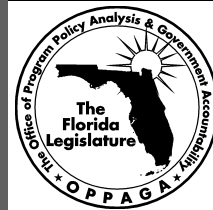




Office of Program Policy Analysis And Government Accountability



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Review of the Performance of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's Information Program

Abstract

- Use of the Criminal Justice Information Program's services and technology increased substantially during Fiscal Year 1996-97.
- However, the 1996-97 performance-based program budgeting measures provide inadequate information for evaluating the quality of the Program's services and technology.
- The Legislature should modify the 1998-99 performance measures to better assess the Program's performance.
- The Department should improve its methodology for developing standards that better reflect the impact of technological change.

Purpose

Chapter 94-249, Laws of Florida, directs state agencies to prepare performance-based program budgeting measures in consultation with the Governor's Office of Planning and Budgeting, staff from the appropriate legislative committees, and the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA). State agencies are then required to submit a performance-based program budget request, with performance measures and standards, to the Legislature for approval. The Legislature includes the performance measures and standards it has approved in the annual General Appropriations Act.

State agencies must report annually on performance against these standards to the Governor and the Legislature in subsequent legislative budget requests. The Legislature considers this information in making funding decisions. The Legislature can also award incentives and disincentives for program performance that exceeds or fails to meet the established standards.

Section 11.513, F.S., directs OPPAGA to complete a program evaluation and justification review of each state agency program operating under a performance-based program budget. The Legislature authorized the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's Criminal Justice Information Program to operate under a performance-based budget in Fiscal Year 1996-97.

This is the first of two reports presenting the results of our program evaluation and justification review of the Department of Law Enforcement's Criminal Justice Information Program. In this review, we examined the Program's performance compared to the standards for Fiscal Year 1996-97 and options for improving the Program's measures and standards for Fiscal Year 1998-99. Our second report, addressing Program performance and policy alternatives for reducing costs and improving services, will be published before July 1, 1998.

Background

The purpose of the Criminal Justice Information Program is to provide criminal justice data and information services to criminal justice and law enforcement agencies. The Program operates a telecommunications network, known as the Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC), to provide agency-to-agency communication and access to computerized criminal justice information. For example,

FCIC provides information to help law enforcement officers identify and apprehend criminals and recover stolen property. For this reason, Florida's law enforcement community depends on the Program to ensure that data are accurate, timely and accessible.

The Program's three main service areas are:

- **Central Records Services** which includes the maintenance of criminal history records, such as Florida Crime Information Center hot files¹, Computerized Criminal History files, juvenile criminal history records, and fingerprint images; and a Help Desk to provide customer support;
- **Information Network Services** which provides criminal justice agency customers with hardware, software programming, and communications technology necessary to maintain and share criminal justice information; and
- **Identification Screening and Statistical Analysis Services** which provides criminal identification and screening to criminal justice and non-criminal justice agencies and private citizens to identify persons with criminal warrants, arrests and convictions, and publishes the annual Uniform Crime Report, which contains statistical and analytical information about crime trends.

The Criminal Justice Information Program, one of the Department's three performance-based budgeting programs, represents 25% of the Department's total budget. In Fiscal Year 1996-97, the Program was authorized 362 positions and appropriated \$29.7 million.

Findings

Using the 1996-97 performance-based budgeting measures and standards, what can be concluded about the Program's performance?

The use of the Criminal Justice Information Program's services and technology increased from Fiscal Year 1995-96 to 1996-97.² That is, the **quantity** of most Program outputs increased. However, the Fiscal Year

¹ FCIC "Hot files" system provides information on wanted and missing persons, stolen vehicles, and other stolen property. This information is entered and removed by local law enforcement agencies, not by FDLE.

² Fiscal Year 1996-97 measures are the Program's first set of performance-based measures and Fiscal Year 1996-97 is the only year for which there is complete data for these measures.

1996-97 measures provide inadequate information to assess the **quality** of these services.

Use of the Program's information services by local law enforcement and other customers increased from Fiscal Years 1995-96 to 1996-97. For example, the number of data transactions on the Florida Crime Information Center network increased 28% from Fiscal Years 1995-96 to 1996-97 (see Exhibit 1). Requests for record checks and crime statistics also increased. For example, the number of requests for crime statistics almost doubled from Fiscal Year 1995-96 to 1996-97. The Program responded to these requests with no additional staff, reflecting the Program's increased efficiency.

