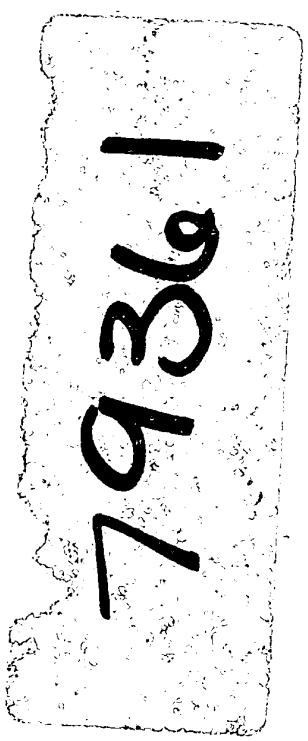
U.S. Department of Justice
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration

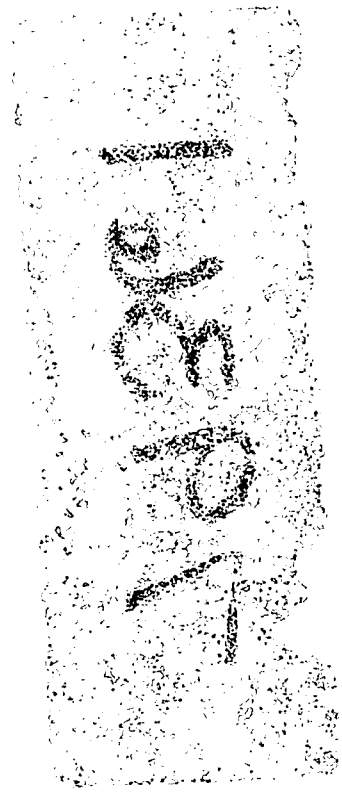
Criminal Justice Planning and Management Series

Volume 3

Criminal Justice Program Development Course:

Text





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TEXT

What is Program Development?

Before attempting a concise definition of program development, it would be helpful to discuss some of its salient characteristics and place it in the context of the General Planning Process Model that has been adopted by many practitioners in the Criminal Justice System.

Program development is a critical part of this overall planning model and supports the development of a wide variety of activities that have as their common purpose the reduction of crime and/or the improvement in the efficiency with which the Criminal Justice system operates.

The model (shown below) is seen to contain eleven "steps," each representing a logical progression in the refinement of plans that move from the normative level (steps 1 through 6), to the strategic level (steps 7 and 8), and, finally, to the operational level (steps 9 through 11).

The program development process "begins" with the definition of problems, which is at the end of the problem analysis process that is represented by step 5 in the model; it "ends"

with the completion of planning for the implementation and evaluation of a program of activities, which is represented by step 9 of the model.

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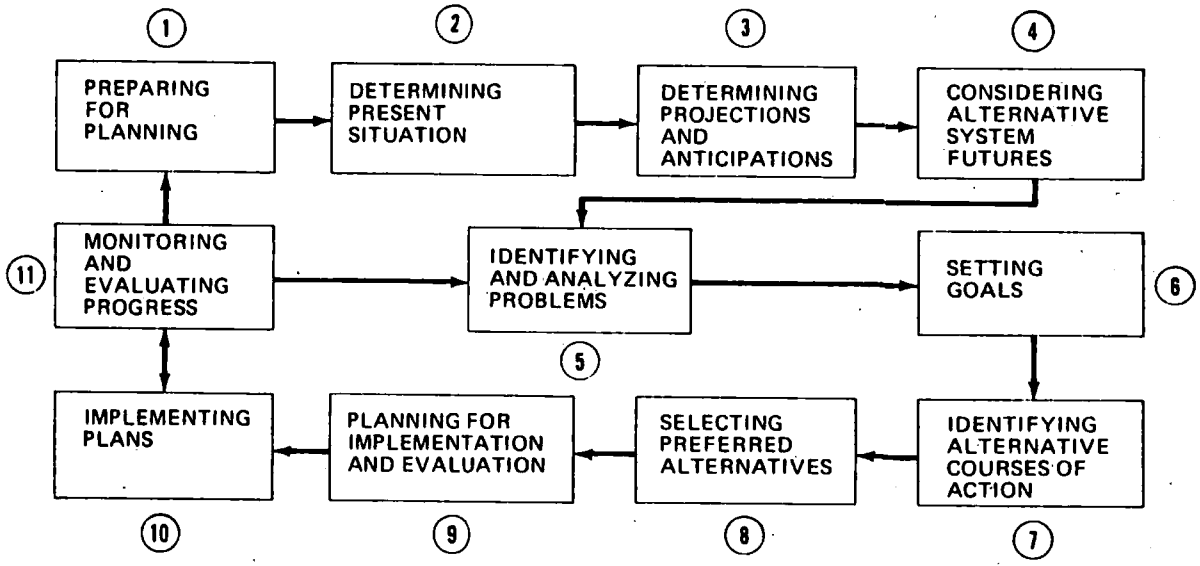
GENERAL PLANNING PROCESS MODEL



Stated most simply, program development builds upon well-defined problems (step 5), sets goals for dealing with those problems (step 6), identifies possible strategies for "solving" those problems (step 7), selects those strategies that are most likely to work (step 8), and plans for their implementation and evaluation (step 9). Program development, in this model, stops short of the funding of activities or their actual implementation, but, as we shall see, this dividing line is not always a sharp and well-defined one.

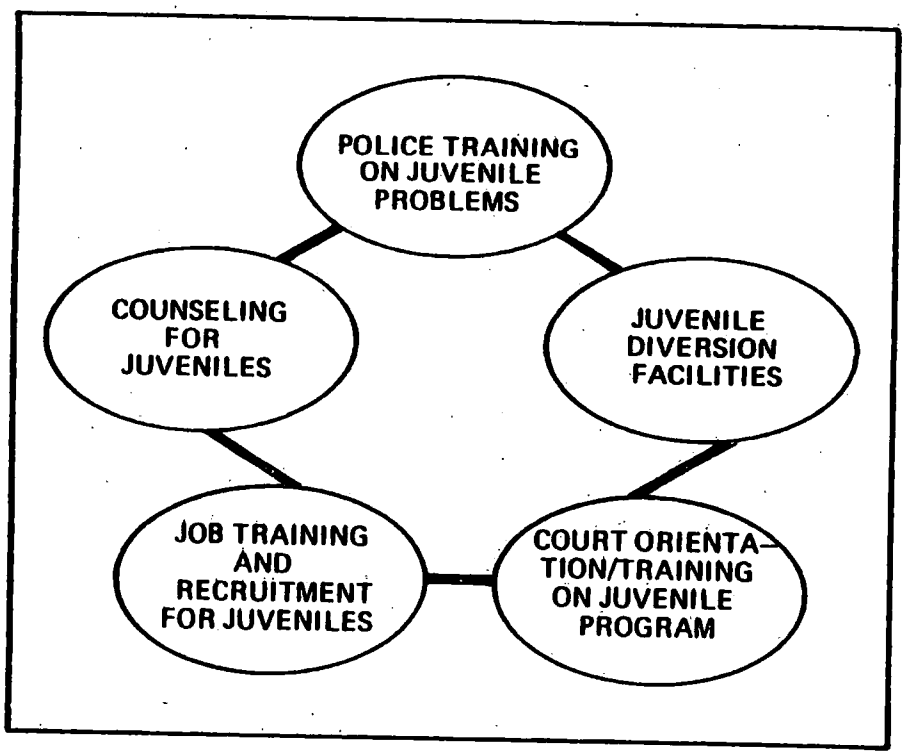
Since there already exist Criminal Justice Training Center courses on problem identification and definition (the Analysis Course) and on the evaluation of projects (the Evaluation/ Monitoring Course), the program development process is anchored at both ends by well-researched and by sound methods and techniques for carrying out those two functions. Thus, the Program Development Course fills a large and critical gap in the process that goes from problem to solution. Or stated still another way, program development carries the planning process from what should be done to what must and can be done but stops short of actually doing it!

Programs and Projects

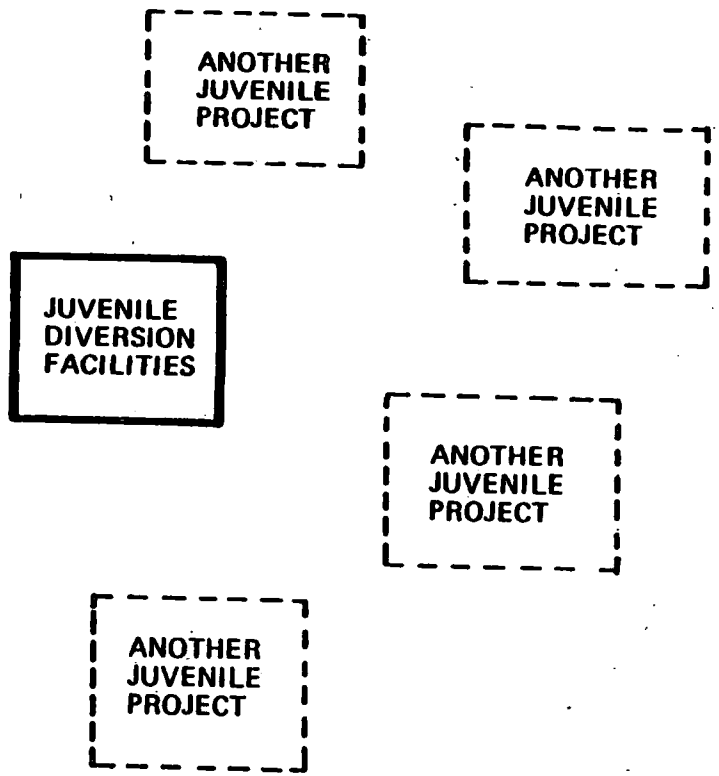
Another useful way of thinking about program development is to contrast it with project development. This is difficult because the terms are often used interchangeably, depending on one's perspective. Thus, a large activity in a small community (e.g., a juvenile diversion initiative) may be seen as a program by the local people but as a project at the regional or state level. This potential for confusion can be reduced by looking at the planning process that led to that activity.

The illustration on the following page shows the two ways a planner can think about an organized effort to solve a problem. In the program on the left we see a set of efforts all relating to juveniles. The lines between the different kinds of efforts -- we call these efforts "elements"-- indicate that they are somehow connected or "integrated." The set of projects on the left are also related to juvenile justice. However, the lack of integration

JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAM



JUVENILE JUSTICE PROJECTS



among the projects suggests that they are just that--a set of projects that happen to all relate to juveniles. Thus, even though both groups of efforts contain common parts, such as juvenile diversion facilities, only the one on the left can be truly described as a program. As we shall see, this distinction is profound in its conceptual and planning implications but may seem trivial at the operational level. Let us at this point simply state an axiom that is the driving force behind the entire notion of program development:

> *Since criminal justice problems are highly complex and multi-faceted in their causation, their overt existence, and their impact, it follows that intervention activities must be sensitive to this complexity if they are going to be of any real and lasting value to society.*

The corollary to this axiom is:

> *Single projects developed in quick response to narrowly conceived and/or ill-defined problems will not contribute significantly to the reduction of crime or to the improvement of the Criminal Justice system.*

Stated less formally, putting out fires or responding to the wheel that squeaks the loudest is not consistent with sound program planning. It also does little to improve the professional image of Criminal Justice planners.

The Role of the Planner In Program Development

If one were to point out that much of the planning currently being carried out in the various criminal justice agencies throughout the country is at the project rather than the program level, this would be correct. If one were to assert that this is not likely to be, or cannot be, changed regardless of the desirability of such change, this would hopefully be incorrect. In a survey carried out in support of this course development effort, it was learned that some form of program development work is now performed by most of the 242 planners who responded, covering state, regional, and local agencies (1). In fact, only 2.1% of the respondents said that they do no program development work at all and 20% spend over 50% of their time on program development work. The remaining 78% range between these two extremes.

Furthermore, of the 76 tasks initially identified as comprising the program development process, 62 of them, or 82%, were said to be performed at least some of the time by over 70% of the agencies responding. Even allowing for the error inherent in such survey results, there is still a sizable number of planners who are making some kind of an effort to engage in program development, although very few of them are doing it on a systematic, regular, and full-time basis.

Definition of Program Development

Having set Program Development in context and described some of its characteristics, the following definition is offered:

> *Program Development is the process of identifying, selecting, and designing systems-oriented strategies, made up of complementary projects and activities, to produce goal-directed changes in specific criminal justice problem areas.*

The emphasis in the definition is clearly on the notion of developing a systems response to criminal justice problems. This does not mean that the program as developed should confine itself to the present criminal justice system--the courts, police, corrections, etc., but that the response should relate to the problem in its breadth and complexity and thus be a multi-faceted set of activities, all linked together by a common goal. The systems notion also carries with it the idea of evaluation, feedback and revision--a dynamic response rather than a static one. Finally, the program development process is characterized by the need for expertise that ranges over several areas, and strongly suggests the use of a team approach.

The Basic Steps in Program Development

Prior to the development of this course, an extensive literature review was carried out as well as intensive

interviews with a substantial number of practitioners with many years of experience in developing programs and projects in the Criminal Justice environment. Based on a concensus of their informed judgments, 76 separate tasks were identified as being part of the program development process. To validate this list, a survey form was sent to 237 planning agencies in the U.S. and territories to (1) check on the accuracy of the list ("Is this task part of the program development process as you see it?"), (2) determine how many of the planners actually did these tasks, and (3) determine how important they considered each one to be. Based on the results of this survey, a validated model of the program development process was developed and served as the basis for the design of this training course. (Perceived areas of inadequacy were also solicited from practitioners to help determine the relative emphasis that should be placed on various topics.)

The seven major steps in the Program Development Model are shown below (related course modules are shown by Roman numerals):

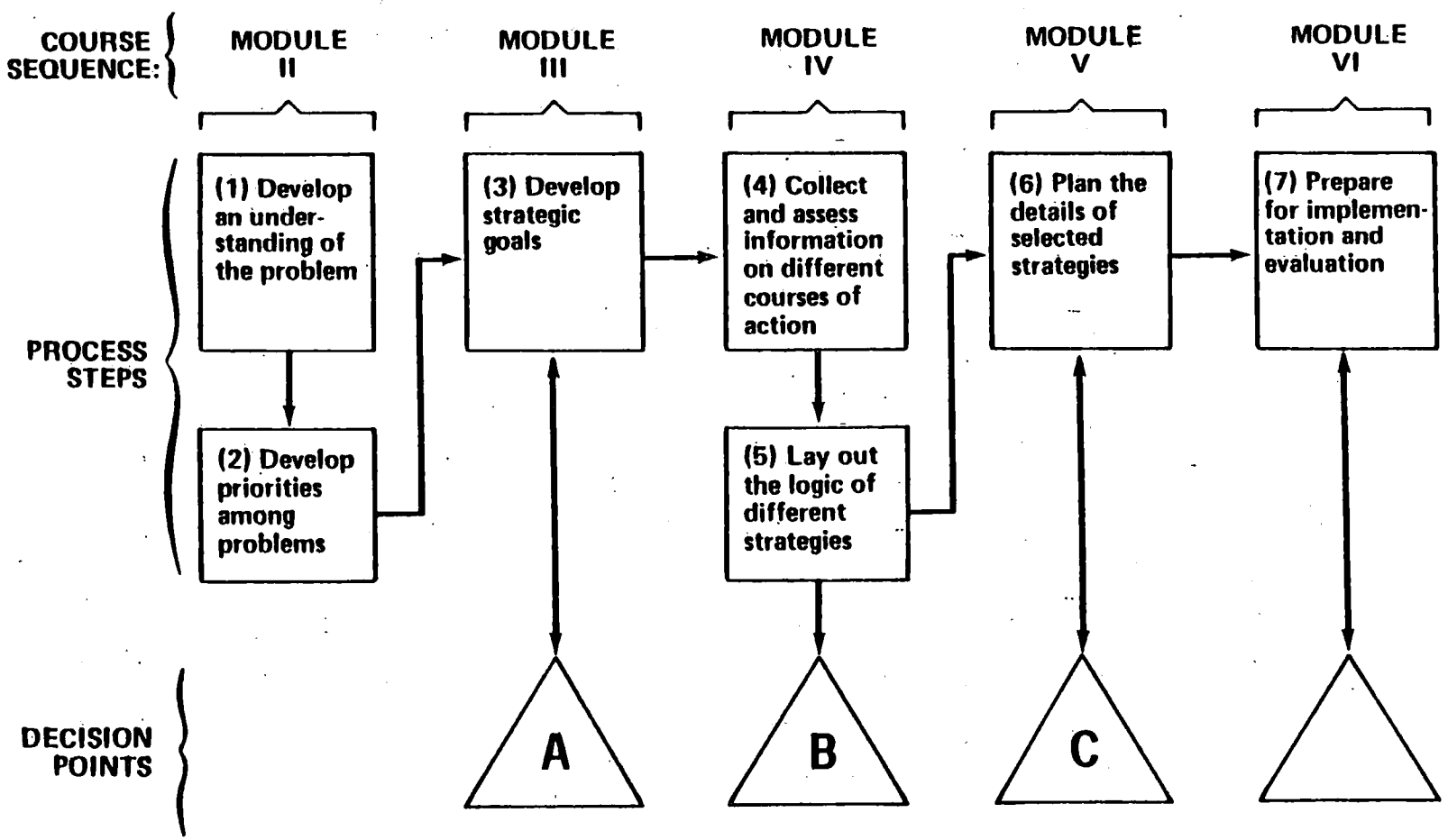
- Develop an understanding of the problem (II)
- Develop priorities among problems (II)
- Develop strategic goals (III)
- Collect and assess information on different courses of action (IV)

- Lay out the logic of different strategies (IV)
- Plan the details of selected strategies (V)
- Prepare for implementation and evaluation (VI)

It should be noted that this model of the Program Development process, while more detailed, is quite consistent with the General Planning Process Model shown earlier. Thus, Modules II and III are essentially dealing at the normative level of planning--the "ought" stage. Here, problems are defined and selected, and strategic goals for those problems are established and approved, thus establishing the overall policy direction of the work to follow. Module IV is at the heart of the process, sorting out what kinds of strategies can be considered as potentially able to "solve" the problem and meet the strategic goals. Available resources begin to play a role at this point in the process, introducing the notion of what <u>can</u> be done as distinct from what <u>ought</u> to be done. Modules V and VI carry the process to the operational level of planning (the <u>will</u> be done stage), spelling out the elements necessary in order that the program be carried out as planned, often including who will do it, when it will be done, and how much it will cost to do it. Planning for the management and evaluation of the various elements that comprise the program is also accomplished here.

The program development process also contains a series of <u>decision points</u>--points at which key decision-makers must be brought into the process and approvals to continue the program development efforts should be obtained. In this course we

THE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



discuss four such decision points:

- The selection of a set of possible strategic goals (A);
- The selection of a set of possible strategies (B);
- The approval of a set of elements which will implement the different strategies (C);
- The approval of the completed work plan which integrates the different elements and will guide the implementation and evaluation of the program (D).

At each of these decision points the program developer prepares what we call a decision package; a document which outlines the options available to the decision-maker and provides the necessary background information he or she needs to evaluate the choices.

The Logic of the Program Development Process

A simple way to conceptualize the program development process is to consider the reasons why programs succeed or fail. In general, there are three such reasons:

- The extent to which the persons planning the program understand the problem they are trying to address;
- The extent to which the strategies developed are appropriate to the solution of the problem;
- The extent to which the strategies are carried out as intended.

A program succeeds or fails largely to the extent that all three of these conditions are met. A perfectly executed plan

will fail if the plan itself was faulty to begin with, just as a perfect plan will fail if the plan is not followed. Similarly, a strategy may meet all the criteria of logic and feasibility but still fail if it is based on an inaccurate understanding of the problem to be addressed.

The program development process outlined in the course is aimed at maximizing the probability that programs will succeed. It does this by outlining a logical series of steps that tie the problem to the development of strategies and the development of operational plans to the strategies. Putting first things first we focus on the problem before looking to solutions and test the logic of those solutions before deciding how best to implement them. We also follow a consistent pattern at each step. Before any decision is made we first identify as many relevant options as possible and then organize those options in a way that makes the decision possible.

We can now see that the program development process is really a set of decisions, each one representing a further refinement of, and narrowing of, the options available to the planner. However, these decision points must be recognized not as part of a one-way linear process but as informed estimates, subject to reassessment and re-definition as the process progresses. Thus, goals established earlier may be revised on the basis of new information, new insights

or newly imposed limitations on the resources available. The process should operate as a self-correcting system, with feedback from each step used to reassess the adequacy of earlier steps and modify them as appropriate.

We can also see that the end-point of the program development process is difficult to define with precision. The best one can say about where the program planning process should stop is "it depends." We have said that for purposes of this course it ends at that point where the program is funded or implemented. But in the real world, program development may well continue beyond that point. The extent to which that is true depends on several things, but mostly on the nature of the elements that comprise the program. Are they innovative or traditional? Large and complex or small and easy to define? Are they dispersed geographically or confined to a small area? Are they research efforts or demonstration efforts (or mixed)? Do they cross jurisdictional lines? Are the agencies and personnel involved in carrying out the elements of the program plan well known and experienced in the work involved or is it new to them? Have unforseen external events forced the elements to be modified? Any of the above factors could result in additional program development work <u>after</u> funding and implementation. But courses have to end, so a logical point to consider the process as having been completed is at that point where the program is ready for implementation.

Sensitivity to the need for flexibility on the part of

those who will implement the work is the other side of the same coin -- when do guidelines for management and evaluation of a project become a straightjacket on effective performance at the operational level? When does the detailed planning of the program developer become an insult to those given the responsibility to carry out the plan?

At the more philosophical level, we can also see that program development cannot be bound by a finite set of steps. The entire process is one that can only improve the probability of success while reducing that for error and failure. In a world of imperfect knowledge and limited resources, the results of the best program development efforts will also be imperfect. In that sense, then, the process is never completed; many of today's programs are built on the foundations of earlier activities that were the product of other planning efforts. There is little reason to believe that this process will now reach its ultimate conclusion, even with the increased skills of planners that should result from courses such as this one!

The Skills Needed for Program Development

The development of a program is a complex and demanding process and requires a variety of special skills. The ideal program developer should have:

- *Fact-finding and analytic skills*, e.g. skills in interpreting research and evaluation materials; ability to think systematically about interventions and identify assumptions; knowledge of ways to access available information.

