data can be effected, then the evaluation team can establish a simple computer-based reporting system which will analyze and display key relationships in project-level data. If the reporting system functions well, then it is assumed that participating projects will return assessment information on a pre-determined schedule.

To keep track of changing conditions within the project, within the institution and in the institution/community relationship, some reports are likely to be required monthly, while others may be needed on a periodic basis, such as every three or six months. For projects funded for a year, ideally we would receive some initial base-line data as the project got started and two semi-annual reports. For projects whose funding continues over two or three years, the data base will take on the quality of a time-series study.

Although the majority of the data in the reporting system will come from project self-reports, the limited field data collected directly also will be integrated into the system. The reporting system will have the capacity to provide the statistical analyses required by the project.

D. <u>Sampling of Projects for More Intensive Evaluation</u>

In general, two-levels of analysis are envisioned for the evaluation: minimum analysis based on self-reports only from 40-50 projects, and more intensive analysis in which self-reports are supplemented by field work. It is assumed at this time that for each year of the evaluation study, approximately 20 individual projects can receive more intensive analysis.

It is recommended that between five and ten of these projects be selected on the basis of self-report data and reflect those projects which, in the judgment of the evaluation team and LEAA, show the greatest promise. The remainder of the projects to receive more intensive analysis would be random samples from the remaining projects in the project candidate pool. This sampling could be stratefied so as to insure that smaller states will be adequately represented in the sample.

The field work for the more intensive analysis is intended to add the following features:

a. To test the accuracy of the project self-reports and to identify ways of increasing the accuracy of these reports.

b. To administer additional instruments which for technical reasons are beyond the skill or the resources of project personnel to administer themselves.

c. To collect data on project procedures and to infer how projects may be producing observed effects.

Although a formal assessment of the causal relationship between project activities and observed changes is precluded, it is felt that systematic observation of project operation would permit some tentative hypotheses to be formulated. If these relationships are strong and plausible hypotheses are suggested, then a basis for the development and testing of theory will have been laid. Given the limited state of knowledge about how these projects might function in a correctional institution, this kind of exploratory, "Natural history" approach seems most appropriate.

E. Carrying Out the Evaluation

The evaluation will attempt to develop its instrument array and to secure LEAA and OMB approval of the use of these instruments prior to start-up of Arts-In-Corrections projects. This means that the project must begin with a design phase.

Once all required approvals have been obtained, start-up packages of reporting forms and instruction manuals can be sent to participating projects as soon as they become operational so that preliminary base-line data can be collected. For all practical purposes, we will regard as base-line data the earliest set of data collected by each project on the initial sets of reports.

Once the initial reports are in, then a regular data collection routine will be established for each participating project. Since the data received from the projects probably will be entered into the computer data base within two weeks of receipt, the computer can keep track of which projects are behind in their reporting schedule.

Contacts by telephone or in person will be used to rectify the lag.

After a significant number of projects are underway, on-site visits can begin. A target number of field visits will be established including both those projects selected for their apparent success and those that are randomly selected. Since selection based on performance would require base-line data and a first set of semi-annual progress self-reports, it is likely that the randomly sampled projects will be visited first. In the event that a project picked up by the random sample is also selected by the criterion of excellence, then an additional project will subsequently be added to the random sample.

It is assumed that evaluation will continue as long as the Arts-In-Corrections program is funded, or for a period of at least three years. The three-year life of such a project would insure that a reasonable amount of time-series data from projects receiving multiple-year funding could be analyzed to give greater precision for the interpretation of results.

F. Preparation of Evaluation Reports

If the evaluation study receives multiple-year funding, it is anticipated that several kinds of reports can be generated:

a. Quarterly reports can be prepared to keep LEAA informed of progress in evaluation;

b. Individual project feedback summaries can be prepared periodically, on a schedule set by LEAA, so that evaluation data is available for consideration in refunding decisions;

c. Annual reports can be submitted to permit assessment of the accomplishments of each funded project year and

d. Two technically substantial evaluation reports can be prepared (assuming three-year funding), one at about the mid-point of the evaluation and one which would constitute the final report of the third year, at the close of the evaluation. The first of these reports would be prepared at a time when analysis of one-year data from a significant number of projects could have been completed. It is hoped that such one year data based on base-line reports and two semi-annual progress reports, as well as data from more intensive field work, will provide the first overall assessment of (1) the relative accomplishments of different project strategies and (2) the effectiveness of the overall program and its constituent subprograms.