The overall increase in Program services (outputs) can be attributed, in part, to better staff performance and enhancement of Program technology. However, to a large extent, these outputs are demand-driven and influenced by factors other than the Program's performance. For example, *the number of records maintained* measures the number of records in the Department's database, but changes in this number are primarily a function of the arrest activities of local law enforcement. Similarly, *the number of responses to requests for record checks* is driven by the number of people purchasing firearms or applying for licenses or sensitive employment. As a result, these measures are not very meaningful for assessing the Department's performance.

Despite these limitations, output measures play an important role in the legislative budgeting process. The number of record checks may not measure the quality or impact of Department performance, but this information does allow policy makers to track the workload of the Program over time. Output measures are also helpful for developing unit cost information.

The usefulness of the Criminal Justice Information Program's Fiscal Year 1996-97 outcome measures for measuring the quality of the Program's technology and services is limited. Three of the Program's performance measures are designed to provide information on the quality of Program performance. These outcome measures address timeliness, accessibility, and data accuracy, all of which are critical to the usefulness of criminal justice information. However, each of these measures has limitations (see Exhibit 1). Given these limitations, the quality of the Program's services cannot be sufficiently gauged.

Exhibit 1
Use of FDLE's Data, Technology and Information Services Increased
From Fiscal Year 1995-96 to 1996-97¹

Fiscal Year 1996-97 Measures	Fiscal Year		GAA Standard 1996-97	Comments
	1995-96	1996-97		
OUTPUTS:				
Number of agencies/workstations networked	686 / 9,380	725 / 10,111	700 / 11,500	Data reflect increased demand for and access to computerized crime data and improvements to Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC) technology. Did not meet standard because Department has reduced local law enforcement access to network until the new message switch is installed in 1998.
Number of data transactions	292,344,911	373,121,545	300,000,000	Data reflect increased use of the FCIC system by local law enforcement and improvements to FCIC technology.
Number of records maintained	5,225,132	5,643,360	5,756,765	Data reflect increased use of FCIC system by local law enforcement, arrest levels, and file updating by FDLE and local law enforcement. Did not meet standard because the Department deleted more poor quality fingerprint records than estimated.
Number of responses to requests for crime statistics	3,356	6,383	3,030	Data reflect increased demand for Uniform Crime Report statistics and FDLE workload. The Department began measuring web site visits in Fiscal Year 1996-97. As a result, the increase may be attributed, in part, to changes in how data were collected.
Number of responses to requests for record checks	1,147,912	1,334,770	1,238,690	Data reflect work by Program staff to respond to increased requests for FDLE's record check services.
OUTCOMES:				
Percent of responses to customer within defined timeframe (FCIC customer - 3 second timeframe)	95.3%	94%	98%	Data reflect performance of FCIC message switch based on a sample of simulated queries, not response time to actual customers. Did not meet standard due to failure of the current message switch.
Percent of time computer systems are running and accessible	99.9%	99%	99%	Data reflect performance of FCIC message switch. Percentages cannot be compared due to inconsistent rounding methods. Small changes in the measure can be significant; one percentage point represents 88 hours of downtime.
Percent of times crime data from FDLE was deemed accurate	88.6%	92%	95%	Data reflect accuracy of computerized crime data (FCIC hot file data) entered and updated by local law enforcement, not FDLE. Measure has been discontinued because the Department determined that the accuracy of the hot file data was not within its control.
Number / % of criminals identified during record checks for sensitive employment, licensing or gun purchase	136,355 / 12%*	152,599 / 11%*	168,189 / 13%	Data reflect how many criminals are in the population screened. Number/percentage is not determined by Department performance. Data for Fiscal Years 1995-96 and 1996-97 based on estimates. A law requiring "grandfathered" certified school personnel to have record checks resulted in a lower percentage.

*Department estimate

¹Adequate documentation for Fiscal Year 1994-95 data was not available.

Source: 1996-97 General Appropriations Act and 1996-97, 1997-98, and 1998-99 Legislative Budget Requests

For Fiscal Year 1996-97, the Department did not have adequate procedures in place for data collection and reporting. The Department's Inspector General identified a number of deficiencies associated with the collection of Fiscal Year 1996-97 performance measure data. For example, the Department had no quality control process in place to verify the accuracy of data Program staff collected and compiled. In addition, the Department did not have a formal process for aggregating Program data to report to the Legislature. Lack of formal procedures for compiling and verifying data may lead to errors that reduce data reliability.

We identified other problems with Program data, including inconsistent methods of rounding and reporting data. These data reporting and reliability concerns limit the conclusions we can make about the Program's Fiscal Year 1996-97 performance and limit the Legislature's ability to compare performance data across fiscal years (see Exhibit 1).