- *Interpersonal skills*, e.g., organizational, leadership, communications, and public relations abilities.

- *Technical, administrative and planning skills*, e.g., competence in budgeting, procedural development, staffing and organization, scheduling, and developing internal and external feedback mechanisms.

- *Operational and content expertise*, e.g., substantive knowledge of the content areas, practical experience with the agencies involved in and impacted by the program, knowledge of local conditions.

This brief overview of what Program Development is, some of the problems connected with its use, and some of the relevant skills and knowledge that those who do Program Development need to have, serves to point up the challenge faced by a course that proposes to provide training in the area. The ideal program developer would appear to be someone who has the wisdom of a Solomon, the craftiness of a Machiavelli, the brains of an Einstein, the charm of a Valentino, the hide of an elephant, and the agility of a gazelle!

The Role of the Program Developer in the Context of Criminal Justice Planning

The process for developing a program described in this course may seem idealistic, particularly in a period of limited resources when the "grand" approach to criminal justice problems apprears to be less feasible. In addition, the approach may appear to be running counter to the reactive, crisis-oriented approach to criminal justice planning which many agencies have

adopted over the years. It is true that the process described here may often take more time, money, and effort than is required by the more typical "quick-fix" approach to planning. However, there are a number of reasons why such an approach is, in fact, more practical and realistic than the more typical approaches to problem solving.

First, in times of limited resources the program developer must necessarily be more selective in his or her choice of targets. Thus, a process which deliberately forces the program developer to look carefully at the nature of the problems to be addressed and the options for intervention is more realistic than one that simply reacts to each crisis as it occurs. Second, when limited resources are available the program developer must be as certain as possible that the interventions implemented have the best chance of succeeding--the margin for mistakes is much narrower. Third, program development, as described here does not necessarily mean the implementation of "new" activities or projects--it may often mean redirecting existing efforts or providing better ways of doing what is already being done. The process described here encourages the program developer to use what is already available and to not limit program thinking only to those activities that will require additional resources.

It can also be argued that very little of what is presented here is beyond the current experience or capacities of persons in the criminal justice planning profession. Most of the tasks and skills required in program development are already carried out by persons in the system. What this course adds is a more

systematic and logical arrangement of these tasks and skills, and an underlying approach that makes the process explicit rather than intuitive.

We are not attempting to minimize the difficulties involved in implementing the process described in this course. To work properly the process must have the support of managers and decision-makers. This means that it will have to be "sold"; either as a whole package, or one piece at a time. The logical person to do the selling is the program developer who is convinced that the process can work. One excellent way to sell the process is to first, create a sense of teamwork in the process--program development is seldom a one-person operation--and second, to involve the key decision-makers in the process through timely briefings and free sharing of information.

Summary: The Characteristics of Program Development

We have tried to cover a great deal of ground in this introductory essay. Many of the ideas will be fleshed out in more detail in subsequent chapters. We conclude this discussion with several salient points which helped form the overall concept of the course:

- A collection of individual projects and other activities that fall within or are assigned to a programmatic label do not usually constitute a program as defined here. A collection of highly skilled carpenters, plumbers, brick layers, roofers, etc., will never build a house unless they are working toward a common goal and from a common set of blueprints.

- The elements that comprise a program may be of several types, including funded projects that went through the RFP and grant process; activities that an operating agency agrees to do within its own budget; and initiatives that are carried out within the planning agency itself. Each of these elements requires a different approach, different products and different skills. Yet each is an integral part of the overall program and the failure of any one of them may seriously compromise the overall program.

- The various elements that represent the end products of the program development process are likely to require inter-agency cooperation. This puts special requirements on the management and evaluation functions to insure the integrity of the program elements oncy they are operational.

- Program development may be initiated and carried out at different levels in the Criminal Justice system. Ideas may start at lower levels, go to higher levels for further development, integration, and funding support and return to the lower level for detailed planning and implementation.

- The various state and local planning agencies have routinized and proceduralized much of the planning process, partly due to pressure from various governing authorities to work within prescribed legal codes and guidelines. This is not a guidelines-compliance course, nor is it one on how to obtain funding. It describes a process that can be carried out according to certain logical procedures. The variations in the way these procedures can be locally institutionalized and legally defined are infinite, subject to constant change, and clearly beyond the scope of this course.

- Managers of criminal justice agencies should serve in a sorting capacity in the program development decision process, selecting those things that the developer can decide on his own, those things that the manager should decide on his own, and those decisions that should involve a larger constituency, such as a planning or supervisory board. The program developer can facilitate and heavily influence these decisions through his technical and interpersonal skills, but he or she must

recognize that final authority for decisions about the selection of problems, the determination of goals, the selection of intervention strategies, and the utilization of resources will almost always rest elsewhere.

- The program development process has an opportunity to present itself as a force for positive social change as opposed to a negative response to serious and immediate problems. It has the scope and breadth to consider longer range solutions that can consider, for example, prevention activities. This is also why programmatic approaches are often harder to "sell" and to keep before the public eye. Results are longer range and more difficult to document. Interest may lag and funds diverted to other, more immediately perceived needs.

- Quantitative factors should play the major role in the program development process, but qualitative factors play a large role as well. Traversing from the "ought," to the "can," to the "will" involves selling ideas to the hard-to-sell, and convincing the hard-to-convince of the logic of your approach. It also means knowing when to retreat, compromise, and select alternate routes -- all of this being done while maintaining the integrity of the program. Such interpersonal factors are hard to define and even harder to teach. The course will discuss their importance and provide some guidance on their use, but it will not be able to compensate for real deficiencies in these areas.

Course Objectives

If some of the above characteristics seem problematic, that is only because the role of the planner in program development is being looked at realistically. A course of instruction in such a complex area as program development does little service to the cause of improved criminal justice practices by ignoring reality. What such a course can do is (1) convince you of the inherent logic and desirability of program development, and (2) introduce you

to the basic skills and knowledge that will enable you to begin the pursuit of Program Development in your own agency. The stated overall objectives of the course are as follows:

> To provide to those who have Program Development responsibilities the necessary knowledge and skills so that they will see the need to, and will be able to:
>
> - Assess the adequacy (completeness, accuracy, logic) of statements relating to criminal justice problems within your jurisdiction (ref. Module II);
> - Establish priorities among those problems for possible intervention (ref. Module II);
> - Develop program goals consistent with the problems selected and the priorities established (ref. Module III);
> - Locate and/or develop approaches potentially capable of meeting program goals, i.e., dealing with the selected problems (ref. Module IV);
> - Select those approaches most likely to impact on the reduction of those problems, commensurate with available or obtainable resources (ref. Modules IV and V);
> - Identify delivery systems and procedures that can implement those approaches at both the strategic (program) and action (project) levels (ref. Modules V and VI);
> - Identify those key events in the program plan on the basis of which effective monitoring, evaluation, and corrective feedback can be carried out as the plan is being implemented (ref. Module VI).

The obligation of a training course is to present a model of things as they could or ought to be if the world were a more rational place and everyone in it were motivated by the purest of intentions, while at the same time providing useful skills and knowledge for the real world we all

live and work in. No one will be able to use and follow all of the advice, guidance, ideas, skills and knowledge presented in the following modules. But no one should leave the course without having at least one new idea that they can put to good use in their own planning environment.

References

[1]Radtke, P., Holland, V.M., Felker, D., and Shettel, H. *Criminal Justice Program Development Job Analysis Survey*. Washington, D. C.: American Institutes for Research, 1979.

Chapter II
Developing an Understanding of Problems

TEXT

Program development is aimed at finding and designing solutions to problems. How well this is accomplished depends heavily on two early steps in the process:

- The development of an understanding of the problem
- The selection of problems for program intervention

In this module (II), this part of the program development process is discussed.

Developing an Understanding of the Problem

Program development can be thought to begin when a problem is first identified. How the problem is described and explained plays a major role in determining how the problem will be addressed. People tend to react to the most obvious and dramatic aspect of problems. This initial perception, however, may be based on inadequate or partial evidence. This can lead to erroneous assumptions about the problem, its causes and effects, and how it can be "solved." In the General Planning Process Model, the initial identification of a problem is followed by a period of careful analysis. Through this process, the characteristics of the problem are clarified. Through analysis the boundaries and characteristics of the problem are defined, thus confirming, revising, amplifying, or replacing the earlier assumptions made about it.

The major product of the analysis process is a document that spells out what is known or suspected about the problem--the Problem Statement. This document serves as the primary basis for decisions about whether to initiate a program to address the problem. If a decision to act is made, the Statement can also serve as the major source of information about how the problem could be solved.

Problem Statement Format. Problem Statements differ greatly from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In this course we have adopted the format and content as taught in the course on Criminal Justice Analysis, a companion course in this training series. The recommended format for the Problem Statement is shown on the following page. This format is comparable to the standard format used in technical and research reports in the social sciences.

According to this format the Statement should begin with an introductory description of the problem and the major concerns and issues surrounding the problem. This should be followed by a detailed description of how the problem was analyzed. In a good Problem Statement the discussion of methodology should enable any reader to assess the technical adequacy and limitations of the analytic methods.

Following the methodology section, the Statement should next present the findings viz à viz the hypotheses tested in the analysis. The Statement should specify these hypotheses explicitly and indicate the theory or assumptions behind each. The interpretation of the findings is presented next. This

discussion should lay out the implications of the findings:

- The extent to which the findings confirm or refute the original assumptions about the problem
- Specific characteristics about the problem not previously suspected
- Additional questions or hypotheses raised by the findings
- Limitations in the findings
- Alternative explanations for the findings

The Problem Statement should conclude with a brief summary of the findings and interpretations and additional materials, calculations, or technical discussions supporting the analysis.

Assessing the Adequacy of Problem Statements

Based on a survey of criminal justice planning agencies, discussions with criminal justice planners, and our own examinations, it is clear that the quality of problem statements produced in the system varies widely. Because the Problem Statement can be an important input to the program development process, it is important that the program developer has confidence in the contents of the Statement and is aware of the limitations and defects in the Statement. This same requirement holds true for any other sources of information about a problem the program developer may use. Consequently, the process described in the course provides for a preliminary assessment of the Problem Statement before any decisions are made to proceed with the development of a program. The purpose of this assessment is to

identify those Problem Statements that fail to meet certain criteria of adequacy and to develop a detailed understanding of the problem.

Criteria for Assessing the Adequacy of Problem Statements

There are two general aspects of the Problem Statement that should be assessed by the program developer: the technical adequacy, and the conceptual adequacy of the statement.

Technical adequacy refers to the quality of the information contained in the Statement and the appropriateness of the analysis used. The criteria to assess technical adequacy are the same as those applied to any other analytic work. Among the technical aspects of the Statement to be assessed are:

- The research design applied by the analyst,
- The measures and variables used in the analysis,
- The size and characteristics of the data sample,
- The statistics used to analyze the data.

Research design refers to the overall analytic strategy used by the analyst to answer certain questions about a problem. In a good Problem Statement these questions are identified explicitly in the form of hypotheses. However, in other instances it will be necessary to infer the questions that are tested through a careful reading of the Statement. The primary criterion of an adequate research design is that it allows the analyst to answer or test the research questions posed.

The first step in assessing the research design is to identify all of the questions the analysis attempts to answer.

The second step is to determine how the analyst attempted to test the hypothesis. Since there are always a variety of ways to do this, the assessment should consider the relative value of the alternatives. In general, a design which permits a comparison--between groups of subjects, before-and-after comparisons--are more powerful than those which merely collect undigested facts.

A third step in assessing the design is to look for uncontrolled threats to validity. A valid research design is one where extraneous factors, factors not directly relevant to the hypothesis are accounted for or controlled. This control is necessary if the analyst is to be able to state that Factor A is related to Factor B.

Measures and variables. A second aspect of the Problem Statement to be assessed is the way in which the data used in the analysis was gathered and defined. The first step in this assessment is to identify all of the measures and variables used in the analysis. Again, in a good Problem Statement, these will be identified and described in detail.

In assessing the use of measures and variables the program developer should ask the following questions:

- Is the analyst measuring what he or she thinks is being measured? Police arrest rates may be a good indicator of police performance and productivity, but may be poor indicators of the volume of crime being committed.

- Are the measures and variables representative of events in the real world? A concept such as "recidivism" may encompass a broad array of specific events ranging from a released offender breaking parole to holding up a liquor store. By lumping all such events into a single measure the analyst may be presenting an inaccurate picture of real world events.

- If the same analysis were conducted again using other data would it produce the same or similar results? Many analytic findings are the product of purely local conditions and could not be replicated anywhere else or even at any other time. The program developer must consider whether the findings are generalizable beyond the location or moment the data was collected.

The Sample. The third technical aspect of the Problem Statement to be assessed is the adequacy of the data sample used in the analysis. Did the analyst use all of the data available, or was a sample selected? In general, a survey of the total universe of data points is ideal, but seldom feasible. If a sample was used, how was it selected? Random selection is preferable. Otherwise a matching of subjects is allowed if all relevant variations are accounted for in the sample. The program developer should be aware of any selection biases that make one group of subjects more likely to be picked for analysis than another.

Related to the representative adequacy of the sample is the matter of sample size. There are no fixed rules related to the minimum size of a sample. However, the larger the sample the better the predictive power of the analysis. The program developer should ask:

- Is the sample size roughly proportionate to the number of variables being gathered? The greater the number of variables, the larger the sample should be.

- Is the sample large enough that it is likely to contain most of the variations found in that population (e.g., most age groups, most major ethnic groups, most neighborhoods, most police ranks, etc.)?

The critical question related to the sample is, does the sample size or characteristics permit the analyst to generalize about the entire population, i.e., is the sample reasonably representative of the population as a whole?

Statistics. The adequacy of the statistical methods used in the analysis is a highly technical subject beyond the immediate capacity of this course. The reader is urged to refer to a good standard text on statistics in making this assessment. Several useful works are referenced in the appendix of this module. This discussion will be limited to a few common problems in the use and misuse of statistics.

- Percentages are widely abused in Problem Statements. The most common abuse is the failure to present the whole numbers upon which percentages were calculated. A statement that, "40 percent of the respondents in our survey indicated that they felt police protection was inadequate" is meaningful only if the number of persons responding is also reported. In this instance the statement may mean that 2 out of 5, 4 out of 10, or 400 out of a thousand had this opinion. It should be noted that there are statistical tests of significance which can be used to estimate the degree to which changes or differences in percentages are meaningful.

- Averages are often abused in a similar fashion as percentages. For example, a statement that the average number of years of education among police officers is 14 years obscures the fact that a sizeable number of officers may have a much smaller educational attainment. Interpretation of averages should be accompanied by an appreciation of the range and overall distribution of the total population. Again, there are tests to estimate the statistical significance of differences or changes in averages.

- Correlations are not frequently used in Problem Statements. When they are, however, a common error is to assume that if two factors are highly correlated one factor caused the other. A correlation only measures the degree to which two or more factors change together, in a regular or uniform fashion. This may be because of some third factor or pure chance. There are numerous examples of factors that vary together in a regular fashion over many years (e.g., ice cream consumption and the number of drownings per month). In highly complex systems, organizations or societies, many similar correlations can be found for which the third common causal factor is not obvious.

Technical adequacy is the minimum requirement of any problem statement. Unless the statement can meet minimum methodological criteria, the program developer and decision-makers are seriously limited in the kinds of decisions they can make about the problem. Indeed, unless the statement meets these criteria, there may be little basis for assuming that the problem exists at all.

Conceptual adequacy refers to the substantive quality of the problem statement--how well the statement describes and explains the problem. The criteria to be applied in this area are necessarily less precise than those used to assess technical adequacy.

In general, the description of the problem in the Problem Statement should be relatively comprehensive. The explanation of the problem should be complete and logical.

Comprehensiveness. The Problem Statement should serve as the major source of relevant information about a particular problem. It should contain as much information about the problem as the limits of time and space allow. At a minimum the statement should present information on the following topics:

- What is the problem? The Statement should provide a clear description of the type of problem under examination. It should specify whether the problem is related to a specific crime, the way the criminal justice system works, the secondary effects of crime, or a combination of all these.

- What is the size of the problem? The Statement should indicate the magnitude of the problem. If the problem is one of crime, the Statement should state how often the crime is committed. If the problem is in the system itself, the number of times the problem arises should be reported. If it relates to some secondary effect of crime, the number of people affected should be given.

- How has the problem changed over time? The statement should provide a history of the problem. Is it a new problem? A long-standing problem? An old problem that has suddenly increased in seriousness? If the problem has changed over time, the Statement should also indicate how fast the change has occurred.

- How serious is the problem. The Statement should indicate the extent to which the problem poses a critical situation for the system in terms of costs, public confidence, or the ability to operate. Similarly, the statement should indicate how serious the problem is for the community or segments of the community as a whole.

- Who is affected by the problem? The Statement should indicate the people, groups, organizations, and agencies that are affected by the problem. The Statement should also indicate how these people, groups, etc., are affected and the seriousness of the problem for each.

- Where is the problem located? The Statement should indicate how widespread the problem is. Is it confined to a single neighborhood? A single community? A region? Or is the problem scattered about in various places? Is it a statewide problem? A national problem?

- When does the problem occur? The Statement should indicate the temporal or cyclical nature of the problem. Is the problem more prevelant at certain times of the year? On certain days of the week? Certain times of the day? Does the problem display any regular trends or is it a continuous problem?

- How does the criminal justice system respond to the problem? The Statement should indicate which parts of the criminal justice system have responsibility for dealing with the problem. If agencies outside the system are also involved, this should also be reported. The Statement should give an assessment of how well the system responds, where response problems exist, and why.

- What factors are associated with the problem? The Statement should indicate what is known about the root causes of the problem, the factors that make the problem more or less likely, and the secondary effects the problem creates. If possible, the Statement should also indicate if there are any

theories about the problem and what the best thinking says about the causes and effects of the problem.

Completeness of Explanation. If a Problem Statement describes the problem in a comprehensive manner, the next aspect to be assessed is the completeness of its explanation of the problem. To be most useful, the contents of the Statement should form a conceptual whole. That is, the parts of the problem should fit together in a way that makes it apparent why A leads to B or why the problem has the characteristics it does. Unless the information can be organized in this fashion, the Statement remains a collection of unconnected facts.

The conditions and events described in a Problem Statement tend to fall into one of the following categories:

- Presumed causes
- Primary effects
- Secondary effects
- System response

The presumed causes of the problem are those conditions or events that are thought to come before and lead to the expressed concerns and related events and effects. For example, many persons believe that poverty is a major antecedent of crime. Other factors in this category might include: poor child-rearing practices, personality, and economic incentives. Other factors are more immediate and might include: peer group pressures, opportunities to commit a crime or the subjective estimate of being detected and caught.

The primary effects of the problem are those conditions and events that directly result from the presumed causes. They are often the most immediate and obvious aspect of the problem. For example, the incidence of burglary in a community may be the primary effect of an increase in drug trafficking.

The secondary effects of a problem are those conditions and events that directly result from the primary effects and indirectly result from the presumed causes. For example, a rise in the number of street crimes may result in fewer people leaving their homes at night. A high crime rate may result in an increase in public fear of crime.

The fourth set of conditions and events are called the system response components. They refer to those conditions or events in the criminal justice system, or some other relevant system (e.g., schools, public welfare agencies) that have an effect on, or are affected by the problem's presumed causes or effects. For example, the ability of the police to detect and apprehend drug traffickers will affect the presumed causes of the burglary problem. At the same time, a rise in the fear or crime may result in greater police efforts to crack down on burglary or drug trafficking. Thus, factors contained under the system response category are important parts of the portrait of the problem as it is presented in the Problem Statement.

The Logic of the Explanation of the Problem

By organizing the components of the problem into presumed causes, primary and secondary effects, and system response components the program developer can gauge how complete the

explanation of the problem in the Problem Statement is. However, a true understanding of the problem requires that these conditions and events be organized into a logical structure so that the linkages or relationships among the different conditions and events are explicit.

In an ideal Problem Statement these relationships are specified and tested in the form of hypotheses. An hypothesis is a statement that asserts a relationship among either concepts, variables or measures. However, very often these relationships are not stated specifically but are merely implied as assumptions about the problem. For example, a Problem Statement which states that ex-offenders who are able to find good, well-paying jobs within a month after release are less likely to recidivate than those who do not is implying a relationship between two variables: employment opportunity and recidivism. Such a statement might be based on a detailed statistical analysis of hundreds of ex-offenders, the testimony of an expert in the field, or the "gut" impressions of a seasoned parole officer. Whatever the evidence used to support the statement, such relationships are extremely important to a program developer. First, they help to explain the problem of recidivism in a way that goes beyond merely describing the components of the problem. Second, they provide clues as to possible ways of dealing with recidivism or other problems. Thus, as a step in understanding a problem, the program developer must be alert to identify all such relationships, stated and implied, in the Problem Statement.

However, while it is important for the program developer to be aware of all relationships between components of the problem, the program developer should also be cautious in attaching too much faith or confidence in any one relationship in isolation of other possible factors or effects. Many factors contribute to an event, including many that are beyond the immediate observation of even the most careful analyst. Moreover, these many factors interact in extremely intricate ways so that the net effect of any one may be difficult or impossible to detect. Finally, even with sophisticated analytic and statistical techniques, the evidence of a relationship can be misleading. Thus, to return to our example, while recidivism may be related to employment opportunity it may also be related to the ex-offender's background, his experience in prison, his family's encouragement and his parole officer's energy and concern. To isolate one factor as the key to recidivism or any other problem is probably a mistake, no matter how strong or intuitively "right" the evidence.

The Boundaries of the Problem

The final conceptual aspect of the problem to be considered is what we call the boundaries of the problem. The boundaries of a problem are defined as the range of conditions and events beginning with the presumed causes and encompassing the primary and secondary effects and the system response factors described in the Problem Statement. This area could be called the domain of the problem--that segment of the entire range of possible events and conditions examined by the analyst.

It should be apparent that the selection of one factor as a presumed cause or primary or secondary effect is somewhat arbitrary.

For example, consider a causal chain of effects where:

- Drug trafficking (leads to)
- Increased burglaries (leads to)
- Increased fear of crime by the citizens

If the primary effect was perceived as the increase in burglaries, then the increase in drug trafficking would be seen as the presumed cause, and the increased fear of crime would be a secondary effect. If, however, the primary effect was seen as drug trafficking, the chain could be extended so that:

- Organized crime (leads to)
- Increased drug trafficking (leads to)
- Increased burglaries (leads to)
- Increased fear of crime.