It is at this time that the evaluation study will have covered enough to lend support to the Arts-In-Corrections concept, if there are clear positive findings.

By the end of the third year of the study, it is hoped that analyses of at least two and a half years of time-series data will be available on a large number of projects. For many of the projects receiving multiple-year funding, it is hoped that six reporting periods would be covered and that moderately long-range impact on clients, institutions, and institution/community relationships could begin to show up in the data base.

Three principal activities are involved in the preparation of the two major reports, as well as the year-end report: data analysis, interpretation of results, and presentation of findings.

1. Analysis of Data. Although the specific data analysis strategies will be worked out during the course of the evaluation, several approaches will be given careful consideration. Various forms of multi-variant analysis will be considered in order to identify the underlying factors which contribute

most significantly to the results observed in the data. A multi-method, multi-trait matrix analysis will be considered to determine the validity and reliability of the instruments in the instrument array. Analyses of variance or co-variance will be used to test the significance of changes in individuals, institutions, and community-institution interactions over time.

2. Interpretation of Results. The results of the quantitative analysis and those obtained from direct field observation will be conceptually integrated in order to draw conclusions concerning the overall effectiveness of the projects and the reasons why particular projects or project elements appear to be more successful than others. Based on conclusions drawn from evaluation results, recommendations for the strengthening of the program will be developed by evaluation staff in conjunction with staff at LEAA.

3. Presentations of Findings. Since our concern is to achieve maximum usefulness of the materials developed by the evaluation, much thought will be given to formats for presenting the findings which will serve the needs of corrections, of LEAA, of the grantees, and staff of the individual projects.

Most of the presentation will therefore be in nontechnical terms, although a full technical exposition also will be provided.

Presentation of findings will be directed toward assisting the kinds of decisions likely to be made on the basis of these findings, such as:

a. Refunding decisions with regard to grantees and projects.

b. Decisions concerning which program and project elements are particularly effective and which are particularly weak so that modifications of existing procedures to strengthen program performance can occur at all levels.

c. General assessment of the probable contribution of the program and its projects to the institutions served to assist in determining whether LEAA is justified in the intensive promotion of Arts-In-Corrections projects in correctional institutions generally.

VI. ESTIMATED COST OF EVALUATION PROJECT

We have so far been able to develop only a preliminary budget analysis. Our rough estimates of the distribution of costs among major cost centers is presented in Table 1. We understand the ceiling on this project is to be $100,000, which is very low considering the large number of individual projects to be evaluated. If additional funds for this evaluation can be released, it is suggested that the scope and number of projects included in the intensive field work could be increased. If the ceiling of $100,000 is firm, then probably no more than 20 local projects can be visited. One can estimate that the cost of visiting local projects is roughly $2,000 per project. An increase in the total budget by $20,000 thus could mean the inclusion of at least ten more projects in the field work.

Another important augmentation would be to provide some additional funds to support some local researchers interested in additional research specific to the particular project and institution. It is well known that oftentimes such research opportunities do not exist in correctional institutions and well-qualified professionals are unable to get research done on their own. Support and guidance from outside could produce in such settings important contributions to our knowledge within the context of our general program interests. It is therefore recommended to increase the projected budget beyond the amount earmarked for this work.

Table 1

Summary of Budget Estimates for the Arts-In-Corrections Evaluation

Cost Center	Cost
Salaries and Benefits	$ 42,800
Overhead	20,500
Consultant	4,000
Travel and Per Diem	16,000
Data Processing	5,000
Xerox and Reproduction	2,200
Postage	1,000
Telephone	3,600
Supplies	900
Occupancy	4,000
TOTAL	$100,000

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