What improvements can be made to the Program's performance-based program budgeting measures and standards for Fiscal Year 1998-99?

The Program's performance-based program budgeting measures have improved over time. In Fiscal Year 1997-98 the Legislature added more appropriate and useful measures for data quality and timeliness, as well as a number of customer satisfaction measures. For example, the measure for the timeliness of responses to requests for record checks relates directly to the efficiency of Program procedures and the performance of Program staff and management. The Legislature also clarified the meaning of several Fiscal Year 1997-98 measures (see Exhibit 2).

In general, the Fiscal Year 1998-99 measures provide better information on Program performance than the measures for the previous fiscal years. For example, the Program has proposed a new measure for the number of missing children found through the Department's Missing Children's Information Clearinghouse. This measure directly relates to the Program's impact on public safety.

The measures for Fiscal Year 1998-99 can be further improved. A number of measures should be modified to clarify their meaning and improve their usefulness for assessing the performance of the Program. In addition, the Department should develop unit cost measures for the Program's key activities. Exhibit 3 describes our recommendations for making these improvements. Also, there is no measure for an important Program function—technical assistance and customer support. While there are a number of general customer

satisfaction measures related to the usefulness of crime data provided by the Program, there is no measure to assess the quality of the services and technical assistance provided to customers through the Program's Help Desk.

The Department has requested several realistic, yet ambitious, standards. However, we recommend that some standards be adjusted to better reflect the impact of external and internal factors (see Exhibit 4).

The Department has requested appropriately ambitious standards for Program measures related to customer satisfaction, response timeliness, and accessibility to the Florida Crime Information Center network. The Department has also raised its requested standard for *the percentage of felony criminal history records with complete disposition data* from 65% to 77%. In Fiscal Year 1996-97, the percentage of felony records with complete disposition data was 64%, and it has increased only slightly since then. Given this starting point, a standard of 77% is an ambitious goal. Standards related to the quality of criminal justice data, however, should be ambitious because law enforcement agencies make decisions based on this information that have a direct impact on public safety.

The requested standard for data accuracy is not based on reliable baseline data. The Department has requested a standard of 80% for *the percentage of criminal history data on file compiled accurately*. While there is no reliable baseline for the accuracy of criminal history data, the Department estimates the accuracy rate to be 77%. The Department plans to contract with consultants to perform an audit of criminal history data. Until these data have been audited, there is no basis to determine if the requested standard for data accuracy is realistic or appropriate. Given how crucial accuracy is to the usefulness of criminal history data, the standard should be based on sound, reliable data and set as ambitiously as possible.

Some standards may not adequately reflect the impact of technological change. The level at which some standards are set may not adequately take into account the impact of technological changes. Access to information on the Department's web site, for example, has dramatically increased the number of requests for crime statistics. As a result, the standard for this measure for Fiscal Year 1997-98 was exceeded in the first six months of that year (see Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 2
The Performance-Based Program Budgeting Measures Have Been Refined
to Provide More Useful Information on Program Activities

1996-97 Measures	1997-98 Measures	1998-99 Measures Proposed by FDLE
Number of agencies/workstations networked	Modified: Number of agencies/Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC) workstations networked	Continue
Number of data transactions	Modified: Number of FCIC data transactions	Continue
Number of records maintained	Modified: Number of hot files, Computerized Criminal History (CCH), and Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) records maintained	Continue
Number of responses to requests for crime statistics	Continued	Modify: Number of requests for crime statistics
Number of responses to requests for record checks	Modified: Number of responses to requests for criminal history record checks	Continue
	New: Number of counties on-line with AFIS Livescan	Modify: Number of counties/agencies on-line with AFIS Livescan
Percent response to customer within defined timeframe	Modified: Percentage of on-line responses to FCIC customer within defined timeframe (3 seconds)	Continue
	Modified: Percentage response to criminal history record check customers within defined timeframes	Continue
Percent of time computer systems are running and accessible	Modified: Percentage of time FCIC is running and accessible	Continue
Percent of times crime data from FDLE was deemed accurate (accuracy of FCIC hot files)	New: Percentage of criminal history data on file compiled accurately (accuracy of CCH files)	Continue
Number/percent of criminals identified during record checks for sensitive employment, licensing, or gun purchase	Modified: Number/percentage of criminals identified during criminal history record checks for sensitive employment, licensing or gun purchase	Continue
	New: Percentage of time felony criminal history records were deemed complete	Modify: Percentage of felony criminal history records with complete disposition data
	New: Percentage of customers satisfied with on-line crime data provided by the FCIC	Continue
	New: Percentage of customers satisfied with available crime statistics	Continue
	New: Percentage of customers satisfied with criminal history record check services	Continue
	New: Average turnaround time for AFIS Livescan	Continue
		Proposed: Number of Missing Children cases worked through Missing Children Information Clearinghouse (MCIC)*
		Proposed: Number of registered sexual predators / offenders identified to the public
		Proposed: Number of responses to requests for sexual predator/offender information
		Proposed: Number of missing children found through MCIC*