This is not a trivial or academic problem for the program developer. In assessing the logic of the Problem Statement, the developer must determine whether the analysis has identified realistic boundaries of the problem or has isolated too small a segment of some larger and more complex problem. Conceptually "the problem" encompasses <u>all</u> of the factors associated with the concerns or characteristics first observed.

Modeling The Problem

There are three steps involved in constructing a problem model:

- Identifying the important aspects of the problem itself

- Organizing those aspects of the problem into a logical pattern
- Identifying logical linkages between the different aspects.

The important aspects of the problem are those conditions and events which characterize, define or are associated with the problem. For example, research on the problem of offender recidivism have identified specific conditions and events which characterize the problem. For example:

- Economic factors--job opportunities for ex-offenders;
- Social factors--the stigma of having a criminal record;
- Psychological factors--the inability of the ex-offender to handle frustration and rejection;
- System factors--the tendency of the police to suspect an ex-offender more readily when a crime is committed.

These factors, among others, tend to define the recidivism problem. They are the conceptual labels or, more technically, the constructs which we use to discuss, define, describe and explain the phenomenon of recidivism.

As this discussion implies, we arrive at these constructs through research, debate and reflection until something like a consensus emerges and people with an interest in the problem

begin to talk in common terms. This is a long and open-ended process. But for the program developer, armed only with the facts in a Problem Statement, the process necessarily must come to a temporary halt. Taking what he has he must fashion a response.

The second step in constructing a model involves organizing the important aspects of the problem into a logical set of categories. There are many ways to do this, but for purposes of this discussion we propose four categories of conditions and events which can be used to organize our understanding of the problem. They are:

- The presumed causes of the problem
- The primary effects of the problem
- The secondary effects of the problem, and
- The system response aspects of the problem.

The presumed causes of the problem, as the term implies, are those conditions and events that are presumed to lead to, produce or contribute to primary effects and, indirectly, to create the secondary effects. The system response aspects of the problem relate to how the system--the criminal justice system or some other formal system --affects or is affected by the problem.

The third step in the process is to identify the logical linkages between the important aspects of the problem. These can be defined in terms of probability estimates, measures of association or simply theoretical suppositions. In a good

Problem Statement the linkages are demonstrated through the testing of precisely stated hypotheses. More often, they are only implied in the facts presented in the Statement.

Once the linkages have been identified the program developer has all of the components he needs to construct a logical model of a problem. This model can then be used to assess not only the quality of the Problem Statement itself, but also the degree of understanding the program developer has about the problem. A brief example illustrates the process.

Assume that the Problem Statement presents us with the following facts:

- Vandalism occurs most often in schools in areas with depressed economic conditions
- High rates of vandalism are thought to contribute to accelerated turnover among school staff and faculty
- Vandalism results in higher costs for repair and upkeep of schools
- Police manpower is not adequate to patrol areas around schools
- Only a small percentage of vandalism incidents result in an arrest

The important aspects of the school vandalism problem, according to the Problem Statement are:

1) Economic conditions in the area around schools
2) The level of vandalism in the different schools

3) The rate of staff and faculty turnover

4) The cost of repairing and maintaining schools

5) The level of police manpower

6) The number (or level) of patrolling around schools

7) The number of arrests for vandalism.

These important aspects of the problem can be organized, according to our four-way typology as follows:

- Economic conditions in the area around schools is a presumed cause in that it appears to be a good predictor of vandalism levels.
- The actual level of vandalism and the costs associated with repairing and maintaining the schools are considered primary effects of the problem--the outward and most obvious aspects of the problem.
- The accelerated rate of staff and faculty turnover is considered a secondary effect in that it is only indirectly related to vandalism.
- The level of police manpower, the number of level of police patrol around schools, and the number of arrests for vandalism are considered the system response aspects of the problem.

The linkages between these important aspects of the problem are fairly obvious: economic conditions in the area around schools somehow lead to increased or decreased levels of

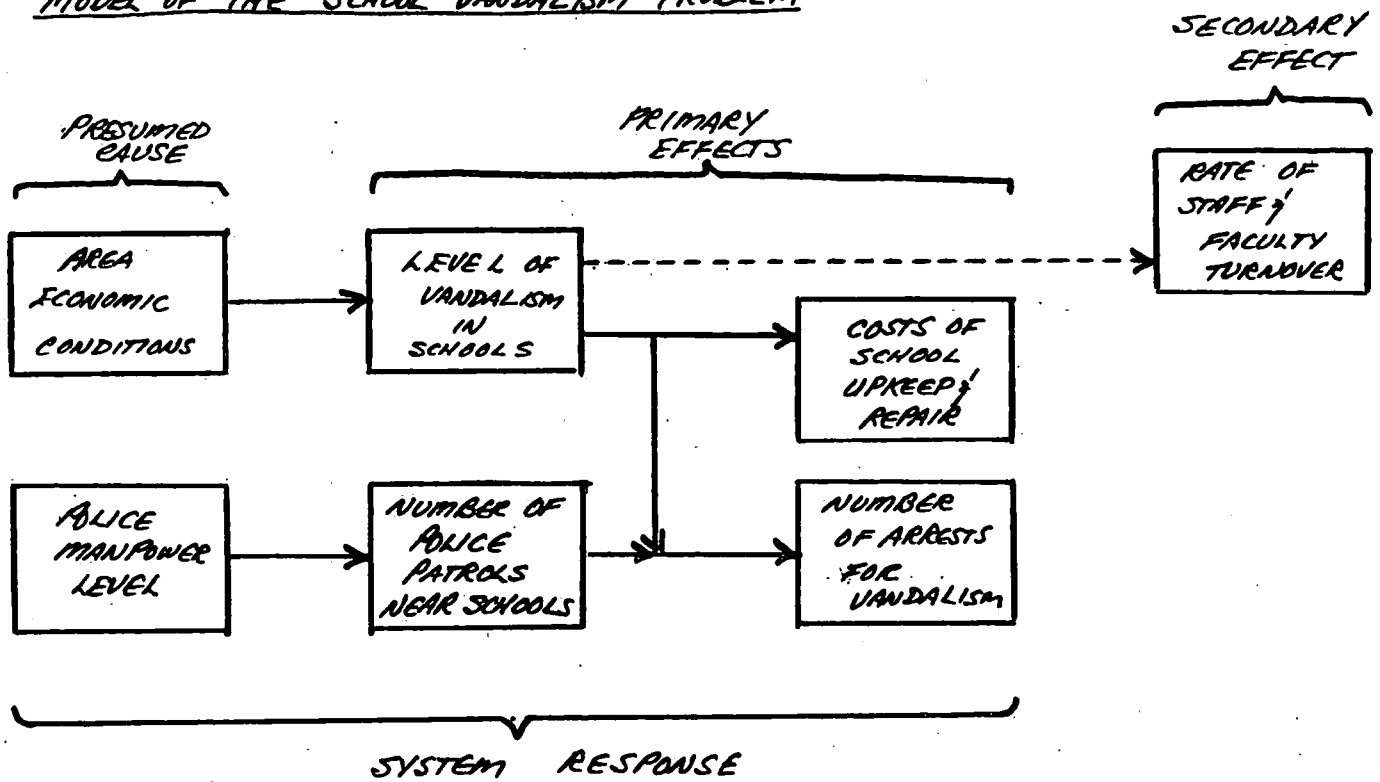
vandalism in those schools; the level of vandalism is related to repair and upkeep costs and to the rate of faculty and staff turnover. Because police manpower levels are inadequate there are few police patrols near schools so that few vandals are arrested for their crimes.

The figure of the following page presents a crude version of the model of the school vandalism problem. In a more complex problem, with more important aspects of the problem identified, such a model could be invaluable in assessing both the quality and adequacy of the Problem Statement and the level of understanding the program developer has of the problem. Even this crude model points to some obvious gaps and flaws in our understanding.

- We know virtually nothing about how or why economic conditions relate to school vandalism levels.
- Is the rate of staff and faculty turnover related only to vandalism levels or perhaps is it only related indirectly due to the same depressed economic conditions found in areas with high rates of vandalism?
- What other factors beside the level or number of police patrols are related to the number of arrests for vandalism?

Thus, the developer has improved his or her understanding of the problem and of the possible logical pitfalls to be avoided when looking for possible solutions to the problem. The program

MODEL OF THE SCHOOL VANDALISM PROBLEM



developer should not be obligated to correct an inadequate Problem Statement. If, in the developer's judgment, the Statement is not adequate, the developer should document where the gaps or inconsistencies exist and suggest that they be corrected before any further action is taken. If a decision to proceed on the basis of an inadequate Statement is made, the developer will have the information necessary to attempt to fill in gaps during development, and will have fulfilled a professional obligation to demand the best possible analytic foundation for his or her development activities.

Setting Priorities Among Problems

After a problem has been identified, defined, and the analysis of the problem has been assessed and accepted, the next step is the decision to proceed to develop a program. In an ideal system, such a decision could be made purely on the merits of the problem itself. In the real world, however, this decision must be made in reference to other problems in the system. Because resources, manpower, and time are limited, planners and decision-makers are forced to set priorities among problems, directing more attention and resources to the solution of some problems now, leaving others for the future.

What is it about a problem that makes it more or less important than some other problem? In a universal sense, there is no answer to this question. The concept of importance is essentially a matter of subjective perception. Perceptions are shaped by a combination of past experiences, immediate concerns

and future expectations. Since people tend to differ widely on each of these variables, it is difficult (and perhaps impossible) to reach universal agreement on what is or is not important. If tomorrow someone were to propose an objective scale of importance against which all problems could be measured, it is a safe bet that few would agree with it and fewer still would abide by it.

Despite the inherent difficulty of reaching agreement on matters of universal importance, it is obvious that decisions must be made and are made every day where choices of this type are involved. Over the years, society and organizations have devised a variety of methods to make difficult choices: majority rule, the enlightened (or unenlightened) despot, divine revelation, or random chance. More recently, an entire field of research and theory has been built up to study and perfect decision strategies. These studies have taken two different perceptions:

- To improve the use of available information in decision-making
- To improve the degree of consensus about the decisions that are made.

The first of these approaches has led to the development of improved information gathering and handling techniques and increasingly sophisticated methods of analysis to aid decision-making broadly included under the discipline of operations research. The second approach has focused on the dynamics of group decision-making and on the development of techniques to

achieve compromises and resolve disputes within groups otherwise included under the lable of oragnizational development. Both approaches have produced a substantial body of literature ranging from very practical, applied techniques to highly theoretical, analytic methodologies. Both areas of research are particularly relevant to program development. Selected sources of information in these areas are included as an appendix to this module. This discussion will focus on several issues common to both areas of interest.

Varieties of Priority-Setting Approaches

There are a variety of techniques to establish priorities in the criminal justice planning system. Priority-setting can be done informally through a process of compromise and "horse-trading" with little more than the individual opinions, wants and ambitions of the participants to guide the process. It can also be done through a very formal process, using standardized procedures and weighted decision criteria. Both approaches have inherent advantages and disadvantages. The informal approach provides enough flexibility for decision-makers to reach consensus on their priorities. It provides a mechanism where everyone's wishes and needs can be met to a certain degree. Moreover, such decisions can usually be made quickly with a minimum of conflict.

The disadvantages of the informal approach arise primarily from its advantages. Flexibility can easily evolve into an extremely inconsistent process. There is the danger that less

powerful interests will be ignored or consistently overridden, regardless of the merits of the issues they raise. The advantage of maximizing everyone's satisfaction with a set of priorities can result in no one's problem being adequately met. Resources which might better be expended resolving a few select problems could end up being squandered on a larger number of relatively small-scale problems. Finally, while decisions can be made quickly in an informal process, this speed may be purchased at the expense of an inadequate understanding or reflection on the choices.

The advantages of a more formal approach are relatively apparent. Formal methods:

- reduce the amount of purely subjective input to the decision-making process
- reduce the probability that decisions will be made in reaction to temporary crises or transitory opinions and fads
- increase the consistency of decisions, and
- reduce the area of possible conflict or disagreement over decisions.

However, formal approaches reduce the flexibility of decision-makers and, if taken too far, can make the process overly mechanical. There are always certain problems that defy pre-formulated criteria and categories. They also tend to reduce individual accountability for decisions and reduce the amount of detailed assessment decision-makers apply to their decisions.

The Need for Consensus. In the priority-setting process consensus is particularly necessary. The decisions made at this point may dictate the future policies and the resources that will be available for many years to come. For the program developer, consensus among decision-makers is also necessary if subsequent decisions and plans are to succeed. Consequently, the program developer should be sensitive to the need to maximize the degree of understanding, reflection and agreement among decision-makers at this point in the process.

There are specific techniques that have been perfected to enhance the amount of agreement among decision-makers while still producing quality decisions. These techniques usually entail the adoption of certain basic principles of group decision-making. Under these principles participants should:

- Focus on defeating the problem rather than defeating each other
- Seek facts to resolve issues
- Accept conflict as helpful, so long as it does not generate threats or defensive behavior
- Avoid behavior which cuts off or limits the free flow of opinions and ideas.

Among the techniques that have been developed are:

- Nominal Group Technique -- a group decision-making procedure in which interested or expert

participants identify, discuss and select one or a set of answers to a specific question. The technique involves face-to-face group interaction under a highly structured set of rules and procedures.

- Brainstorming -- a group decision-making process intended primarily to identify a broad range and variety of responses to a specific question or issue. This technique can be used by staff to bring a large number of persons into the process and to broaden the range of options from which they can subsequently choose.
- Surveys -- a technique in which a planner or program developer can tap the ideas, opinions or attitudes of a large number of persons in a community without direct contact. Surveys are used most often to investigate such factors as public opinion, the opinions of certain population groups or a particular group of decision-makers and experts.
- Delphi Technique -- a device in which experts or persons knowledgeable on a certain question are systematically surveyed for their opinions, ideas or attitudes. The technique usually involves a series of such surveys in which the

results of previous surveys are fed back to the participants. The process continues until either a clear consensus emerges or the conflicting "schools of thought" about the subject have been identified.

Each technique places a great deal of emphasis on the need to produce both acceptance and quality in decisions, open sharing of ideas and information, and the depersonalization of decisions. The details of each technique can be found in several of the references cited in the appendix of this module.

Criterion-based techniques. Whether priorities are set, formally or informally by groups or individuals the basic process is the same. Invariably priorities are set on the basis of certain criteria. The criteria may be explicit or ad hoc. They may be applied consistently or they may vary from case to case. The criteria may be the same for all decision-makers or each decision-maker may make up his or her own. The extent to which the criteria are explicitly stated, consistently applied, and used by decision-makers as a group defines how formal or informal the process is.

A further distinguishing feature in the priority-setting process is, who sets the criteria? In an informal process this decision is usually made by each decision-maker individually. However, as the process becomes more formal the decision may shift from the decision-makers to the program developer as the most knowledgeable and objective resource person. In those planning agencies where the decision-makers rely on the

professional planner or program developer to advise on decisions the criteria may,in fact, be wholly determined by the developer or planner. By contrast, in those agencies where the professional planner or developer merely staffs the decision-makers deliberations, his or her role may be reduced to facilitating the priority-setting decisions without making any independent input to that process.

Regardless of the process used to set priorities, the program developer should have an independent sense of the priority of the problems in his or her system. Even if decision-makers only take the developer's recommendations on advisement the developer should be prepared to justify these priorities on the basis of sound, factual arguments. This means that the developer should have a set of criteria to rate the relative importance of problems.

Developing criteria. There are several approaches to developing criteria to set priorities. A common approach is to adapt existing ad hoc criteria into more explicit and detailed standards. For example, problems may be typically distinguished on the basis of the number of people affected by the problem. This loose criteria could be made more explicit by developing a scale on which each problem could be rated. Problems affecting larger numbers of people would receive a higher rating on the scale than problems affecting few individuals. Similar scales could be constructed for other broad ad hoc criteria such as the geographic location of the problem, the costs the problem creates for criminal justice agencies or the prevailing attitude

of the public toward the problem. By rating each problem on a set of specific criteria, the program developer can produce overall scores of importance or seriousness which can be compared or ranked in a consistent fashion.

A second approach to criteria-building is to poll decision-makers and other informed individuals on their own criteria of importance. This can be done through face-to-face discussions, or through the use of questionnaires. The responses of the decision-makers can then be compiled, compared and synthesized to produce a master list of criteria. This approach has the distinct advantage of forcing decision-makers to be explicit about what they consider important. It also provides a broader range of possible criteria than the developer might produce working alone.

The third primary approach to criteria building is the basic process of "trial and error." Starting with a relatively broad range of criteria, the developer can gradually reduce or revise the list based on actual experience. Eventually the list can be reduced to a smaller more manageable number with which the developer and the decision-makers are comfortable.

Types of criteria. It is expected that no two agencies would adopt the same set of criteria to rate the importance of problems. Localized factors such as the degree of homogeneity within the area served, the size and scope of the area's crime problem and the balance of interests within the jurisdiction will dictate what the criteria will be and how much weight each criterion will carry.

In reviewing the priority-setting criteria of several jurisdictions, we noted a general consistency in the kinds of factors or criteria examined. In general we noted two broad categories of criteria used:

- Criteria related to matters of fact
- Criteria related to matters of opinions, attitude and value.

For purposes of this course we will label the first set factual criteria and the second set qualitative criteria.

Factual criteria tend to focus on factors related to the problem as a discrete whole. They also sometimes reflect the agency's internal policies, goals, or the existence of programs that might be affected by the problem. Among the criteria in this category are:

- Size of the problem -- How many people are adversely affected by the problem? How often does the problem arise?
- Cost of the problem -- How much money is spent to address the problem now? How much is lost because of the problem? Are there any secondary costs which are known to exist but cannot be precisely calculated? Who bears these costs, and to what effect?
- History of the problem -- Is this a new or an old problem? Has the problem increased, decreased or remained at the same level?

- Knowledge of the problem -- How much is known about the problem? How adequate is the research on the problem? Are the presumed causes known? The secondary effects? Is the evidence clear that the problem really exists? Is this evidence adequately documented?
- Location of the problem -- Is the problem concentrated in a few locations or does it exist over a broad area? Is it confined to a few jurisdictions? What are the characteristics of the locations where it is found?

Among the criteria relating to internal policies and goals are:

- Past efforts -- Has the agency ever tried to deal with the problem before? If so, what were the results? Does a program or project currently exist that deals with the problem?
- Standing priorities -- Does this problem fit within existing priorities of the agency? Does it fit within the priorities established by other planning agencies? Does it fit within the priorities of relevant operating agencies?
- Commitments -- If a program were initiated to deal with this problem would it entail a major or minor commitment? Would it require

a long- or short-term commitment? How would it affect the availability of resources now and in the future?

- Expected impact -- How soon would it be before the problem would be significantly or noticeably affected? Would a program produce immediate results? Long-term results?

Qualitative criteria usually focus on factors relating to perceptions, opinions, attitudes and judgments. Unlike criteria addressing factual matters there is considerable room for disagreement, conflict and purely subjective judgment in this area.

The following are examples of qualitative criteria used in various agencies around the country:

- "Importance" of the problem -- Several agencies attempt to define the importance of problems based on the collective responses of decision-makers. This may be done through a ranking procedure in which the decision-maker assigns a rank or weighted score to a set of problems. These scores or rankings are assumed to reflect the individual preferences or attitudes of decision-makers regarding those problems.

- Public opinion -- How does the public regard a problem? How important is a problem to the citizen? Several agencies utilize public opinion polls to tap the attitudes of the public. In other instances the representatives of various citizen groups are polled to gather their opinions.
- Equity -- In several agencies the decision about the priority of problems is based on the principle that all elements of the system or all areas of the jurisdiction should receive a "fair share" of attention. Thus, a problem raised by a jurisdiction or agency that had not received attention previously might be assigned a higher priority.
- Goal enhancement -- In certain agencies problems may be assigned a higher priority if they provide an opportunity to advance a particular goal or agenda. In some instances this may be a desire to recruit a particular agency into the planning process -- particularly an agency that had not been involved or had resisted involvement before. It might also result from a desire to demonstrate a particular idea or intervention technique for which the problem is particularly appropriate.

The examples given here do not constitute a complete inventory of possible priority-setting criteria. The criteria themselves vary greatly in terms of specificity and content. In addition, the criteria vary in terms of the amount of effort needed to apply them. Applying factual criteria almost invariably involves more work for the program developers and analysts than applying the qualitative criteria -- which is probably why relatively few agencies rely heavily on factual criteria in setting priorities. However, if the priority setting processis to result in the selection of suitable, well-defined problems, a balance should be struck between the two kinds of criteria.

The Priority-Setting Process

A simple and useful approach to setting priorities is to assign weights or numeric values to each criterion. Criteria which are considered more important or decisive will be assigned a higher weight. Lesser criteria are assigned a lower weight. In this fashion a total score can be computed for each problem on all criteria. The problems can then be ranked according to their total scores. This technique should not be followed slavishly. It should be used to help sort out problems into gross categories -- high, medium or low. Through this technique the number of problems under consideration can be gradually reduced so that the greater attention can be focused on those problems that rank consistently high of all or most of the criteria.

In some jurisdictions problems are initially sorted in the above manner based only on factual criteria. Those problems that fall at the top of the list are then presented to decision-makers for their subjective appraisal. This process has the advantage of reducing the number of problems under consideration to a manageable size and eliminating those problems that are obviously less important from the process.

It is also possible to use a process of successive ratings. Under this process, decision-makers are asked to make an initial ranking of all or some of the problems. If no agreement appears, the problems that were rated consistently low by all or most of the decision-makers are eliminated and a second ranking is made. By continuing this process one of two outcomes will appear. Either the decision-makers will gradually reach agreement on the problems ranked highest or lowest, or a clear division of opinion will emerge. If a clear and unyielding division emerges several options are available:

- Problems about which there is a clear polarization of opinion can be eliminated from consideration
- New information can be gathered to clarify the issues separating the decision-makers
- Compromises can be negotiated in which both positions are given part of what they want.

It should be understood that none of these techniques are foolproof or without problems. All of the processes described

here can produce results which will satisfy no one in the process. A useful way to conceptualize the priority setting process is to think of it as a careful balancing of the quality of decisions with the acceptance of decisions. If the program developer is intent on maximizing the quality of the decisions the result will usually be to reduce the level of overall acceptance. Similarly, if the developer is intent on producing maximum acceptance the quality of the decisions will usually suffer.

In attempting to reach a proper balance between quality and acceptance the program developer should keep certain basic rules of thumb in mind:

- The quality of a decision is usually a direct function of the amount of information applied to the decision. Thus, up to a point, the quality of a decision can almost always be improved if more information can be brought to bear.
- The acceptance of a decision is a direct function of the perceived equity and fairness of the decision. Thus, acceptance is easier to achieve if all relevant viewpoints are given an open hearing.
- The range of solutions should be narrowed to those that are both good and acceptable. Both acceptance and quality of decisions are

necessary in priority setting. A failure to reach consensus may result in subsequent blocking and conflict, thus defeating the decision despite its inherent quality.

- Conflict between viewpoints is not necessarily bad if it generates new information, clarifies issues and stimulates a search for creative solutions.
- Voting mechanisms should not be used to substitute for a direct confrontation on issues. Although criteria weighting and ranking techniques are useful in sorting out problems at the extremes, they should not be used to mask real differences. A problem that emerges as the result of a one-vote majority or a decimal-point advantage may not be the best choice as the top priority problem.

The Role of the Program Developer in Priority Setting

The program developer may be called on to play a variety of roles in priority-setting. The essence of priority setting is deciding which of an infinite number of interests, concerns, pressures and biases should be given immediate public recognition and which must wait for attention some time in the future, if at all. It is unrealistic to assume that this type of decision can be reduced to a mechanical process. Individuals, groups, and oragnizations often invest a great deal of personal and collective effort to bring their problems to the fore.

Inevitably, some of these efforts will be frustrated when priorities are set, generating heightened emotions and intense reactions. Given this environment, it is almost impossible to channel decisions along purely rational or mechanical lines. For this reason, the program developer and planner must be as sensitive to the qualitative factors involved in priority setting as they are to the technical data and analytic findings they employ.

Political factors. The planning profession, over the years, has become much more aware of the importance and legitimacy of politics in program planning. Occasionally a frustrated planner will complain about the intrusion of political influences in the otherwise "rational" policy planning process. However, these statements are heard much less often, particularly from among the more successful planners in the system. Conventional professional wisdom now accepts the fact that politics is an inescapable reality of planning and that in many ways the effects of political factors are more complementary to the principles of good planning than they are antagonistic. The idea that "if only these irrational political influences could be removed, we could do a much better job improving the system" is given far less credence. A more typical attitude is that planners need to work with the political process, not as long-suffering prophet of the "one-right-way," but as an active and, hopefully, respected contributor to the process.

The central point about the relationship between political actors and program developers is that both are seeking the

same end--to solve pressing problems. The reward and accountability system that motivates decision-makers places great stress on finding solutions quickly that cause the least amount of pain, conflict, and controversy. If the program developer can provide a reasonable approach to making difficult decisions--such as setting priorities among problems--and can also help develop reasonable solutions to those problems, the decision-maker is much more likely to seek out his or her help in the future.

Public opinion often serves as a major limiting factor on the types of problems that can be addressed and the kinds of solutions that can be developed. It is true that most problems in criminal justice are not widely visible to the general public. However, the public does have certain fixed ideas about what is wrong with the system and what should be done about it. Issues related to the level of crime in the community, the degree of security from crime felt by the public, and the appropriateness of punishments meted out to criminals are highly salient in the public mind. In addition, certain short-term events, such as a rash of burglaries, a prison riot, or an unpopular court decision can raise these broad concerns to a high level of saliency, resulting in demands for immediate action. The fact that these problems may be beyond the immediate control of the criminal justice system, that they may be much less serious than the public believes, or that they are not susceptible to short-term remedies is of little relevance.

If these concerns are expressed long enough and strongly enough, they will eventually become high priority problems.

What should be the response of the program developer? There are several options. The most obvious response is to go along with public opinion and put more pressing but less visible problems aside. A second obvious response would be to ignore public opinion,hoping that demands for action will subside, but also running the risk of a more serious reaction in the future. The third option is to turn public demands for action into an opportunity to create needed changes while attempting to address those demands. The final option is to undertake a strategy of public education on the issues raised by the public.

Which of these options the developer will select will depend on a variety of factors:

- The degree to which there is any substance to the problems raised
- The amount of damage that would be created by addressing these problems rather than some other problems
- The damage that would be caused to the long-term viability of the planning effort if public opinion is ignored
- The probability that public education would create a real change in attitudes

- The program developer's personal sense of professional integrity weighed against his or her sense of obligation to follow the public will.

This is not a new problem or one unique to the critical justice planning system. The long-range solution to the problem is improved public understanding of the issues and limits of the system. The short-term solution, whichever option is chosen, should have that broader goal in mind.

Special interests. Criminal justice is a highly politicized system. It is also highly fragmented along lines of function; jurisdictional authority, and organizational structure. This has given rise to numerous public and private interest groups representing the parts of the system itself or the affected public. Within the sphere of their influence, these groups can exercise decisive control over how problems are defined and how they will be addressed.

Efforts to close the gaps between the parts of the system have been underway for many years. From the start, the criminal justice planning system has fostered this concept of criminal justice as a unified system with a certain level of success. However, cooperative arrangements across jurisdictional or organizational boundaries are still relatively rare. The result has been that programs and projects tend to focus on those specific parts of problems that can be handled within a single agency or community.

The model on which this course is built explicitly endorses the concept of program planning at the system level. For the program developer, this means that problems should be selected and attacked as system problems rather than as problems of a particular agency or criminal justice sector. This philosophy places a heavy burden on the developer to work with several interests and groups at the same time. It also requires the developer to work on the mutual cooperation of these separate interests toward a common end.

From the standpoint of good program development practice, one of the best ways to assure the cooperation of these multiple interests is to include them in the process from the beginning. This means working with the groups at the stage where problems are first identified, defined, analyzed, and assigned a priority. This may not be an easy task. Nor does it guarantee ultimate success. However, if such a mutual agreement can be achieved early in the process, the chance that a system-level solution can be found is greatly improved.

Summary

During these first few steps in the program development process we focused on two preliminary requirements: we assessed the adequacy of the Problem Statement and any other information we may have about the problem, and we tested our understanding of the problem itself. We assessed the Problem Statement for its technical adequacy; that is, the quality of the information, the techniques used to collect and analyze it and the validity

of the conclusions drawn. We also focused on the conceptual adequacy of the Problem Statement; the degree to which the Statement describes and explains the problem. On the basis of the information in the Problem Statement we constructed a conceptual model of the problem to identify logical gaps and assumptions in our overall understanding. Finally, we discussed the problems and methods of priority-setting when more than one problem must be considered for program development.

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Chapter III
Developing Strategic Goals

TEXT

The Purpose of Goals in Program Development

The purpose of goal setting in program development is to focus attention on the desired end-point the program is to reach. By focusing on the end-point of the program, it is easier to begin thinking about alternative ways of getting there. It also forces planners, program developers and decision-makers to be specific about the conditions they are trying to change and, ultimately, whether it is reasonable to try. For example, it may be relatively easy to identify and select the problem of juvenile gangs as a high priority problem. However, having made that decision, the question immediately arises, what is a reasonable goal to set in relation to this problem? Should it be to totally eliminate juvenile gangs in the community? Or should it be to merely reduce the number of gangs? Or would it be more reasonable to try to reduce the amount of crime committed by gangs? If so, which crimes? And by how much? Goal-setting forces everyone involved in solving the problem to clearly state the ends they are trying to reach in concrete terms, thus illuminating the numerous alternatives and decisions they will be required to make.

The critical word is "reasonable." The desired purpose of goal-setting is to establish reasonable goals--goals that can be realistically pursued given existing conditions. At the same time realism must compete with idealism, the desire to make changes that have a significant and useful impact. If strategic goals are set too low, in order to be certain they can be met, there is the real danger that no real changes will be made. A goal should motivate the persons involved in the program to work hard in expectation that something worthwhile will be accomplished. Thus, if the program's goals are to be reasonable they must reflect a delicate balancing of both realism and idealism.

Apart from specifying what the program is intended to accomplish, goal-setting can be used to solidify the resolve of persons to attack a problem. A goal can be a useful device to recruit people to solve problems. It creates a common bond between diverse interests and makes cooperation between those interests much easier to accomplish and sustain.

For the criminal justice program developer, goal-setting provides an additional occasion to look at problems and solutions from a system-wide perspective. Few worthwhile goals can be accomplished within a single agency or criminal justice sector. Consequently, goal-setting provides an opportunity to think broadly and creatively about solutions.

Finally, goal-setting can also be seen as a decision-point at which several very important choices are made and

numerous alternatives are foreclosed. A useful analogy to illustrate this function of goal-setting is the first meeting between a property developer and an architect. Before the meeting the architect only knows that the developer wants a new building designed. But it could be almost any kind of building: a house, an apartment complex, a shopping center, or a cathedral. The developer tells the architect that he wants to build an office building. Immediately the number of options has been drastically reduced. The developer further indicates that it should house 350 people. Again the options are reduced. In addition, the building should be attractive, distinctive, and energy-efficient. Finally, the building must harmonize with its surroundings, be located on a quarter-acre lot, and be completed within two years.

In a few short sentences, the developer has drastically narrowed the number of options open to the architect. While the number of options remaining is still very large, and while it is not immediately clear that all of the features can be accommodated, this brief goal-setting exercise will have a significant impact on everything that happens from that point on.

Goals vs. Objectives

In criminal justice planning a distinction is made between goals and objectives. The principal feature that distinguishes these two concepts is the level of specificity. A goal is defined as:

> A desired future state expressed as results to be achieved; usually general and not time-limited.

By contrast, an objective is defined as:

> A specific condition to be attained by a specific set of activities, stated in time-limited and measurable terms.

Thus, goals are what we want to accomplish whereas objectives are what we will accomplish. Goals are stated in general terms whereas objectives are described in terms of specific, measurable conditions. Finally, goals are not normally scheduled for completion at a specific date. Objectives, being linked to certain activities are normally scheduled as part of a specific strategy.

Levels of Goals

In criminal justice planning a distinction is usually made between normative goals--what "ought" to be done--and strategic goals--what "can" be done. The distinction is not merely one of semantics or level of specificity. The distinction reflects two different ways of looking at a problem. Normative goals reflect or express the concerns of decision-makers, the general public or key parts of the community. From the program developers perspective those concerns are hopefully based on hard information and careful analysis, but even if not they reflect a serious commitment to do something about an intolerable situation.

By contrast, a strategic goal reflects a more analytic understanding of a problem. The problem itself is a "given." For the program developer the normative goal supplies the boundaries of the problem and the mandate to act. The strategic goal (or goals) supplies the policy orientation to be followed in attacking the problem. Strategic goals should reflect the most important components of the problem, i.e., the most important of the presumed causes, primary or secondary effects or system response components of the problem. Thus, the strategic goals might reflect a policy to attack the causes of a problem (e.g., poverty, unemployment, poor housing); the primary effects (e.g., the amount of property loss, the number of injuries, the number of arson fires); the secondary effects (e.g., the fear of crime, the trauma of rape, the relocation of businesses); or the system's response (e.g., the number of arrests, prosecutions and convictions). Thus, strategic goals can be thought to originate first, from the normative goal, insofar as it reflects the concerns of others; and from an understanding of the problem as developed in the Problem Statement

The Strategic Goal Statement

In criminal justice planning, a goal is best set forth in the form of a formal statement. The standard form for a goal statement is (a) an action verb followed by (b) a statement of what is to be accomplished. For example:

- The goal of this program is to (a) reduce (b) the number and expense of arsons committed in this city.

or

- The goal of this program is to (a) improve (b) the ability of arson investigation agencies to detect and prosecute arson crimes.

or

- The goal of this program is to (a) remove (b) the economic incentives for commercial arson.

The characteristics of a good strategic goal statement are:

- It should be clear, concise, and understandable.
- It should be based on adequate research and analysis of the problem in question (i.e., the problem statement).
- It should be consistent with existing policies, regulations, and laws.
- It should be responsive to the major issues surrounding the problem.
- It should be endorsed and formally adopted by all relevant decision-makers.
- It should be subject to change in the future if necessary.

In addition, a good strategic goal statement should reflect a sense of what is feasible, given the current understanding of the problem and existing conditions. However, the statement should also present a challenge to people in the system. In this sense it should convey a sense of the "good things" that could be accomplished if the goal is met.

In writing strategic goal statements, there is a tendency to equate the goal with the removal or reduction of the problem or some component of the problem. However, it is often more motivating to express goals in positive terms. To use the analogy of the property developer and the architect again, consider the difference between saying, "I want the building to be distinctive" and saying "I don't want this building to look like all the others." Similarly, consider the goal statement that says:

- The purpose of this program is to improve the ability of arson investigation agencies to detect and prosecute arson crimes.

and the statement that says:

- The purpose of this program is to reduce the number of arsons that go undetected and the number of arsonists who are not prosecuted.

Stating strategic goals in positive terms can also stimulate the creativity of the program developer. For example, consider the case of a community that has a problem with crime in its commercial district. The factor which brought the

problem to the attention of the planning agency was the concerns of merchants that people were afraid to come downtown to shop. If the community decides to attack this problem, a strategic goal might normally be stated as "to reduce the public's fear of being victimized in the commercial district." However, if the goal were stated in more positive terms--to increase the number of shoppers downtown"--an entirely new range of program activities is suggested. Such a strategic goal clearly implies that more should be involved in the program than merely putting more police on the streets. This strategic goal suggests numerous activities, many of which might be outside the criminal justice system (e.g., providing free parking, making the downtown physically attractive). Moreover, stating the strategic goal in this fashion makes it much clearer why reducing crime is important beyond the reason that crime is "bad" per se. In short, a well-formulated strategic goal statement can serve as a powerful stimulus to think creatively and comprehensively about possible problem solutions.

Alternative Strategic Goals

Strategic goal-setting is the process of identifying, describing and selecting the desired set of conditions the program will attempt to bring about. There are several ways to identify possible strategic goals. A useful place to start is to examine the conditions and concerns which first brought the problem to the fore. If the problem of residential

burglary was first identified through the concerns expressed by citizens, it is reasonable to make a reduction of those fears a strategic goal. If the problem of juvenile gangs was first recognized through the rising level of violence in schools, the reduction of that violence is a suitable strategic goal.

In some instances, normative goals may have been established before the problem was analyzed. The decision to study a problem more closely, by itself, is a tacit form of normative goal setting--a commitment to do something about a problem. Indeed, the analysis may have been initiated only to confirm or clarify normative goals that had already been established. The program developer should be aware of and sensitive to these earlier decisions. The thinking and motivations which first placed a problem on the planning system's agenda should be part of the goal-setting process at this stage and throughout the program development process.

Additional sources of strategic goals are:

- The individual or collective wishes of decision-makers
- Established agency policies and standards
- Existing laws and regulations.

For example, in the model of the school vandalism problem several probable ways of attacking the problem are suggested. The strategic goal could be to improve the economic conditions which appear to contribute to the problem. A second

alternative is to increase police manpower levels or make patrolling school areas a higher priority. Finally, ways could be explored to reduce the costs of vandalism by changing the physical layout or the materials used in schools.

The advantage of using the model of the problem in setting goals is that the options are laid out for the program developer in clear and concrete terms. In addition, by tying the goals to the problem model, the program developer is in a better position to begin thinking about the alternative strategies to achieve those goals.

The Need for Substantive Knowledge

To lay out realistic and specific strategic goals requires a basic knowledge of the problem and the issues and circumstances surrounding the problem. Substantive knowledge of this sort is beyond the scope of this course. However, it should be understood that strategic goal-setting in the absence of sound knowledge can be extremely dangerous for the long-term success of the program. If the program developer does not have this working knowledge of the problem he or she should recruit persons who do. This may mean going to knowledgeable and experienced persons in the agencies that deal with the problem. It may mean going outside the system to persons who have studied the problem. Finally, it may mean going to other planning agencies in the system for advice or technical assistance.

The Need for Specificity

The definition of a strategic goal discussed previously indicated that a goal is usually stated in general terms. However, this does not mean that the strategic goals should be stated so broadly that the goals have no concrete meaning. Strategic goals should be stated with as much specificity as the current state of knowledge about the problem will allow.

Goals which violate this precept serve primarily to create confusion, raise unreasonable expectations and may eventually undermine the credibility of the system to do what it says it will do. A strategic goal should provide a clear guide to the search for ways to attack the problem.

Selecting Strategic Goals

The authority to select strategic goals is usually vested in persons other than the program developer. In most instances, goals are set by decision-makers in the planning agency, the supervisory board, or the executives of affected operating agencies.

If the strategic goals are to perform the functions described in the first section of this chapter, it is essential that they reflect the wishes and opinions of the persons who will be most closely involved in implementing the program. Consequently, the program developer should obtain a consensus on the strategic goals from these persons. In practical terms, this means that the program developer should begin to

work with the affected persons as early in the process as possible, helping them to recognize and define their needs and interests. If it is not immediately obvious who the persons are who will be affected by the program, the program developer should resolve to contact them as soon as their interest in the program is identified.

Everyone will not be equally committed to all of the strategic goals a program is trying to achieve. Individual strategic goals, agency policies and past experiences in working with other agencies or groups will determine how willing affected persons and agencies will be to "buy in" on the overall direction of the program. In some instances, the program developer may be forced to "sell" the program to those who will be affected by the program. This may mean that individual strategic goals will have to be shaped to encourage participation. A police department may not be particularly motivated to participate in a program with a strategic goal of increasing the number of persons who shop downtown. It might be more willing to participate if the program developer can demonstrate how they might be able to achieve their own agency goals by participating, i.e., increased cooperation from downtown merchants, or an improved public image. If the program developer has taken the time to examine the needs of the affected individuals and groups and is thoroughly versed in the problem the program will try to affect, the advantages and disadvantages of the program should

be readily apparent. This information and a willingness to work with these persons should make this aspect of program development much easier to carry out.

Flexibility in Strategic Goal Development

The program development process model lays out a sequence of activities of which strategic goal development is one part. The model implies that strategic goal development is a one-time-only event. In reality, this is seldom the way it works. At the beginning of a program development effort, everyone involved may have certain fixed ideas about what the program is trying to achieve. As the effort progresses, these ideas will invariably change. New information will become available, unanticipated events will occur, previously unseen limits will become apparent. In some instances it may become apparent that the basic ideas behind the program are incorrect or unworkable: the problem is more intractable than thought, the solutions selected cannot be adequately supported, the cooperation of some crucial person is suddenly withdrawn. These events may dictate the need to adjust, expand, or drop certain strategic goals. It is extremely unwise to begin a program development effort with vague or weakly supported strategic goals. It is equally unwise to insist on retaining goals that are no longer realistic or viable. Once it becomes clear that a strategic goal cannot be feasibly achieved or pursued, the goal loses its motivational value. The program

developer should be prepared to revise the strategic goals of the program throughout the process if conditions or circumstances require it. This is not to say that the strategic goals of the program should be perpetually "up for grabs" or that the program developer should not try to make the initial set of goals as concise as possible. It does mean that the developer and the other participants in the process should remain flexible and modest about the strategic goals they are trying to achieve.

APPENDIX: NOMINAL GROUP TECHNIQUE BACKGROUND

Background

An important tool covered in the Program Development Course as part of the discussion of both priority-setting and strategic goal development is the Nominal Group Technique. The following discussion outlines the major features of this technique andindicates how it could be conducted. For further information about this technique the following references are particularly useful:

- Delbecq, A. L., Van de Ven, A. H., and Gustafson, D. Group techniques for program planning. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1975.
- Huber, G. and Delbecq, A. L. Guidelines for combining the judgments of individual group members in decision conferences. Academy of Management Journal, 15, June, 1972.

In reading this discussion, keep in mind that the Nominal Group Technique can be applied at several points in the program development process--not only at the point where the important components of the problem are identified.

Nominal Group Technique

The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is a structured group process which follows a prescribed sequence of steps to reach

a decision. The NGT is a valuable device for reaching decisions when:

- The decision-making situation involves very complex issues or problems, and
- The judgments, opinions, or attitudes of several persons must be collected, considered and reconciled.

The NGT has been used in a variety of settings in business, industry, education and government to:

- Identify the most important components of a problem
- Establish priorities and goals for organizations
- Identify and select possible strategies to solve problems

When used properly the NGT can produce high quality decisions as well as a high degree of agreement and satisfaction among the participants.

We are devoting space to a discussion of this technique because of several virtues this approach has over the others described in the previous chapter. First and foremost, the technique does not require that the person conducting the exercise be an expert on the issue in question. Thus, it is possible for a planner to use the ideas developed in the technique without the need to master the subject beforehand.

Second, the technique involves a minimum of preparation or attention to administrative details. Unlike a Delphi Technique or a survey the entire process can be completed at a single meeting within a reasonable amount of time (2-3 hours). Unlike a brainstorming session, the process does not require the person running the process to sort and sift the final product; the final product is a decision, for better or worse.

Finally, the technique can be used with persons with varying levels of education, verbal skills, personal expertise or viewpoints. The technique was originally designed to help community groups in low-income areas articulate their problems and demands in a manner that could be useful to planners and policy-makers. The technique works equally well--if managed correctly--with persons with a variety of backgrounds and even very different political backgrounds.

As described in this course, the NGT can be used for any number of decision-making situations. It can be used to set priorities, establish decision-making criteria, select from among a set of alternatives or to identify different ways of implementing or improving a program or goal.

The NGT Process. The NGT is carried out in small groups. The recommended number of persons to be included in the process is from 5 to 9. Research on group processes indicate that groups of less than 5 persons often lack the breadth of experience and ideas needed to made the process productive. However, groups of more than about 9 persons often tend to

bog down in factional disputes or the amount of record-keeping involved in the process. A technique to handle more than 9 persons will be discussed later in this text.

Preliminary Preparations. Persons running an NGT exercise should make the following preparations:

- Each member of the group should be provided with writing materials and a free area at which to work.
- The members of the group should be arranged so that they face each other and can clearly see the flip chart or blackboard where their responses will be recorded.
- The room in which the exercise is carried out should be relatively free of outside noise or distractions.
- Each member of the group should be given a sheet of paper on which the question to be considered is indicated at the top. The question can also be written at the top of the flip chart or blackboard where the group's responses are to be recorded.

The members of the NGT group focus on a single question, which has been selected beforehand by the persons running the meeting. There are six steps in the process:

1. Each member of the group works silently and independently for 5 minutes to generate a list of possible responses to the question.
2. The responses of the group are collected and recorded.
3. The group discusses and clarifies each of the responses.
4. A preliminary vote is taken on the responses.
5. The preliminary vote is discussed and, if necessary, the responses are further clarified.
6. A final vote is taken.

Each of these steps will be discussed in detail below.

When the group has been seated the leader of the exercise should make a brief opening statement which:

- Explains the specific purpose and objectives of the meeting,
- Briefly describes the steps of the process, and
- Emphasizes the importance of each member's full concentration and participation.

The leader then asks the group to read the question and, if necessary, will clarify its meaning.

Step 1. Silent Generation of Responses to the Question. After the question has been read and clarified the leader should instruct the group as follows:

- The members of the group will be given 5 minutes to generate as many responses to the question as possible.
- Each member should work silently and independently, listing their responses in short sentences or phrases on the worksheet they were given.
- The members should not focus on any one response too long. The purpose of the step is to identify as many different responses as possible. The responses need not be completed worked out to be listed.

The five-minute limit on the generation of ideas serves two purposes: it encourages members of the group to think and work quickly, and it keeps the number of responses to be considered by the group to a manageable size. Persons may object that the limit does not allow enough time for adequate reflection on the question. However, research on the NGT indicates that very little useful input is lost by limiting the amount of time for this step. People tend to produce their best ideas during the first few minutes of reflection. Ideas generated later tend to be more elaborate or specific versions of earlier ideas. These detailed responses can be better developed during later steps in the NGT process.

The purpose of having each person work silently and independently is to eliminate some of the pressure many persons feel when asked to "think on their feet" in a group. Moreover, when the group consists of persons with different positions and backgrounds, this step provides a safe and acceptable way for persons with less status and self-confidence to make their input. This is particularly important when the group consists of persons at different levels in the same organization.

The purpose of telling members to not focus on any one response too long is to avoid the premature elimination of potentially useful ideas. The purpose here is to identify a broad range of responses. Obviously, many of these "brainstorm" ideas will not hold up under closer scrutiny. At the same time, many innovative and creative ideas have been developed out of this type of "free association" thinking. One of the primary benefits of the NGT is that it can be used to develop unconventional responses that might otherwise not be considered.

The role of the leader in this step is to:

- Keep track of the time,
- Enforce the rule that persons work independently, and
- Encourage the group to use the time period creatively and efficiently.

The leader should answer questions about what a good response would be by indicating that there are no "correct" responses to the question. The leader should also avoid influencing the group by giving examples. Such examples often end up being given as responses by group members because they were "endorsed" by the leader. Finally, the leader should set an example by working silently on the question along with the group.

Step 2. Recording the Responses. When the time limit has elapsed the leader should ask the group to stop writing and give the group the following instructions:

- The responses will be recorded without comment on the flip-chart or blackboard.
- The responses will be collected one by one from each group member in a serial fashion.
- The members should avoid repeating the same response - if more than one member had the same idea the response should be recorded only once.
- New responses, stimulated by a response given by someone else may be added to their list at any time.

The purpose of recording the responses in front of the entire group is to allow all of the members to see what the group has produced. This can be a major payoff for the group

by itself--a sizeable list of optional responses generated in a relatively short time. The purpose of recording the responses without comment is to avoid premature discussions which would tend to increase or decrease the perceived value of any one response. A member whose response is criticized by the group before all of the others have given their respones may choose to "drop out" of the process or become overly defensive about his or her other ideas. In effect, the recording of the responses shifts the ownership of the responses from the individual member to the group as a whole.

The responses are recorded in a serial fashion. The first member provides the first response on his or her list. The leader records the response on the flipchart and then asks a second member to provide the first response on his or her list. The leader continues to go around the group, soliciting one response at a time until all responses have been collected. The leader should include his or her own responses with the other.

The purpose behind this procedure is to disassociate specific responses with specific individuals. This will reduce the tendency of some persons to dismiss the ideas of others based on personal feelings or individual status. The disassociation of responses with individuals is particularly important if the group is to consider the responses objectively during the next steps in the process.

The role of the leader in this step is to record the responses of the group members on the flipchart or blackboard.

The leader should avoid editing the responses and should record them as closely to the words of the member as possible. Overly long statements should be shortened or abbreviated if possible. However, the person providing the response should be satisfied with the way the response is expressed.

The leader should also avoid prejudging responses by suggesting that one response is the same as another response already listed, or that one response could be subsumed or combined with another. At this stage the leader should act as little more than a recorder of the group's ideas.

Each response should be numbered as it is recorded. In addition, room should be left along the right hand margin to record the votes to be taken by the group in subsequent steps.

Step 3. Discussing and Clarifying the Responses. After all of the responses have been recorded the leader should initiate a discussion of the responses. The discussion should focus on one response at a time, starting with the first response and proceeding through the entire list. The leader should begin the discussion by asking the group, "Does anyone have any comments or questions about this item?", or "Does everyone understand the ideas behind this response?"

The purpose of this discussion is to clarify the intent and logic behind each of the responses on the list. The person who provided the response is not obliged to explain the statement. However, the leader should encourage members of the group to ask questions or suggest explanations in order to clarify the meaning of the response.

Conflicts between members may arise at this point. This should not be discouraged so long as the disputes bring out real issues or facts related to a given item. However, the leader should not permit disputes to become personal feuds between two or more members, or allow the discussion to drag out too long. Once it becomes apparent that the issues surrounding a given response have been fully aired the discussion should move on to the next item.

If the number of items in the list is large, a certain amount of editing and collapsing may be permitted. However, the leader should be very careful not to allow this process to go too far or too fast. The group as a whole should agree that the revision is necessary and useful. In particular, the person who provided a response should agree that the change should be made. If the leader senses that the whole group may not see the need to collapse or delete an item it is preferable to leave the list as is. The consequences of having a member feel that his or her response was deleted arbitrarily can be serious, particularly if that person will be expected to accept or act on the group's final decision.

It may be preferable to set a time limit on the discussion of any one item. Although it is desirable to allow the group to pace itself in the discussion the natural tendency is for the group to discuss the first responses lower on the list. This should be avoided. Important issues may not be given adequate attention and some responses may not be completely understood by everyone.

The role of the leader in this step is to facilitate discussion, mediate disputes and keep the discussion focused on one response at a time. The leader should participate in the discussion with the others. However, the leader should be careful to not "steer" the group because of his or her dual role.

Step 4. Preliminary Vote. Once every item on the list has been discussed the leader should indicate that a preliminary vote will be taken. A number of voting procedures could be used in this step. The ranking procedure described here is merely a suggestion. The purpose of this step is to determine the degree of agreement or disagreement within the group based on the initial discussion.

In this procedure the group members are asked to individually rank the responses according to some priority criterion. The criterion might be the importance of the responses, the relative acceptability, desirability or practicality of the responses, or some other criterion related to the decision the group is to reach. The basis on which the group is to rank the responses should be explained and clearly understood before the vote is taken.

The first step in the procedure is to determine how many of the responses should be ranked. The group should not be required to rank the entire list because the intent here is to identify relatively intense differences or agreements within the group. By asking the group members to select only

the top 6 to 9 responses from a larger list the members are forced to focus on those responses about which they have the clearest and least ambivalent opinions.

As a rule of thumb the number of responses to be ranked should be about 40 percent of the total number of responses on the group's list up to a maximum of 9. For example, if the group developed a list of 15 responses the number of responses to be ranked should be about 6. If the list included 20 responses the number to be ranked should be about 8. The group should not be asked to rank more than 9 responses no matter how large the number of responses on the list. The reason for this is that most persons find it difficult to rank many more than 9 items at a time in a meaningful way. As the number of items to be ranked increases the mid-range items become increasingly difficult to assess and persons tend to make arbitrary decisions. This tends to decrease the value and validity of the process for both the person doing the ranking and anyone wishing to use or interpret the results.

When the number of items to be ranked has been determined the leader should give that number of 3x5 cards to each group member. Each member of the group should then select the top "N" number of responses from the list and write the numbers corresponding to those responses in the upper left hand corner of the cards--one number per card. This should be written in pencil in order to make it easier for the member to make a change.

After all the cards have been assigned a number the members should each copy the response statement corresponding to the number on the card. This serves two purposes: it forces the member to check the correct correspondence between the number and the response, and it "commits" the member to the response he or she selected.

When the members have completed copying their responses on their cards they should each array these cards before them, face up. From their array they should then select the lowest ranking response and assign that response the lowest numeric rank. The rank number should be written in the lower right hand corner of the card and underlined twice. The underlining is intended to distinguish the rank number from the response number when the card is interpreted. The members should then turn the card over and select the lowest ranking response from those remaining. This process is continued until all of the responses have been ranked.

When all of the group members have completed ranking their cards they should be passed forward to the leader. The leader should then shuffle the cards to preserve the anonymity of the balloting and begin tallying the votes on the sheet where the responses are listed.

There are several methods which could be used to tally the ballot. The simplest method is to merely write the rank numbers assigned to a response in the margin behind the response. Thus, if response number 3 was assigned a rank of "4" by a member a 4 is written after the response. Thus the group can

readily see how many times each response was ranked and the distribution of ranks it was assigned. (The format for tallying the first vote is shown on page 12.) With this method it is not necessary to compute an average score or any other summary score for the responses. The presentation of the raw tally is usually sufficient given the relatively small number of persons voting and responses to be voted on.

After the vote has been tallied the leader should take a few moments to allow the group to examine the vote results. The leader may wish to make a few notes on the vote relating to:

- Responses on which there appears to be a clear agreement (i.e., everyone gave the response a high ranking or no ranking at all).
- Responses which received only one or two extreme rankings.
- Responses in which the assigned rankings were polarized (i.e., some high ranks and some low ranks).

These notes can then form the basis for the discussion which follows in the next step.

The role of the leader in this step is to facilitate the voting--clarifying or demonstrating the process for the members--and to record the vote. The leader should vote along with the others. During the tallying the leader may wish to

recruit one of the members of the group to assist in reading off the votes or recording the vote on the work sheet.

Step 5. Discussion of the Vote. After the vote has been tallied and the group members have had a chance to examine the results the leader should initiate a discussion, again aimed at clarifying the responses and the vote itself. The discussion should focus on one response at a time, particularly those items which the group as a whole selected as being among the more important. This may also be the time to draw out further explanations on specific responses. Individuals should not be asked to reveal how they voted or to justify their vote to the group.

The role of the leader, as in the first discussion, is to facilitate the discussion, mediate disputes and keep the discussion focused on the responses.

Step 6. The Final Vote. The first vote may have indicated that the group is already in agreement on the responses. In this instance the NGT process can be stopped after the first vote. However, in most instances a discussion and a second vote are necessary to refine the group's decision. As in the first vote, any number of voting procedures could be used, including the same procedure outlined for the first vote. In this example we will outline a second technique in which numeric weights are assigned to specific responses.

For the second vote the group members are again asked to each select a certain number of responses from the overall

list. These responses can be the same as those selected in the first vote or they can be an entirely new set. At this point every response should still be considered a potential candidate. In his instructions to the group the leader should emphasize that no one should feel compelled to change their vote or, conversely, to adhere to their original vote.

The members should each be given a form such as the one shown on the following page. In the first column the group should again list the numbers of the response items they selected. In the second column they should then write in the corresponding response statements opposite the number. Finally, the group members should then rate each response on the scale from 1 to 10 in which a "1" indicates lesser importance and a "10" greater importance. The members may assign the same weight to more than one response if they believe two or more items are of equal importance.

When all of the members have completed their voting the leader should collect the forms and compute the average and total scores for each response as well as the number of persons assigning a rank. After the scores have been computed the leader should announce the results and indicate what the group's decision is.

At this point, unless there is a need for further discussion, the leader should indicate that the NGT process is completed.

NGT: TALLYING THE PRELIMINARY VOTE

(ITEM #)	(STATEMENT)	(TALLY)
1	_____	1, 1, 2, 4 *
2	_____	1, 2
3	_____	1, 2, 2, 2
4	_____	3, 4
5	_____	3, 3, 3, 3, 4
6	_____	*
7	_____	1*
8	_____	*
9	_____	*
10	_____	4, 4

* Discussion Points

NGT for Groups of More Than 9 Persons

A technique has been developed for handling groups of more than 9 persons in the NGT process without distorting the results. In this approach the larger group is broken up into two or more groups of between 5 to 9 persons. Each group is assigned a leader who leads them through the first 4 steps in the process (i.e., through the first vote). After the vote has been taken the groups reconvene as a whole while the group leaders consolidate the individual group responses.

Consolidating the responses and the votes from two or more groups consists of:

- Compiling a single master list of all responses from all the groups,
- Collapsing and combining response items where appropriate,
- Computing overall group scores on the items.

In those instances where the different groups generated essentially similar resonse items the leaders may be able to combine the two or more into a single item. When this is done the rankings or scores of the groups on the combined responses can also be combined. However, the leaders should take care not to eliminate responses or arbitrarily combine items not clearly the same in intent. This is often a matter of judgment and leaders should tend to err on the side of not combining responses if any doubt exists. Any combining

or collapsing of responses should be clearly explained to the group.

When all changes in responses and the vote have been explained a leader should facilitate a general discussion as described in Step 5. Following the discussion the group then carries out a final vote as described in Step 6.

Writing the NGT Question. The most important preliminary decision for persons conducting an NGT exercise is the selection and drafting of the question the group is to address. The NGT is a relatively powerful decision-making tool. Persons who participate in an NGT exercise very often become highly involved in the process and exert a significant level of personal effort. Because of this, participants may become highly committed to the results of the process and demand that those results be put to direct and immediate use. Thus, before persons running an NGT ask a group to make this level of effort it is important that they have a clear view of both what is to be accomplished through the exercise, and how the results of the exercise will be used.

There are four steps in selecting and drafting the NGT question:

1. The objectives of the NGT meeting should be clearly specified.
2. Examples of the kinds of responses to be generated should be drafted.

3. Alternative question statements thought to elicit the desired kinds of responses should be drafted.
4. Each of the alternative question statements should be tested to determine which produce the desired kinds of responses.

Deciding on the objectives of the NGT exercise is the most important of the four steps. The NGT is a highly adaptable tool. However, there are certain kinds of decisions for which it is more useful than others. In general, the NGT is most useful when:

- Only one decision is to be made by the group,
- The options available to the group are relatively open.

The NGT is most valuable when only a single decision must be reached. Because of the nature of the process it is difficult for a group to focus on more than one decision at a time. For example, it would be inappropriate to conduct an NGT exercise to decide which components of a complex problem should be addressed in a program and what the strategy to address those components should be. Clearly, there are several separate decisions to be reached here, each of which would require considerable thought and discussion. In this instance it would be preferable to conduct several separate NGT meetings--the first to decide on the components of the problem to

be addressed, and the subsequent meetings to decide on strategies.

The NGT is most valuable when the options available to the group are relatively open. A decision which has been reduced to a simple yes-no choice, or one in which the options have already been specified, is not particularly suitable for the NGT approach. For example, a decision about which of two programs to fund would not be appropriate for an NGT exercise. The value of the NGT is that it allows the group to generate and consider a range of options, some of which may not have been even recognized beforehand.

The second step, the drafting of the kinds of responses desired from the group, is critical in terms of the ultimate use of the NGT results. As this stage the persons conducting the NGT must consider how the results will be used and thus, what kinds of results would be most useful. This does not mean that the persons running the NGT should predetermine the content of the responses from the group. It means that the level of specificity and the scope of the responses should be carefully considered. For example, if a group of decision-makers are led through an NGT exercise to determine what the general strategy of a program will be, the persons running the NGT might be concerned that the responses selected by the group will be too specific. Similarly, if the responses generated by the group are too broad and general the persons running the NGT may find that they cannot use the decision in a meaningful way.

The third step is to draft a set of possible NGT questions that are intended to elicit the kinds of responses desired. Wherever possible, the question should be a single, relatively simple sentence. The longer and more involved the question the greater will be the group's difficulty in focusing on the issues. A second consideration in drafting the question is the background of the persons in the group. If the members of the group share a common background it may be possible to use more technical or specialized language. However, if the group is made up of persons with different backgrounds or with different levels of expertise it is necessary to draft the questions in more generic and common language.

The final step, pre-testing the questions, should be carried out in order to determine whether the questions will actually generate the kinds of responses desired and which of the questions appear to produce the most workable responses. The pre-testing should be carried out with persons not involved in the drafting of the questions. In addition, persons who might be included in the actual NGT exercise should not be used during the pre-testing stage.

Who Should Participate in the NGT Exercise? The selection of persons to participate in an NGT exercise should be guided by the overall objectives of the exercise. A major criteria for the selection is that the persons have a definite stake in the issue being discussed. For example, in program

development persons who might be involved in the implementation of a program, or who are likely to be directly affected by the program are suitable candidates for the group. It is also desirable to include persons with diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise. The makeup of the group will play a large part in determining the outcome of the NGT process, and the greater the diversity within the group the broader will be the range of issues and responses.

Summary. The NGT is a useful and relatively powerful decision-making device. When used properly it can generate a high level of agreement and satisfaction among participating decision-makers. In addition, the process can produce decisions that are both creative and well thought out in a relatively short period of time.

As a caveat, persons running an NGT exercise should be aware of the limitations and potential dangers of the approach. We have attempted to identify some of the limitations in this discussion. However, the greatest danger in using the technique is that it may raise unrealistic expectations among persons participating in the process. Unless the persons running the technique have the skill to follow through with the decisions made in the group, the counter reaction may be very serious. For this reason persons using the technique should be very clear on how the results of the technique can and will be used and should convey that understanding to the group before the exercise begins.

In this chapter we discussed the development of strategic goals in program development. We discussed the purposes of strategic goal development, the distinction between goals and objectives and the different levels of goals in criminal justice planning. We also discussed the importance of the strategic goal statement as the documented end-points of the program and the various sources that can be used to identify possible strategic goals--including the problem model. Finally, we identified some of the requirements for good strategic goal development: substantive knowledge, specificity, sensitivity to political and organizational factors and a flexible attitude toward the goals that are developed. The concluding discussion of the Nominal Group Technique focused on both the process and uses of a valuable decision-making tool, including the inherent limitations of the technique itself.

In the next chapter we begin the process of turning the goals of the program into a concrete action strategy. Goal development, although not a single event but an on-going process, represents the last preliminary step in the overall program development process. From this point on we will speak more about the solutions and less about the problems we are addressing in the program. However, in these first steps we have laid the conceptual foundation for the program. How well that foundation has been laid will very largely determine how successful we are in all subsequent steps.

Chapter IV
Developing the Logic of Different Program Strategies

TEXT

The Concept of Programs in Criminal Justice

Goals, both normative and strategic, are policy statements about what should and can be done about the problems identified. Programs are the means by which those goals are achieved. Stated simply, programs are planned responses to specific problems for purposes of attaining some desired end. Programs are courses of action anchored between problems and goals. As such, programs really are change processes because they are intended to bring about change--overcome problems and achieve goals.

There are many different kinds of social programs because society has many different kinds of problems. But even with the vast range of possibilities programs share some common characteristics.

For one, all programs are goal oriented. A program designed to attain a goal of increased citizen participation in crime prevention would be quite different from one designed to achieve a goal of improved police efficiency, but both are aimed at goals.

A second characteristic shared by programs is that they build upon ongoing activities. The existing criminal justice system is a reality, consisting of a vast array of people, organizations, facilities, theories, operations, and budgets. Any "new" program is unlikely to be so innovative or so revolutionary that it will be implemented independently of activities and resources already in place.

A third common characteristic is that there always are optional approaches which can be adopted. Any program can be implemented by alternative strategies; there never is just one approach for achieving any strategic goal. If a program is needed to increase the professional knowledge of corrections executives, the alternative strategies might be required university courses, management training seminars, on-the-job training, or specialized work assignments in particular areas of corrections. Some strategy may be cheapest to implement, or quickest, or easiest, or most likely to be accepted by political powers, but there will always be alternatives.

Another shared program characteristic is that they ultimately are someone's best estimates of what will work. Programs are developed on the basis of reasoned expectations of what will succeed. Some of a program developer's reasoning is based on criminal justice experience; other reasoning derives from knowledge of criminal justice programs elsewhere, the printed literature, and the prevailing political realities.

A final characteristic which ought to be shared by criminal justice programs is that they represent a systematic approach to solving a problem. Programs, as they are defined in this course, are not one-shot responses to a single aspect of a multi-faceted problem. As we noted in the text of Module I, the driving force behind program development is the axiom that criminal justice problems have complex causes and demand intervention strategies which reflect this complexity.

A program is the sum of a coordinated set of strategies for attacking a defined criminal justice problem. Many different projects and other kinds of activities may be conducted concurrently or sequentially by different agencies in different locations, but these are all complementary parts of the program.

The Purpose of Alternative Strategies

The fact that alternative program strategies are available for realizing a desired end has profound implications for program development and merits more detailed consideration.

Most program developers work under pressure, with many demands placed upon their time and talents. It is tempting and often expedient to plan programs solely on what has been tried elsewhere, or what is currently in fashion. This type of "knee jerk" program development characterizes much of what is done but the results are seldom effective.

Alternative program strategies provide a basis for comparison. Because the relative strengths of different

strategies can be assessed, it increases the likelihood that final selection decisions will be based on more complete information than if there were no alternatives. It is this public examination of options, rather than the pro forma approval of a single preselected program strategy, that distinguishes recommended from typical practice.

Information Needs in Program Development

Information is a basic and continuous need in program development. It is a particular need at the stage in the process where the program developer is beginning to think about alternative ways of attacking a problem. Although a program developer may know a great deal about the problem, and may have several ideas about how the problem could be approached, a brief but careful survey of available knowledge can materially improve the quality of the choices he or she must make. Such a search can:

- Suggest approaches not previously considered
- Identify particular problems or limitations associated with various approaches
- Identify or clarify the costs or complexities of certain approaches
- Provide estimates of success or failure and identify approaches that should not be attempted.

A brief search for information may also stimulate completely new ways of thinking about a problem and result in truly innovative approaches to its solution.

Of course, the search will not relieve the developer of the task of working through the logic and details of his or her own program. It may, however, guide that work by pointing out where others have succeeded and failed, and why.

Planning the Search

The volume of information potentially available to a program developer, and the vast differences in the quality of that information, counsels the need for a plan to conduct the search. This plan should include the following ingredients:

- A list of the information to be gathered, i.e., the questions that should be answered
- A list of information sources
- A framework for collecting, organizing and assessing the information.

Under this latter point, the developer should provide for an assessment of the information as it is gathered. The quality of information available in the system varies from the very good to the totally useless. The developer should be wary of making use of information that may be flawed, inaccurate, or technically suspect. For this reason a brief assessment of the materials that are gathered is a prudent step in the plan.

Identifying Information Needs

The most obvious place to begin identifying the kinds of information needed are the strategic goal statements--the statements that specify what the program is intended to accomplish. With this information in hand the developer can begin formulating questions to be researched.

- Has anyone ever tried to address this problem before? Few problems in criminal justice are so unique that someone, somewhere has not taken a hand to resolve them. So the answer to this question will usually be "yes" and the real question is, who are they and where are they located?
- What have previous programs or projects tried to accomplish? The developer is looking for examples of efforts that had goals similar to the immediate program. However, this may not always be obvious at first glance. As a general rule similarity of goals may be less important than that the effort dealt with a similar problem.
- How did these other efforts try to reach their goal? The developer is looking for details: specific activities, schedules, timing of activities, organizational arrangements. In some cases who was involved in the effort--specific agencies or individuals--may shed light on how the program was structured.
- How much did it cost? Costs of programs can be deceptive, particularly if the scale of the effort was smaller or larger than the one envisioned. Other factors such as when it was done, and where may also distort cost figures. Nevertheless, in the absence of other information these cost

figures can provide some gross estimates of how economical an approach may be.

- How long did it take? Some approaches can produce results very quickly. Others may require several years before any estimate of impact can be made. These facts can be integrated into the planning of the program.
- What problems were encountered? Negative experiences are often more valuable than successes. The developer should look for recurrent problems or problems that seem to be endemic in the approach. Idiosyncratic problems (personalities; chance accidents) are less useful. It is also valuable to look for particularly good solutions to problems, if they exist.
- What was accomplished? Success may not be measured only in terms of meeting objectives or goals. Also look for partial successes. If one component of the program or project worked well, despite the general failure of the overall effort, the experience may be valuable. However, if a certain approach shows a consisntently high failure rate it should be eliminated from consideration.

Assessing Information

Not all of the information in the possession of the program developer will be of equal quality or use. Consequently, the developer should be prepared to quickly sift out that information that is most valuable, and set the rest aside. For this the developer needs a framework into which information can be fitted, and a process to screen out unneeded or inaccurate information.

The framework will be provided by the different alternatives as they are identified. It is expected that as the search proceeds certain alternatives will become apparent. It is also expected that the search will run parallel with the development of the various strategy logics--the topic of the next section of this module. The congruence between these two processes will become more apparent in the section to follow. For the moment it is necessary only to point out that need for specific kinds of information will evolve as the strategies themselves evolve. In the beginning the need will be broad and relatively undifferentiated--the developer is looking for broad options rather than details. As the number of options narrows the need will be more clearly defined and more detailed. Finally, as the elements of each strategy become apparent the information needs will focus more and more on specific topics. Thus, the development process itself should provide the framework into which information can be fitted.

Assessing the quality and usefulness of the information should be an ongoing part of the search effort. The criteria for assessing the information will depend on its nature and source. Quantitative data, drawn from research and evaluation reports, computer-based data systems or other technical sources, should be evaluated for technical and conceptual adequacy; the criteria is laid out in the discussion in Chapter II. To review briefly, technical adequacy refers to the suitability of the methodology used in collecting and analyzing data. Conceptual adequacy refers to how well the information presented describes and explains the findings of the analysis.

Qualitative-information, drawn from individuals in a less structured or formalized manner must be assessed with slightly different criteria. Among the sources that fall in this category are:

- The advice or reflection of persons who have worked on programs or projects
- The attitudes of criminal justice practitioners
- The recommendations of experts

For example, in the course of an information search the developer may contact the director of a project that represents an approach to the problem in which the developer is interested. How can the developer make the best use of this information source? There are several possible techniques.

- The developer should have a fixed set of questions to be asked. The best guarantee

that the information provded will be useful is that the developer knows what he needs before he contacts the source. The list of questions outlined earlier in this discussion is a good place to start formulating questions to be asked to prospective sources.

- The developer should focus on facts rather than opinions. Broadly worded questions such as, "How successful was your project?" leaves too much room for subjective opinion. Whenever a person provides an undifferentiated opinion about a topic the developer should press for concrete evidence or examples that support the opinion.
- The developer should depersonalize the discussion. Persons who have invested time and effort into a program or project are likely to have strong opinions about the undertaking. These opinions may bias the responses given--the source may be overly positive or overly negative about the effort. Wherever possible, the developer should steer around topics where the source's ego may be directly involved. Rather, the developer should inquire about topics where the source is knowledgeable but is able to make an objective appraisal. If this is not always possible the developer should maximize the use of factual information or focus on specific incidents or events.

- The developer should rely on multiple sources. Whenever possible the developer should contact several persons when investigating a particular program or project. When doing this the developer should not reveal what others have said and should be careful to ask comparable or identical questions to all sources.
- The developer should focus on common rather than unique incidents. Programs and projects often succeed or fail because of completely random or idiosyncratic events. The developer should focus attention on factors or problems which are similar to those found in the developer's own situation. If a project succeeded only because of the personality of the project director the developer cannot assume a similar project would succeed in his or her own jurisdiction with a different director.

When assessing qualitative information the essential criterion is that based on facts wherever possible. Alternatively, when information is strictly a matter of opinion it should be clearly identified as such and thus given an appropriate level of importance.

Organizing the Search

Information will be needed throughout the entire program development process; not only at the stage where alternative strategies are being considered and developed. Moreover, the volume of information may be quite substantial and in some cases quite technical in nature. Unless the developer has a considerable amount of time to devote to the collection and assessment of information, it is strongly advised that a permanent team of people be organized to carry out the process. Indeed, a team approach to program development is a useful idea for all phases of the process.

Under ideal circumstances the development team should consist of representatives of several disciplines and interests. It should include persons with planning, analytic and substantive expertise. It should also include representatives of operating agencies that would be directly affected by the program. Finally, whenever possible, the team should include decision makers both in and outside the planning agency.

There are numerous advantages to a team such as this. First, the team approach allows the program developer to reduce the amount of time devoted to collecting the information. A team with a membership reflecting a variety of backgrounds has the added advantage of being able to assess the information more objectively and efficiently. The developer need not rely on only his or her own experience and knowledge, but can tap the multiple perspectives and

skills of the team. This can be particularly valuable when the information relates to highly technical or specialized matters.

Second, this approach simplifies the process of communicating information to decision makers and other interested persons. The program developer must maintain open channels of communication with the persons who will make the final decisions and those who will be most directly affected by the program. A team approach provides communications channels to these persons through the team membership.

Third, a team made up of several interests can bridge the gap between the planning agency and the affected operating agencies. It reduces the tendency on the part of operating agency practitioners to dismiss planning agency activities as being more bureaucratic papershuffling. The direct participation of operating agency people on the team can reassure others that the final product will be realistic to their needs and interests. In a real sense, having varied interests on the team will be a guarantee that this will, in fact, be accomplished.

In the case of decision makers, the presence of one or more of their number of the development team will reduce the possibility that plans and recommendations will be ignored or overruled. Moreover, it will reduce or eliminate the persistent problem of decision makers being asked to decide on issues without adequately understanding the subject they are deciding.

Finally, a team approach can create advocates for the program outside the planning agency. Having persons in the system who understand and agree with the thrust of the program can help overcome resistence and difficulties throughout the development process and the subsequent implementation phase.

Thus, from the standpoint of both technical efficiency and political practicality, the team approach can be an extremely valuable device for the program developer.

Developing the Program Rationale

The culmination of the many activities that go into selecting a strategy--the creative thinking, the consultation with other criminal justice professionals, the review of documents describing other programs, the integration of disparate information--is called a strategy rationale. A strategy rationale lays out the basic logic of the strategy, depicts the essential causal linkages implicit in the logic, based on the empirical evidence supporting the causal linkages. The strategy rationale ultimately becomes part of the decision package reviewed by decision-makers when they are asked to decide on the one or more strategies to pursue further.

Any given program can be viewed as a statement of logic. The logic is expressed in the form of a causal argument that links the program to the strategic goal, and ultimately, to the normative goal. The nature of the argument is: If X, then Y; if this happens, then that will result; if twice the current number of police cars patrol the streets between 8

and 12 p.m., then the number of burglaries will decrease. The strategy rationale is the document which articulates this type of logic. It describes the logic of the strategy believed capable of bringing about change and it provides the supporting arguments and reasoning for the strategy.

The strategy rationale is the product of a complex creative process which surfaces alternative strategies, ensures they are considered as possible courses of action, eliminates the strategies that will not be effective, and brings the remaining viable strategies to the attention of decision-makers. The strategy rationale "fits" into this process at the point where decision-makers review the supporting evidence for the alternative strategies and select the most suitable one(s) for further development. Exactly where this point will vary from place to place. But wherever this point occurs, the strategy rationale performs the same basic functions: (1) to help select out at an early stage those strategies deemed unworthy to pursue any further and (2) to identify those strategies which merit the investment of additional resources to plan and develop more completely.

The steps of this creative process have no well-defined starting and ending points. It is an iterative process with continuous recycling of ideas to new inputs and refinement of plans to accommodate unexpected obstacles. While it is not feasible to cover the detailed dynamics of the process here, we will outline the following major steps:

- identify potential strategies
- identify the logical assumptions behind each strategy
- test the reasonableness of these assumptions
- prepare the final strategy rationale.

Identifying Potential Strategies

The beginning point of program development is an agreed-upon problem and the strategic goal. Thus, the first step is to identify the alternative strategies that might be used to attain the goal, and then lay out the logic of each in an abstract way. The purpose of this step is to identify as many different approaches that appear to lead to the same goal as possible. The concern here is not with details about specific agencies, personalities, or political climate, but rather with surfacing a variety of possible strategies to consider.

A strategy represents a general approach to the attainment of a strategic goal. For example a problem such as commercial robbery can be attacked through a strategy of "deterrence"--the courts can make robbery so potentially costly to criminals that they will be reluctant co commit the crime. The same problem can also be addressed through "target hardening." Commercial establishments can be redesigned so as to make it more difficult for a robber to succeed, e.g., putting armed guards in stores, erecting barriers between the proprietor

and customers, installing alarm systems. Finally, the problem can be addressed by removing or affecting the causes of the problem. For example, unemployed youths who commit robberies can be found employment or some other diversion, their families can be counseled or provided with additional assistance. Each of these approaches represent a different strategy for reaching the goal of reducing commercial robbery.

Potential strategies can be identified through the information search described earlier. They can also emerge out of a close examination of the Problem Statement. The relationships identified in the assessment of the problem statement provide valuable clues to possible strategies. For example, if the Problem Statement suggests that a presumed cause of crimes against the elderly is the fact that they are often isolated from others who might come to their aid, one possible strategy might be to increase the social contacts of elderly persons. Thus, the relationships identified in the Problem Statement are a valuable source of ideas concerning potential strategies.

A second source of ideas is the program developer or the program development team. Many of the most creative ideas for solving problems come out of "brainstroming" sessions in which ideas are bounced around and new and sometimes outrageous suggestions are proposed. In some instances the "germ" of a general strategy will be suggested in a specific example. For example, when thinking about ways of reducing crimes against

the elderly the idea of hiring local youths to escort elderly persons when they shop may be suggested. This is clearly too specific to be a "strategy" although it may eventually become a possible way of implementing a strategy. However, it contains the germ of a strategy--the idea of providing elderly persons with additional social contacts as a preventive strategy for crime. Thus, by using specific examples and extracting the essential or general approach they reflect, the program developer can derive strategies which can be proposed to meet strategic goals.

Testing the Logic of Strategies

The value of a strategy may not always be apparent to the program developer when it is first proposed. There is a natural tendency to "leap" at an idea because it makes sense at an intuitive level. For example, it makes sense that if police are writing poor reports, and thus making it more difficult for prosecutors to convict suspected criminals, to propose a strategy of additional training for police officers on report writing. Similarly, a logical response to the problem of overcrowding in prisons is to build more prisons. However, before a strategy is adopted it is probably worthwhile to examine the logic of the strategy in a more concise manner. That is, before working out the details of the strategy the program developer should attempt to determine whether the strategy can work and what assumptions must be met for the strategy to work.

A strategy is based on a set of assumptions: about how people behave, about how organizations operate and about the factors and relationships that create certain conditions and events. These assumptions may be explicit or implicit. They may be based on hard evidence or someone's preconceived notions. In some instances they may be based on a person's ideological beliefs (e.g., crime is a product of economic conditions) or on personal experiences. In general, it is very dangerous to allow these assumptions to go unexamined. A sweeping assumption may ignore important facts which contradict the rule or may ignore the factors which may limit the generality of the assumption. In short, before proposing a strategy, the program developer should identify and test the assumptions that lie within the strategy.

Let us examine a strategy and describe how the assumptions it makes can be identified and tested. The strategy is a common one for many types of crime problems--increasing the severity of the penalty for a particular crime. The basic logic behind this strategy is: if the penalty for a crime is severe enough criminals will be less likely to commit that crime. What assumptions lie behind this strategy? One basic assumption is that criminals perform a rational calculation of risks before they decide to commit a crime. Is this a reasonable assumption? For certain types of crimes this may be reasonable. Crimes involving a degree of premeditation probably would be affected by such a strategy. However, crimes that are committed in a heat of passion or by persons with

impulsive or reckless personalities are less likely to be affected. Thus we have identified one important limiting factor in the logic of the strategy. Are there any others? The strategy assumes that criminals are aware of the penalties involved in different kinds of crimes. Is this a reasonable assumption. Again, the assumption is problematic. Some criminals, but not all, will take the trouble to learn what the risks of committing a crime are, but there are doubtlessly many persons who would be totally unaffected by a change in criminal penalties simply because they are unaware of the change. Thus, we have identified a second limiting factor--the degree to which the change in criminal penalties is publicized among persons likely to commit the crime.

There are numerous other assumptions we could identify in this strategy. The strategy assumes that criminals weigh the risks of committing a crime in terms of possible penalties as opposed to the more immediate risk of being caught by the police. It assumes that the courts will actually impose the penalties and that juries will convict criminals knowing that the penalty is so severe. It also assumes that enough criminals will be affected by the change to make a noticeable difference in the crime rate. All of these assumptions must be met if the strategy is to be effective.

For the program developer the testing of these assumptions should be the first step in weeding out illogical or ineffective strategies. For those strategies that are developed

further, this testing of the strategies' logic is an important step in identifying the critical elements of the program. By identifying the assumptions that must be fulfilled in order for the strategy to work the program developer also identifies the basic requirements of the strategy. For example, if a change in the penalty for a certain crime is proposed, the program developer now knows that the change must be well advertised, that judges and juries must be convinced to impose the penalties and that the penalty itself must be credible.

Preparing the Strategy Rationale

Once the logic of the strategy has been tested the next step is to prepare a strategy rationale. The rationale is a graphic representation of the logic of the strategy and should incorporate the assumptions that lie behind the strategy. For example, the rationale for the strategy of providing a more severe penalty for a crime might look like this.

- Criminals commit crime because of lack of severe penalty
- Severe penalty is imposed (Strategy)
- Potential criminals know about penalty
- Potential criminals weigh potential risk of committing crime
- Potential criminals perceive risk posed by penalty as being more severe than is acceptable to them

- Potential criminals do not commit crime
- Number of crimes decreases (Strategic Goal)

The rationale lays out in logical sequence the assumed steps or links through which the strategy is intended to reach the strategic goal. By examining each assumption and each linkage with a critical eye, and by drawing on common sense, past experience or empirical evidence, the program developer can make a rational assessment of the logic of the strategy.

Note that this assessment does not include a consideration of how easy it would be to implement the strategy, how much it might cost, or other "practical" considerations. These decisions can come later. At this stage we are concerned primarily with the essential logic of the strategy--not whether the strategy could be implemented, but whether it makes sense to even try.

Summary

In this chapter we began the long process of developing and refining strategies toaddress the problem, building on our understanding of the problem that we developed earlier. We examined in a broader context the nature of programs in criminal justice and the need for developing alternative strategies to address problems. We discussed the need for information in program development, how to look for information; what to look for and how to assess it when we obtain it. In particular we emphasized the usefulness of a team approach

to collecting information and to program development in general. Finally we discussed the development and the assessment of the program rationale. In this context we discussed the creative nature of strategy development, but emphasized the need for a critical testing of the logic and assumptions in a strategy.

In the next chapter we discuss the next step in developing a program--translating an abstract strategy into a set of specific actions. We have turned another corner in the process. We have focused attention on the second major source of program success or failure; the identification and selection of a strategy that is appropriate to our understanding of the problem. What remains to us is assuring that the strategy can and will be implemented as we intend.

APPENDIX: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Over the last ten years the volume of information in criminal justice has increased significantly. Information on a broad variety of topics is now available through

- Evaluation reports
- Research literature
- Model or "exemplary" program plans and other proscriptive literature
- Standards promulgated by federal, state, local and professional standard-setting bodies.

In addition, human resources have become more readily available in the form of subject matter experts, management and systems analysts and technical assistance vendors. Finally, the planning system itself provides access to a cadre of experienced planners and analysts working in planning and operating agencies.

Despite the availability of this wealth of information much, and perhaps most, program planning is carried out as if each problem was completely new and unique. Part of the reason for this may be that program developers are unaware of the resources available to them. A second barrier may be the lack of time and money devoted to developing rather than implementing program activities. A third barrier may be an

uncertainty about how to use the resources; where they are located, what to look for, how to use the information at hand. In the discussion to follow we will briefly examine each source and provide some broad suggestions on the best way to use it.

Research and evaluation reports. A particularly under-utilized source of information is the growing body of literature in research and evaluation. For the program developer, this information can provide relevant indications of not only what has been done in any given field, but how successful these past efforts have been. The evaluation literature should provide answers to virtually every question on the developer's list.

- Who has tried to address a problem? and where?
- What have they tried to accomplish?
- Internal activities--schedules, timing-organization, participation, costs and duration
- Problems and issues
- Rates of success

The research literature can provide many of the same details as well as indications of alternative theories or hypotheses about the problem in question. For example, research on the relationship between environmental factors (e.g., building design, landscaping) on the incidence of school vandalism might suggest an entirely new approach to that problem. Similarly, review of the research on the general theory of

deterrence might provide additional insights into a variety of crime-related problems.

There are several sources of research and evaluation literature available to the program developer:

- The National Criminal Justice Reference Service provides services at no cost to persons wishing to survey a particular literature. The Service maintains a computerized search system which can produce a comprehensive bibliography, with a brief summary on each source on a variety of specific topics. In addition the Service will loan copies of original materials on request or provide microfiche copies that can be kept. The address and telephone number of the Service is listed in the appendix.
- The National Institute of Justice supports and publishes evaluation and research efforts on a variety of topics each year. Although these documents often deal with national level efforts and problems the quality of the materials is often superior to that produced for individual, small-scale programs and projects. This information can be obtained directly from LEAA or the U.S. Government Printing Office. In addition NIT also publishes and updates a directory of criminal justice information sources, a directory of

criminal justice associations, and directory of newsletters published in criminal justice.

- Other federal agencies can also provide access to basic research and evaluation information. Virtually every agency, both in and outside the criminal justice area, maintain public information or clearinghouse services. Among the more relevant sources are:
  - The National Institute for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention;
  - The National Institute of Corrections
  - The Federal Bureau of Prisons
  - The National Institute of Drug Abuse
- State Planning Agencies normally maintain files of evaluation reports conducted in or for the agency. They are also likely to maintain copies of recent publications, journals and major evaluation studies.
- TARC's (Technical Assistance and Research Centers) provide both human and written resources for planners, analysts, evaluators and program developers.
- Professional associations and public interest organizations produce a considerable volume of research and evaluations related topics. Organizations such as the American Bar Association, the Police Foundation, the International

Association of Chiefs of Police, National Association of District Attorneys, American Correctional Association, National Council on Crime and Delinquency and numerous others conduct basic research and evaluation on all areas of criminal justice.

- Colleges and universities, particularly those with departments of criminology or criminal justice are likely to maintain libraries of literature on all phases of the system.

The amount of information available from these sources on any given topic will vary, as will the quality and value. However, a broad-based literature search--i.e., not relying on only one or two major sources--is more likely to identify those sources that will be of the greatest value.

Model programs. The increased availability of basic research and evaluation findings, and the increased use of action programs as opportunities employing new and innovative methods has led to the development of several model or prescriptive program designs. NIJ, for example, through its Exemplary Project program, has made a conscious effort to document examples of particularly successful methods or strategies. Each report contains:

- The history of the project/program
- How the project/program works
- Organization and administration

- Facilities, plant, and equipment
- Costs and budget
- Effectiveness
- A guide to replicating the effort elsewhere

LEAA also conducts evaluations and research on alternative program models aiming at the development of generic approaches to major problems. LEAA has published numerous monographs and prescriptive packages which provide models and assessments of alternative strategies.

Similar efforts have been undertaken by professional associations, and in some instances, by individual planning agencies.

Standards. An additional source of information and guidance on alternative strategies can be found in the standards promulgated by various organizations and authorities in criminal justice. Since 1970 virtually every aspect of criminal justice has been examined by one standard-setting body or another. The National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals developed system-wide standards in 1973. A similar effort was undertaken by the American Bar Association. In addition, virtually every major professional association in criminal justice has developed a set of standards for its members. Finally, since 1973 large numbers of state, local and regional planning agencies have developed standards and goals to guide funding and other policy decisions.

The standards adopted by these groups and organizations can provide program developers with a useful guide to the

best thinking on the way criminal justice agencies should operate. In this way they can also guide the developer in the kinds of strategies that might be undertaken.

Human resources. The literature will be the primary source of information for most program development efforts. However, the literature should be supplemented by a careful use of the numerous human resources available to the developer. This approach may be particularly useful when the developer has a relatively short time to identify and select a program strategy. The developer should consider the following human resources in the search:

- Subject matter experts - As criminal justice planning has grown it has been paralleled by a similar growth in outside consultants and specialized experts. These experts may be readily contacted through universities, private consulting firms, non-profit research organizations and professional associations. In some instances expert consultants may be retained under standing technical assistance contracts with LEAA or other organizations supported by LEAA. Such experts are usually knowledgeable in a variety of fields and may be able to reduce the amount of time needed for the literature search. The primary drawback to the use of consultants other than those already retained under a technical assistance contract is that they are expensive to

utilize for any length of time. In addition, as in all other fields the quality of the services provided by outside consultants may vary greatly among firms and individuals.

- Planning agency personnel - A source of information that is seldom used to its fullest potential is the experience and expertise of people in other planning agencies. In addition to having a working knowledge of the system they have the advantage of being able to understand the needs of the program developer on the basis of their own experience in planning. Moreover, they may have had the experience of developing efforts dealing with the same or similar problem areas and can thus provide direct advice on various alternatives.
- Operating agency personnel- A final source of information on alternative strategies may come from persons in agencies affected by the problem. These may include persons who would be directly involved in the program or persons in agencies that have attempted to resolve the problem. Not only can such persons provide insights on alternative strategies but the simple process of inquiring with them may reduce barriers to the program when it is implemented.

Chapter V
Planning the Details of Program Strategies

TEXT

In the introductory section of this text we suggested these reasons why programs fail:

- Because the problem was not understood,
- Because the strategies were inappropriate,
- Because the strategies were not carried out as planned.

In previous modules we focused on the first two factors. We should now feel confident that we understand the problem and that the strategies we have selected are appropriate to address the problem. The remaining factor to consider is: how do we assure that the strategies are carried out as intended? At this stage we are now ready to tackle the practical problems of designing the details of the program. In effect much of the "head-work" involved in conceptualizing the problem, identifying the most important components of the problem, developing strategic goals and developing strategies, comes down to this step where "the rubber meets the road." Unless we can translate the ideas into concrete activities the program will flounder no matter how pure our analyses and logic.

Defining the Level of Detail

A basic issue at this stage is, how much detail should the program developer provide? Is it necessary to design every component of the program? What details should be left to the persons who will implement the program? How much can the program developer anticipate in his or her plans?

The answer to this question, unfortunately, is "it depends." It depends, first of all, on the level of confidence the program developer has in the strategies he has developed. If the strategies are inherently "foolproof" it may not be necessary to plan any further. However, if there are questions about the strategy, about how well it will work or how easy it will be to implement, the program developer may feel compelled to spell out the details.

The level of detail also depends on the level of confidence the program developer has in the persons who will carry out the program--assuming that the program developer knows who those persons are. Finally, it depends on where the program developer is in relation to the level where the program will operate. If the program developer is at a state level and the program will be implemented by local neighborhood groups or police departments, the program developer may not be able to supply any additional details because of the sheer distance between planner and the realities of the local program site. As a rule of thumb, the program developer should avoid providing more detail than is relevant to the persons who will actually carry out the program.

On the other side of the coin is the caveat: "Whatever isn't nailed down now is probably going to come apart later on." Even at the state level there will be some details which must be considered and specified beforehand. These details should be inserted--not because the program planner considers the people at the local level incompetent--but because the logic and relationships of the program strategy may not be as obvious or compelling to local authorities as it is to the program developer. In short, the program developer should provide enough relevant detail to insure that the program will work as it is intended, taking into consideration the skills, capabilities and experience of the people who will run the program and the number of "unknowns" in the specific strategies and interventions being implemented.

A second set of conditions which may influence how much detail the program developer should provide, relates to the demands of persons who must approve the program. The decision-makers may require no more than an outline of the strategies to be implemented. However, they may require a detailed plan showing who will do what, when and for how much. Indeed, the decision-makers may still be skeptical that the strategies can be implemented at all, and may require concrete evidence that the strategies are feasible.

For purposes of this discussion we will assume that the program developer is obligated to plan the details of the program down to a considerable level of detail. We also assume

that those details are relevant to the persons who will implement the program and that the program developer can make some useful and realistic judgments about local conditions where the program is to operate. We now turn to a discussion of what those details might include.

The Details of the Program

A program is made up of a set of related and complementary projects or activities which we call program elements. We use this term to emphasize an important point--a program does not necessarily consist of new initiatives requiring additional money or resources. A program is a set of activities which are guided by a common normative goal and organized to meet a set of strategic goals. It is entirely possible for a program to not contain a single "new" project in the sense that term is normally used. For example, a program might consist of a new piece of legislation, the reorganization of an existing agency or the reallocation of resources to emphasize an existing function within an agency. A program could also consist of rewriting a procedures manual or setting up new standards of performance. None of these "elements" of a program would be normally considered a project in the sense of a new agency, new function, or new money being spent.

An element is a relatively discrete entity. It is intended to implement a particular strategy. It may operate independently or in conjunction with other elements to carry out the strategy.

It may consist of a single activity or several chosely related activities. It may be a continuous effort or it may be carried out only once. The elements are the building-blocks out of which the program is formed.

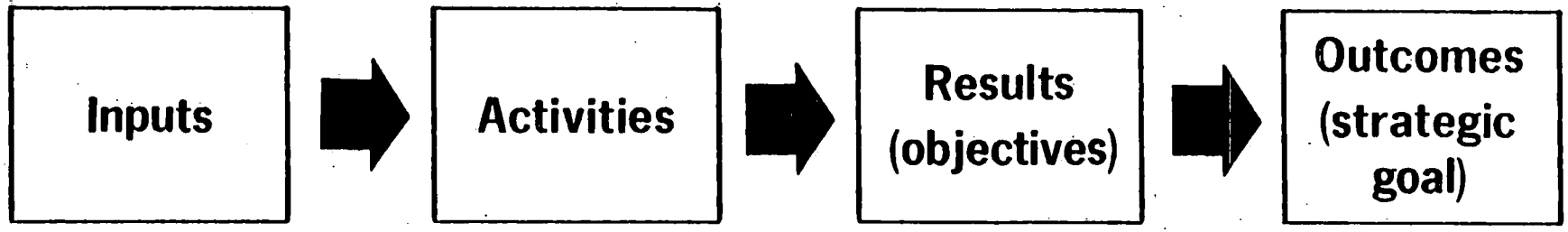
An element is made up of sets of activities. These activities require people and resources and produce results which, in turn, contribute to the accomplishment of the strategic goal. We describe these details of the element in the terminology of what is called the Method of Rationales (or MOR). The MOR depicts an element as a logical sequence in which inputs (people and resources) lead to the activities which lead to the results. The diagram on the following page depicts this relationship. The task of the program developer at this stage is to identify the inputs, activities and results for each element in the program, and to determine whether the results will in fact lead to the accomplishment of the strategic goal, called in MOR terminology the elements' outcome.

Organizing the Details of the Program

Having identified details of the element, the program developer's next task is to organize those details into a coherent whole and in many cases, adjust or rearrange the details of the elements to improve the "fit." There are several considerations which must go into this next set of tasks:

- Accounting for possible conflicts within the elements,

COMPONENTS OF THE METHOD OF RATIONALES



- Accounting for possible conflicts between the element and the rest of the CJ system,
- Determining when the different activities will be carried out, in what order, and for how long,
- Developing reasonable objectives for the element, and
- Estimating the cost and possible sources of support for the element.

Internal and external conflicts. The first two steps in this process are intended to uncover potential problems in the design of an element: possible internal conflicts, and potential conflicts with the rest of the Criminal Justice system. These steps are necessary because a failure to recognize these problems early--before the program is up and running--can result in serious delays and even the failure of the program. If these problems are identified early this step be taken to remedy them or at least reduce the amount of impact they might otherwise have on the program.

The problem of conflicts within an element is all too common to be ignored. Very often planners have failed to notice that they have overcommitted the persons who will run the program or have developed a set of activities which tend to run counter to each other. A classic example of the latter problem is the program in which police officers were placed into schools to keep order, break up fights, confiscate weapons and drugs while at the same time improve the image of the police among the students. Very quickly after the program started

the police officers discovered it was almost impossible to play both of these roles at once. Students resented the presence of the police and even those who were sympathetic to the goal of improving order in the schools were outraged when the police confiscated knives and marijuana from students' lockers. Under these circumstances it was almost impossible for the police to appear as "good guys" and present a positive image. Most officers tended to adopt one role or the other, thus defeating the goals of the program. The purpose of this first step is to examine each element so as to detect these possible conflicts before they are implemented.

A similar problem can arise when the program developer fails to take into account how an element might affect other parts of the Criminal Justice system or how the system might affect the element. For example, providing training for police officers or correctional guards means pulling people from their normal jobs. Unless the program developer can find a way to replace those personnel or find some means of providing training without interrupting the normal work of the agency, that element will probably fail.

Similarly, the standing policies and procedures of a criminal justice agency may seriously affect the ability of the agency to cooperate with the program. For example, several years ago a major city tried to establish a juvenile diversion program. The planners had assumed that the logical place to locate the program was in the police department, applying the theory that diversion should be instituted before the

juvenile has "penetrated" very far into the criminal justice system. However, after several months of planning the program developers were informed that the police were forbidden to make an independent disposition of juvenile cases under a recently enacted law. Consequently, the planners had wasted several months of effort and were forced to rethink the entire program plan.

The example cited above points out the danger of not considering possible conflicts within a program element or between an element and the rest of the system. Had the program developers taken even a few hours to examine such questions as possible internal inconsistencies or possible legal barriers the program could have been saved considerable expense and embarrassment.

Scheduling and networking the program element. One of the knottiest problems for a program developer is to take an abstract strategy and translate it into a sensible sequence of events. Merely knowing what should be done is not enough; those activities must also be anchored in time and orchestrated in such a way that they produce the desired results. The problem is analogous to setting up an assembly line in a factory. The program developer must be sure that part A arrives at point E in time to be installed in part C. Of course, a criminal justice program with dozens of persons working on many separate tasks is many times more complicated than a factory assembly line. No one complains if a crate of parts sits on a loading

dock for twenty minutes while the workers take a coffee break. But if a rape victim must sit twenty minutes waiting for a counselor to arrive at the police station the whole purpose of the program may be defeated.

The program developer must develop three types of detail about the activities of each element:

- The order or sequence of the activities,
- The length or duration of the activites, and
- The dates or times when the activity must begin or be completed.

In addition, the program developer must then arrange each activity into a schedule or network to insure that the activities can be carried out within a reasonable time, or more commonly, within the time limits established by decision-makers.

The order or sequence of activities within an element is largely a matter of logic. Some activities are dependent on others. Some activities can be carried out at almost any time. Some activities must be carried out simultaneously with others. Some will be conducted intermittently over a long period. The program developer may be forced to try several different arrangements before a sensible sequence can be discovered. In general, there is seldom "one-right-way" to order events in an element.

The length or duration of activities can be determined through experience. It is usually very difficult to estimate beforehand how long it will take to carry out a particular

activity. The program developer must consider who will be carrying out the activity, the number of persons involved and the relative newness of the activity to those persons. In general, most persons require a breaking-in period before they become proficient at any task, particularly a task with which they are unfamiliar. All of these factors, plus the inevitable delays caused by unanticipated events, should be considered by the program developer in estimating how long it will take to carry out an activity.

The final detail in this area to be considered is the time or date when various activities must be commenced and/or completed. In some instances these times or dates will have been established by others arbitrarily or because of overriding political or policy considerations. For example, a program with a great deal of public visibility may have to show positive results very early or face serious public or political opposition. Fixed dates such as legislative schedules, elections, funding cycles or fiscal years also create scheduling problems.

Converting the above details into a useful schedule and into a plan that can be communicated to others--particularly decision-makers--requires considerable skill. Decision-makers may be overwhelmed by a mass of details about each of the activities within an element. However, program managers may require this level of detail when they begin to operate the program. Graphic presentations such as a Gannt chart can be used to simplify the information for the decision-makers.

A more complex tool such as PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) or CPM (Critical Path Method) are useful for both planning and presenting detailed scheduling information to managers.* These latter methods are particularly useful to be program developer when trying to answer such questions as:

- How long will the program take?
- Can we meet our projected completion date?
- If there is a delay in one activity, will the entire program be delayed, and if so, by how much?
- What is the most economical way to speed up a program?

However, these techniques are less valuable in planning on-going processes, such as an offender counseling program, where the same activities are carried out over and over again. PERT and CPM are most valuable in depicting the start-up phase of programs or elements when discrete activities with definite beginnings and ends (e.g., hiring staff, buying equipment, preparing manuals) are involved.

PERT and CPM are not difficult to master. Basic knowledge of simple arithmetic is all that is needed to put them to use. But better than simply reading about them is to work through

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*A good standard reference on PERT and CPM is:

Horowitz, J. Critical path scheduling: Management control through CPM and PERT. New York: The Ronald Press, 1967.

the process for oneself with the aid of a standard reference, such as the one cited on the bottom of page 11.

Developing objectives. The objectives of a program element are the immediate accomplishments the element is intended to reach to carry out the strategy and thus, contribute to the strategic goal. As discussed in an earlier section of the text, objectives are distinguished from goals in that they should be:

- Time bound, and
- Observable (measureable).

The purpose of objectives in a program are twofold: they provide an immediate point of reference toward which the persons running the program or an element should aim, and they provide a benchmark for evaluators and decision-makers against which program performance can be measured.

The objectives of a program element can be developed in several ways--some good, and others less desirable from a professional standpoint. One of the least desirable ways of developing objectives is to pick a level of performance that "sounds good." Many program plans are filled with objectives which have no basis in reality but which are included to convince decision-makers to approve the plan. Objectives should be more than words on paper. They should not be considered only as something to meet a bureaucratic fetish for precision. Objectives should reflect a realistic appraisal of what actually will happen when the program gets underway.

Nothing is as damaging to a program than a consistent failure to meet objectives. It undermines confidence in the value of a program and, ultimately, in the competence of the program developer and the planning profession as a whole.

In some instances objectives are not developed but are imposed on the developer by the nature of the problem and the tacit commitment to affect the problem significantly. For example, if the problem involves the failure of 300 witnesses to show up to testify, one way or another the program must find the means to bring all or a significant portion of that number into court. In this instance the objective is pre-set and the program element must be designed to meet that performance specification. Under other circumstances the objectives will be shaped by the limitations of the program element design. Given a fixed level of resources, or a strategy with a limited area of effectiveness, the program developer may be constrained in terms of the level of performance he can promise. In this instance the objectives emerge out of the development of the element posed on a realistic estimate of what can be accomplished.

The point of this discussion is that the program developer should not rely on intuition or use objectives as political tools. As a professional, the program developer should develop objectives which reflect realistic estimates of what can be accomplished given the design of the program's elements. While it is true that unanticipated events may defeat the objectives, this does relieve the program developer of the

obligation to make the best estimate possible, based on the information at his or her disposal.

Developing cost estimates and sources of support. The remaining detail to be developed is, how much will all this cost? For a decision-maker probably no other single piece of information is as important as the bottom line cost figure. This is particularly true in these days of budget cutbacks and Proposition 13 sentiments. It is of course possible to argue that if a problem is important enough, cost should be no object. From a long-term perspective this may be realistic approach--problems not addressed adequately today may well end up costing much more to tackle tomorrow. However, most decision-makers do not think in these terms, except on rare occasions, and it would take considerable skill to convince more than a small minority of administrators, managers and public officials to adopt this perspective. Consequently, it is the program developer's job to demonstrate that the money, time and effort needed to implement a program is worth it in terms of relatively immediate payoffs.

Before discussing cost further, it may be worthwhile to underscore a point made earlier in this discussion. A program does not necessarily have to involve the creation of entirely new or elaborate initiatives, agencies or interventions. Indeed, because these "new things" tend to be the least predictable and most problematical aspects of a program, the program developer may be wise to minimize the number of new

projects or elements, and focus first on using existing agencies, or reorganizing existing functions and resources. In this way the program developer can avoid the uncertainty involved in starting up entirely new organizations from "scratch," and at the same time save the considerable expense entailed in such new endeavors.

Of course, it should be recognized that no program can entirely escape imposing new costs on the system. Retraining or reorganizing staff in an existing agency entails costs: the cost of supporting substitutes while a regular staffer goes through training, the cost of meetings to develop new procedures and forms, and the often hidden cost caused by the temporary loss of efficiency during the breaking-in period of a program. Thus, even when the program develoepr adopts a strategy of using existing agencies and resources, there will be costs involved.

The process outlined in this course is designed to minimize (but not eliminate) the uncertainty involved in developing cost estimates. Earlier, at the step where the inputs, activities and results of the program were developed, the program developer identified the major cost factors involved in conducting the program. The <u>input</u> factors identified in that step represent the individual <u>budget items</u> for the program elements. As the details of the element are developed additional inputs may be added: to accommodate activities necessary to resolve internal or external conflicts, to accommodate the

schedule for carrying out the element, and to support the level of performance required to meet the objectives.

Once the program developer has developed this level of detail he or she has virtually all of the information needed to develop a realistic budget or cost estimate. The program developer knows:

- What inputs he or she will need to acquire (from the MOR)
- When and how long those inputs will be required (from the network or schedule), and
- How much or how many of each resources will be needed (to meet the objectives).

The remaining piece of information needed is the cost figure for each of the inputs. For this information the program developer can turn to budgeting experts, to persons in agencies with practical experience on costs, or to his or her own experience with other programs or projects. Cost information of the kind needed to produce a budget estimate should not be difficult to find, although it may require time and persistence.

Presenting the program budget to decision-makers for approval is a minor art unto itself. A major error many planners and program developers make is simply presenting a traditional line-item budget in which costs of a similar nature are lumped together (e.g., personnel, material, travel, etc.). The reaction of many decision-makers to such a budget

is that the staff has included "hidden" expenses in the budget. Under these circumstances the decision-maker may be sorely tempted to simply say, "You're spending too much on travel--(with images of program staff flying first class to some conference)--cut that down by $20,000."

A more effective form of presentation is to break program costs down by element so that decision-makers can more readily know where the money is to be spent. This approach has the additional advantage of permitting the program developer to specify the benefits (results) of each element in relation to the amount of money being requested. It also reassures the decision-maker that the cost estimates are legitimate and can be justified in terms of the requirements of the element and the program. There are dangers in this approach, however. A decision-maker may focus on one element of the program and, losing sight of its importance to a strategy, attempt to bargain the program developer down on specific cost items. Under these circumstances the program developer's best response is to fall back on the detailed planning work that went into the design of the element. Using this knowledge the program developer should be able to justify the cost figures.

Non-traditional sources of funding. The gradual withdrawal of Federal funding from the criminal justice field has forced many planning and operational agencies to consider alternative ways of funding and supporting program initiatives. For the program developer this situation presents both a

challenge and an opportunity to expand the range of potential sources of support. A variety of non-traditional sources of support are described below. You are encouraged to explore some or all of these options in your own jurisdiction.

- Federal programs other than LEAA-related--Individual elements of a program may fall within the range of interest of Federal agencies other than LEAA. This is true of programs with elements relating to housing, education, community development, mental health, drug abuse or employment. A handy source of information on the availability and requirements of these programs is the:
- Catalogue of Federal and Domestic Assistance. Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, (published annually). If attempting to develop funds from these sources would be considered "poaching" on another agency's territory, this might be a good basis to develop ties with other agencies with related interests.
- Private Businesses and Foundations--Each year considerable sums of money are distributed by private businesses and foundations for projects that improve community conditions or amenities. In theory, there is no reason why criminal

justice-related projects could not be included in this category. Local businesses may also be induced to donate "in-kind" contributions to projects operating in their communities. Major corporations have also "donated" experienced management personnel to state and local governments as part-time consultants on programs and projects.

- Local Churches, Civic and Social Organizations-- Programs with elements relating to community education, or civic imporvement can benefit from the extensive work done by local volunteer groups. These groups can provide manpower for surveys, contribute office space for neighborhood level activities and can provide a valuable liaison service between the program and local residents.
- Local Colleges, Universities and High Schools-- A recent trend in education is to involve students in volunteer work in the community as part of a "hands-on" educational experience. Local programs may find a valuable source of manpower in the schools by incorporating students into the plans of an element. Because these students may be receiving academic credit for such work, they may tend to be more reliable than other volunteer-type groups. College and university faculty may also be used as volunteer consultants for local projects or elements.

Summary

In this chapter we focused on the "nuts and bolts" of a program, the details of who does what, when and for how long. In this discussion we examined several issues relating to the level of detail the program developer can or should develop; i.e., when is the level of detail enough and when is it too much? How much latitude should the program developer allow for the persons who will actually implement the details? We also reemphasized the need for the program developer to think beyond the usual forms and formulae of the traditional "project" and consider alternatives was of implementing strategies.

The discussion of the specific details of a program focused on the concept of the program element. We discussed the parts of the elements: the inputs, activities, results and outcomes that make up an element. We discussed the need to evaluate potential conflicts, both within the element and between the element and the rest of the criminal justice system. We discussed scheduling and networking the activities of an element, the development of realistic objectives, and how to use the information developed to this point to prepare reasonable cost estimates. Finally we introduced some ideas for alternative sources of funding and techniques for presenting the budget to decision-makers.

In the next and and final chapter we turn our attention to the problem of organizing the implementation of the program and the evaluation of the program after it is underway.

Chapter VI
Preparing for Program Implementation and Evaluation

TEXT

The design and approval of the details of the program is a major step in the program development process. However, the program developer's job does not end here. Many well-designed and thoroughly planned programs have failed, or have been unable to reach their full potential because inadequate attention was given to the next critical steps: integrating the different elements of the program, identifying the key events in the plan and assuring that the program is implemented as it is designed. In this concluding module we will discuss various ways in which the program developer can help to translate the plan into a set of unified, concrete actions and assure that the program will remain "on-track" after it is underway. In addition, we will discuss how the program developer can integrate the implementation of the program plan with the evaluation and monitoring process. In this latter discussion we will focus on four major topics:

- Communicating the plan to program implementors
- Developing special conditions, performance, standards and limitations for implementors
- Selecting appropriate implementors

- Preparing for program monitoring, evaluation, management and technical assistance.

Program and Project-Level Implementation

Before discussing the major topics listed above it may be useful to reemphasize a primary conceptual distinction we have made throughout the course--the distinction between program- and project-level planning. Program development necessarily involves a consideration of what happens at the project level or at the level of the individual activity within a project. However, this interest on the project level should be guided by an overall perspective of what all the projects and all the activities are intended to accomplish as a whole. While the developer must be concerned with assuring that the individual elements of the program work as they should, at the same time the developer must be constantly aware of how the performance of Project A will affect the performance of Project B, and how the collective performance in all projects and activities work together to reach the program's goals. Thus, if Project A does not provide the right kind of job training to the juveniles referred to it by Project B, and Project C was set up to place those juveniles in certain dedicated job slots, the problem is not just that of Project A. The failure of that one project or perhaps one crucial aspect of its design can potentially place the whole program in jeopardy.

The program developer is the person in the best position to anticipate problems such as these. The developer must maintain a dual perspective on the program and its elements. The developer must consider

- How to assume cooperation and coordination between the program elements, and
- How to assure that each element produces the results needed to meet its own internal objectives.

Obviously, there is a limit to the amount of pre-implementation planning that can be carried out by the program developer. The developer must allow individual project managers enough flexibility and freedom to do their job. However, the developer can set guidelines, suggest procedures, and help smooth the implementor's path through a judicious use of the knowledge and skills that have been acquired through the development phase. In all of these matters the "rule of thumb" should be that the program developer has an obligation to do all that can be done to maintain the integrity of the program as a whole within the limits of his or her authority.

Integrating the Elements of the Program

It very often happens that a program is designed by groups of persons organized into different task forces or committees--particularly when the program contains several different strategies, or affects several areas of the criminal justice system. The major drawback to this approach is that

the different groups will tend to work independently and not take adequate consideration of how their one part of the program may affect or be affected by the other parts. Even when the program is designed by a single group or person, the developer(s) may tend to ignore potential cross-impacts among the elements. Consequently, in this course we advise the program developer to examine these cross-impacts as a way of integrating the elements into a coherent whole.

Earlier, in discussing the development of the program elements we made a point of considering possible internal impacts within an element, and possible conflicts or cross-impacts between an element and the rest of the CJ system. Now we will repeat this process, but this time focus on the different elements themselves. In this assessment we are looking for the following:

- Potential conflicts among the different activities, results or outcomes;
- Areas where two or more elements should be coordinated because they tend to feed into one another;
- Areas where two or more elements could share their resources or responsibility or otherwise assist each other;
- Areas where two or more elements should communicate with each other or schedule their activities together.

The products of this step could include the revision of specific activities within an element, the creation of coordinating mechanisms or joint-management groups to help integrate the activities of different elements, a partial collapsing of activities or even entire elements to avoid duplication of effort or the creation of special agreements or procedures to lay out responsibilities and enhance communication among persons working on different elements. Through this step the program developer can assure that the program will, in fact, be a set of complementary activities rather than just a set of discrete elements under a common program label.

Identifying Key Events

It is very easy for a program developer to lose sight of the programmatic purpose after a program has been designed down to a relatively low level of detail. It is very tempting to become enmeshed in the minutia of the program, particularly when the program involves multiple strategies and numerous elements. However, once the details of the program have been developed, the program developer should make a conscious effort to step back and view the program as a whole. The process we suggest for this step is what we call "key event" analysis. In this step the program developer will attempt to identify these elements, activities or relationships which are particularly critical to the successful implementation of the program.

In theory, almost any part of a program could be a "key event." In addition, it may not always be possible to identify all of the key events in a program before the program gets underway. A large, complex program simply involves too many potential interactions, events and activities for the program developer to worry over them all. However, there are some events which are obviously and logically more important than others. This discussion will attempt to provide some guidelines for identifying them.

- One set of key events are important because they assure the integration of the different program elements. Elements or activities designed to head off potential conflicts, coordinate activities between elements or agencies or provide overall supervision of the program are, by their nature, almost always "key" to the success of the program.
- A second set of key events are important because they provide integration <u>within</u> an element. Those events, developed to avoid potential conflicts or coordinate activities within an element, are also important because they play a major role in assuring the successful implementation of that element.
- A third set of key events are those elements or activities designed to accommodate potential conflicts between the program and the rest of the

CJ system. These events are important because they provide the link between the system as it exists now, and the program. Given the potential for conflict and cross impact, these activities or events are critical to the success of the program.

- A final set of events are "key" because they implement or attempt to guarantee the assumptions the program developer made about why the strategy should work. For example, if the logic of a strategy assumes that neighborhood residents will accept and understand certain educational materials they are to be given to help them reduce their risk of becoming a crime victim, any and all activities or elements designed to enhance the acceptability and understanding of the material become "key events." Obviously, if a strategy rests on an assumption that is not met in the program implementation, success of the program is greatly reduced.

Using Key Events. The purpose of identifying key events is twofold in nature. First, key events serve as guides to implementors about those aspects of the program, or their part of the program, which the program developer considers critical to the success of the program. Thus, from the implementors' perspective they can help in the management of the program by indicating where the implementor should focus his or her attention.

The second function served by the key events is to help evaluators and monitors to identify where in the program they should be devoting most of their effort. By the same logic which guides the implementor, key events are the critical points which hold the program together and make it work. More will be said about the use of key events in subsequent parts of this chapter.

Communicating with Implementors

The model upon which this course is based anticipates that a given program may consist of a variety of elements. Some of these elements may involve direct action by persons in the planning agency, i.e., drafting or proposing legislation, providing assistance to operating agencies on changes in their internal procedures, or preparing materials for distribution to the public. Other elements may involve purely internal, no-cost changes in existing agencies, i.e., modifying report forms, reassigning personnel or orienting employees to the program. However, some elements will involve the establishment of entirely new activities requiring direct financial support from the planning agency or other sources. These are the type of activities which are most readily associated with new programs. And, because they entail the greatest amount of uncertainty and risk, these activities should receive the greatest amount of attention by the program developer.

If the program developer has been able to follow the suggestion of working closely with the persons and agencies

that are to implement these new activities in the design of the program plan, the communication "gap" between the developer and the implementor should be relatively narrow. If, however, the plan was designed with only minimum participation by the implementors, the developer has the burden to clearly communicate the intent and structure of the program plan.

There are several standard vehicles for communicating with potential implementors. They include:

- The "Request for Proposal" (RFP);
- The Program Announcements;
- The Program Description published in annual plans prepared by the planning agency;
- The General Announcements published in periodicals, journals and newsletters;
- The Bidder's Conference--a formal presentation to prospective bidders on the program;
- The Decision Package developed for policy-makers but often useful in communicating the overall intent of the program;
- Policy or Procedural Directives--internal documents which inform administrators and line staff of changes in the way an agency operates or the standards it must meet;
- Legislation--perhaps the most effective, and certainly the most authoritative way of establishing the scope and intent of a program.

These vehicles may be directed to the criminal justice system as a whole, to persons or agencies on a standard mailing list, or to selected persons or agencies with a particular interest in the program. How wide or how narrow the distribution should be will depend on the purposes to be achieved by the distribution. These purposes are relatively fixed:

- To publicize the existence of the program to relevant persons in the field
- To attract a range of informed candidates for program participation from which to choose
- To communicate what would be expected of a participant, and why
- To permit interested candidates to make an appropriate response to the announcement
- To inform persons in authority of what the program is and what they are expected to do.

Content. The information in the announcement or RFP should enable the potential implementor to answer the question, "Is this an effort my agency should undertake?" To do this the implementor should be provided with a clear description of:

- The Problem Analysis--What is known about the problem? What is suspected? How does the planning agency view the problem? What assumptions have the planners, analysts and program developers made and why is a program being developed to deal with the problem?

- Program Goals--What is the program trying to accomplish, not just in respect to the one part of the program of immediate interest to the potential implementor, but the overall goals of the program.
- Objectives--The potential implementor should know what his or her agency is expected to accomplish as well as the objectives of other agencies or persons with which he or she may have to cooperate.
- Activities--The potential implementor should know how the objectives are to be achieved. This includes both the content of the activities and the schedule that should be followed.
- Sites--The potential implementor should know where the work is to be done.
- Eligibility Requirements--This information might include the kinds of agencies that are eligible to bid as well as the necessary qualifications of the staff or the agency itself.
- Funding Levels--This may be the critical factor for many otherwise qualified agencies or persons. Without this information the agency may be unable to assess its ability to meet the other requirements.

The style of the announcement should be clear and unambiguous. If technical or specialized terms are used they

should be defined. If certain aspects of the program or project are not clearly or completely developed this should be made explicit. The content, format and style of the announcement should be such that the potential bidder knows (or can find out) exactly what the program developer wants and expects in the response.

Special Case: The Pilot Program. In the case of pilot programs or experimental projects, in which the details of the program have not been completely worked out, the potential implementor may be requested to provide the details about how he or she would approach a particular problem. The RFP or announcement may not provide all of the information suggested above or may only provide partial information on certain topics. Thus, the developer is requesting that bidders or potential implementors in effect design the project themselves. This may be a useful approach when the developer is seeking fresh ideas to be tested through the program.

Developing Special Conditions, Performance Standards and Limitations

The ability of the program developer and the planning agency to assure that the program plan is carried out as intended depends heavily on the special conditions, performance standards and other limitations built into the original design. As a practical matter no funding agency can dictate to an autonomous operating agency and no plan can be so detailed that certain alterations cannot be (and should not be) allowed.

Nevertheless, before a program is turned over to an implementor it is reasonable to specify certain expectations that should be met by the implementor as a condition of participation and funding.

General Performance Standards. These requirements cover such topics as hiring, allowable costs, reporting requirements, record-keeping, and facilities. The states and certain local planning units may impose additional requirements on grantees relating to those or other subjects. These provisions are usually standard and should not pose any serious constraint on recipients.

Special Conditions and Performance Standards. The program developer may wish to insert certain additional conditions or standards designed to assure the proper operation of the program. These additional requirements may be negotiated with the implementors or they may be a fixed condition of funding. If this is necessary these special conditions or standards should be specified when the program is announced so that potential implementors may consider them before deciding to bid.

Examples of special conditions or performance standards might be:

- That the implementor agrees to not deviate from the overall objectives of the program or project. For example, if the project is intended to provide crisis counseling to crime victims the

project should not be allowed to expend funds on marital counseling or job placement services.

- That the implementor agrees to provide services to a minimum number of clients. If a project is funded to provide job-training services to 400 newly-released offenders in a year the project should not be allowed to reduce the number or to "pad" their clientele with persons in other categories. Such a requirement might be particularly necessary if other projects must coordinate their activities with the project in question (i.e., job placement projects serving employer-clients with fixed manpower needs.
- That the implementor agrees to meet certain schedules or milestones. In a complex program where the activities of several projects must be coordinated and phased-in over time, the failure of one project to meet a milestone may affect several activities.
- That the implementor agrees to employ persons with certain minimum training or qualifications. If psychiatric services are needed in a prison program it may be permissible to substitute a psychologist or even a social worker. However, the substitution of an untrained counselor with a B.A. in Sociology may defeat the purpose of the project.

- That the implementor agrees to keep certain kinds of data and records for monitoring/evaluation.
- That the implementor agrees to certain limits on expenditures. If funds are limited it may be necessary to impose certain funding limits in order to support all of the needed activities.

The establishment of special conditions and performance standards, to repeat the general rule, should be limited to those aspects of a project or activity that are critical to the overall program. The developer can identify these critical aspects in the plan from the key events. If a key event in the strategy rationale requires that certain assumptions must be met for that element to work, the program developer should establish a special condition or performance standard in that area. The developer can use the key event analysis to identify where a special requirement should be imposed, and justify that requirement on the basis of the overall program logic and design.

Resolving Inconsistencies

It is unlikely that the implementors selected to participate in the program will propose a detailed plan exactly as it was originally designed. After implementors have been selected the program developer should begin a process of negotiation to resolve inconsistencies between the plan as designed and the program as proposed. The developer should resist changes in the plan which might jeopardize its overall

integrity or purpose. However, the developer may be forced to revise the final plan in order to accommodate limitations among the participants or unanticipated problems. If an agency must retrain its personnel in order to carry out its objectives the developer may be forced to delay the start-up of the program. If the developer has developed a detailed schedule in the earlier stages of the process these changes and their implications can be more readily made and accommodated.

Post-Selection Planning: Monitoring, Evaluation and Technical Assistance

The final post-selection activity for the program developer is the preparation for evaluation, management and technical assistance. There are limits to the amount of pre-implementation planning the program developer can carry out without running afoul of the prerogatives of agency managers and the inevitable, unanticipated problems of the real world. In this section of the discussion we will present certain measures the program developer can and should take to minimize the impact of these factors on the program.

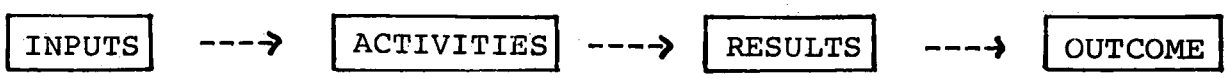
Planning for Evaluation and Monitoring. The planning of the program evaluation should begin very early in the program development process. One of the criteria for selecting an element should be the evaluability of the element. In addition, the identification of key events in the design and the setting of objectives should be made with an eye toward the eventual evaluation of the program.

Program versus Project Evaluation. The evaluation plan should distinguish between the evaluation of the program as a whole and the evaluation of the individual elements and activities within the program. The distinction is primarily one of focus. Individual parts of the program may work correctly but the overall program may still fail. The purpose of evaluating programs and elements is to determine whether or not the program or element met its goals and objectives and if not, to determine reasons why. However, the criteria for determining whether a program succeeded or failed are necessarily different and at a higher level of abstraction than those used to evaluate a particular element or activity. Program evaluation is focused on the strategic goals, objectives, and key events of the program as a whole. Project evaluation is focused on the objectives and key events within a particular element.

At both levels there are three primary types of evaluation:

- Monitoring
- Process evaluation
- Impact assessment

The distinction between the types of evaluation can be readily understood in reference to the MOR. The general form of the rationale is shown below.



When monitoring the evaluator focuses on the first two links, inputs and activities. The evaluator attempts to determine whether planned activities of the effort were carried out and whether the resources needed to support those activities were obtained. Monitoring is focused on questions of compliance and managerial adequacy.

A process evaluation extends the questions asked to a consideration of the first three elements, inputs, activities and results. In addition to asking if the planned activities were carried out and necessary resources were obtained, the evaluator also examines the results of those efforts. Thus, process evaluation attempts to determine the immediate efficiency and effectiveness of the effort.

Impact assessment examines all four of the rationale elements. In addition to the other questions the evaluator asks whether the effort met the goals for which it was implemented, i.e., did it attain the strategic goal?

The type of evaluation to be applied will depend on the degree of confidence the program developer and decision-makers have in the elements and links they have designed. If he or she is uncertain about the ability of an implementor to obtain the inputs and carry out the activities they will want to conduct a process evaluation. Finally if the primary concern is with the long-term outcome of the effort an impact assessment will be called for.

If the program rationale has been planned in detail the design of the evaluation, at whatever level, should be relatively simple. The aspects of the program that were the focus of the design effort, the key events, are also the aspects of the most concern to the evaluator. Just as the program developer put the greatest effort into designing the details of the key events, the evaluator will make the greatest effort to examine those events during implementation. The program developer and the evaluator are motivated to look most closely at the same aspects of the program for the same reasons:

- Uncertainty about the ultimate success of a given element, and
- An awareness that the key event is critical to overall success of the program.

The criteria for evaluating a program or project are also closely tied to the design considerations that go into the strategy rationale. That is, the criteria will evolve as the developer identifies the critical performance specifications demanded of the individual projects and activities. If a given project must provide crisis intervention training to 200 police officers during a year in order for the project to meet its objective, that specification will become a criterion for evaluating the project. At the program level, if a strategic goal of the program is to increase the number of persons who shop downtown the evaluator will focus his or her attention on monitoring changes in that measure while attempting

to determine how much the program's elements contributed to those changes.

The concerns and needs of the evaluator will have an impact on the design of the program from the beginning. If the evaluator is to appraise the effectiveness and impact of a program, baseline data on the problem and its components must be collected before the program is implemented. After implementation the evaluation may also require the implementors to keep certain kinds of data and records. Finally, the evaluation schedule will have an impact on the design insofar as the evaluator anticipates periods of intensive on-site observation and data collection. This may be coupled with the scheduling of critical decision-points in the program. The decision-points are intended to provide the implementor with an opportunity to revise or redirect his or her activities on the basis of interim evaluation findings. In the case of experimental or pilot programs, where the level of uncertainty is high about all phases and aspects of the effort, the evaluation may be a critical element in the plan.

Planning for Program Management. Information generated by the evaluation will be a primary input to the management of the program and the individual elements under a program. The monitoring function will serve as a key management device for the funding agency and the manager of individual projects. The information generated through evaluation can guide decision-makers on whether to expand, reduce or continue the program

or its individual elements. This information can also be used by implementors in the management of their specific elements or activities. It can

- Identify critical problems arising in the operation of the project
  - Personnel shortages
  - Schedule delays
  - Budgeting problems
- Identify critical problems in the general design of the project
  - The effectiveness of certain procedures or techniques
  - Gaps or inconsistencies in the procedures or techniques
- Identify unanticipated or extraneous factors
  - Service demand levels higher or lower than anticipated
  - Unanticipated events or crises outside the program

The program developer can also build into the design of the program certain features which will ease the management load on individual managers and provide internal self-correcting devices to coordinate the overall program effort.

- The program developer can identify specific areas in the program where managerial attention should be focused. If the developer knows that one part of the design may present a particular problem to implementors, on the basis of the experience of other, similar projects, he or she can identify these to the implementor. Indeed, the developer could require the implementor to address these issues in the management plan or make provisions for the problem in the design of the project.
- The program developer can identify areas that require constant monitoring by the implementor. If some aspect of the project is highly uncertain or is subject to rapid changes the developer can advise the implementor to give particular attention to that feature. The developer could also require the implementor to build in "self-correcting information feedback systems" so that changes in the way the project is operating are immediately "flagged" and corrective measures can be taken.
- The developer can build-in certain coordination mechanisms between projects

and activities. In large and complex programs, with many interlocking or interdependent projects and activities; it may be necessary to create mechanisms to coordinate and correct the program as it operates. The developer could establish a standing committee of representatives from each of the parts of the program. This committee could serve as an overall management board to make adjustments, resolve conflicts, or improve communications within the program. Similarly, the developer could design in specific communication links between projects.

In short, the experience and knowledge gained by the developer during the design process can be useful to implementors after the program is underway. To the extent that the developer can influence the way the program is managed, the developer can also institute specific mechanisms in the program design to smooth the path for managers.

Planning for Technical Assistance. The last aspect of the program developer's post-selection role relates to the provision of technical assistance to implementors. If the developer has taken the process through the steps suggested and outlined here, he or she should have as much or more knowledge about the program as any implementor. It follows that the developer can be a major resource to implementors as an advisor and consultant. The developer is also in an

excellent position to anticipate when and where implementors may need specialized assistance. Thus, the developer can begin to assemble the technical assistance resources of the planning agency and advertise its availability to implementors. Finally, when possible, the developer can make the provision of technical assistance a fixed point of the overall program design.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter we brought the program development process up to the point where the program can and will be implemented. The steps we took in this chapter were intended to insure that the program will operate as intended when it is implemented and to build in a variety of mechanisms and safeguards to head off major problems while they are still at a manageable level. We discussed the necessity of stepping back from the details of the program elements and viewing the program, once again, as a whole. We discussed the need to integrate the different elements of the program by creating coordinating linkages, a sharing or collapsing of responsibilities and the identification of areas where conflicts might arise. We discussed the concept of the key event and how it can be used to both manage and evaluate a program. Finally we discussed the problem of communicating with implementors, the different methods that could be utilized and the content of the communications. Within this context, we discussed concrete steps the program developer can take to smooth the path of potential

implementors including guidelines, requirements and the provision of technical assistance and evaluation feedback.

Course Summary: An Overview of the Program Development Process

Having reached this point in the discussion of program development it may be instructive to trace our steps through the process and see how we got here. At the beginning of the process we were confronted with a problem. What we knew of the problem was contained in a document which we called a Problem Statement. Before we could proceed any further we needed to know two things. We needed to know if that document and the information it contained was technically adequate by the standards of criminal justice planning, research and analysis. We also needed to know if the information in the Problem Statement was adequate on a conceptual level; that is, did the Problem Statement adequately describe and explain the problem so that we could make sensible decisions and judgments about it. We explored a variety of ways of looking at the conceptual adequacy of the Problem Statement, including the development of a conceptual model which attempted to tie the important aspects of the problem together into a coherent and unified whole.

This initial examination of the problem was narrowly focused on a single problem. The next step was to look at the problem as one of a set of competing problems and to set priorities among them. We discussed several ways of looking at problems and setting priorities ranging from the difficulty

of defining the relative importance of a problem to the practical influence of politics and public opinion on the program developer's role.

Based on our understanding of the problem we tackled the difficult process of developing a set of strategic goals--the end points toward which the program would be aimed. We explored the different functions of strategic goals and the different ways in which these goals could be identified, selected and drafted. At this point we had formulated the boundaries of the program. On the one side was the problem--where we were--and on the other side were the goals--where we wanted to go. The rest of the process was aimed at closing the distance in between.

The next step was to formulate strategies. We drew on a variety of information sources, including our understanding of how the problem works, to identify a range of possible strategies. We then took each strategy apart and examined the assumptions they embodied. Out of this assessment of the logic of the strategies we eliminated some and pointed out the strengths and logical weaknesses of the rest. Eventually we settled on those strategies that gave us the best chance of reaching our goals.

From this point on the process almost drove itself. We were now concerned with details: who should do what, when and for how long? How much will this cost? What conflicts and inconsistencies should be avoided or resolved? What can we reasonably expect to accomplish? We resolved these questions

at the level of the program element--the building blocks out of which the program is to be constructed. Finally we stepped back from the details and view the program as a whole one last time. From this perspective we saw areas where the different elements should be integrated. We identified the key events within and between the elements and planned for the eventual implementation and evaluation of the program.

Of course, program development will not end here. Ahead of us lie decisions about managing and refining the program in operation. Eventually we will make further decisions about continuing, revising or ending the program. Throughout this later process we may come to question some of the decisions we made earlier and perhaps reformulate our ideas about the problem itself.

Program development, as described here is a process of successive exploration, analysis, refinement and selection. We have described it as a linear process, whereas, in reality the steps often double back on each other or occur together in fits and starts. In places the process relies as much on intuition, artistry and sheer gall as it does on analysis and professional judgment. The political skills involved in the process have been hardly covered, but they are as important as the ability to construct a conceptual model or put together a PERT chart.

In many respects the process described here is extremely idealistic in relation to the realities of planning and

analysis in criminal justice. However, like all ideals, we believe the process can help the practitioner in the trenches avoid becoming totally overwhelmed by the competing pressures of time and politics. If that much is accomplished we may have made some headway in the quality of the programs we develop.