*Measures related to the Missing Children Information Clearinghouse (MCIC) were under the Investigations/Protection PB² Program in Fiscal Year 1997-98 and were transferred to the Information Program in Fiscal Year 1998-99.

Source: 1996-97 and 1997-98 General Appropriations Act and 1998-99 Legislative Budget Request

Exhibit 3
OPPAGA Recommendations to Improve the Proposed 1998-99 Performance-Based Program
Budgeting Measures for the Information Program

Output Measures	Comments	OPPAGA Recommendations
Number of Missing Children cases worked through Missing Children Information Clearinghouse (MCIC)	This is an appropriate measure of Program staff's workload.	None
Number of agencies/ Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC) workstations networked	This is an appropriate measure to show the number of agencies/workstations that have access to FCIC. Increases in this number reflect enhancements to the technical capacity of the FCIC message switch, but the measure does not show how well FDLE is meeting the demand for access to FCIC.	Add outcome measure to assess the extent to which FDLE meets requests by criminal justice agencies for network access to FCIC
Number of FCIC data transactions	This is an informational measure. While it is an indicator of the volume of transactions the FCIC system can handle, it is driven primarily by local law enforcement's use of the system.	None
Number of hot files, Computerized Criminal History (CCH), and Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) records maintained	This is an informational measure. The number is influenced primarily by local law enforcement activity, rather than Program performance.	Delete
Number of requests for crime statistics	This is a measure of the demand for Uniform Crime Report (UCR) information and a workload indicator for Program staff who respond to the requests.	None
Number of responses to requests for criminal history record checks	This is an appropriate measure of Program staff's workload.	Add unit cost measure to identify the cost per response
Number of registered sexual predators / offenders identified to the public	This is an informational measure. It is influenced primarily by factors outside the Program's control, but it is also an indicator of Program workload. The meaning of measure should be clarified.	Change to <i>Number of sexual predators / offenders identified on the Department's web site</i>
Number of responses to requests for sexual predator/offender information	This measure is primarily driven by the public's demand for information, which is influenced by media events, and visits to the Department website. It is also an indicator of Program staff's workload.	None
Number of counties/agencies on-line with AFIS Livescan	Agencies with AFIS Livescan equipment may be "on-line" but not "fully operational."	Change to <i>Number of counties /agencies fully operational with AFIS Livescan</i>
Outcome Measures	Comments	OPPAGA Recommendations
Percentage of on-line responses to FCIC customer within defined timeframe (3 seconds)	The wording for this measure is somewhat misleading. It is a measure of the performance of the FCIC message switch, not the response time to actual customers.	Change wording to show <i>% of responses to simulated FCIC queries within defined timeframe</i>
Percentage of responses to criminal history record check to customers within defined timeframes	This is an appropriate measure of the timeliness of the criminal record checking process.	None
Percentage of time FCIC is running and accessible	The FCIC system is in operation 24-hours a day. Differences in performance of one percentage point can mean 88 hours of down time. Actual hours of system downtime is a more meaningful way of reporting this data.	Include number of hours the system is down as well as percentage of time system is running and accessible
Percentage of criminal history data on file compiled accurately	The Department is in the process of contracting for an audit of the data to assess its accuracy. This audit will provide information necessary to assess the appropriateness of this measure.	Audit criminal history data as soon as possible
Number/ percent of criminals identified during criminal history record checks for sensitive employment, licensing or gun purchase	The measure shows how many individuals with felony records are trying to purchase firearms, and how many with criminal records are applying for sensitive employment and licenses. Results for this measure are not within the Department's control, so it is not a useful performance measure.	Use measure for informational purposes only
Percentage of customers satisfied with on-line crime data provided by FCIC	This is an appropriate measure of customer satisfaction.	None
Percentage of customers satisfied with available crimes statistics	This is an appropriate measure of customer satisfaction.	None
Percentage of customers satisfied with criminal history record check service	This is an appropriate measure of customer satisfaction.	None
Average turnaround time for AFIS Livescan	This is an appropriate measure of the response time of the new AFIS technology, but until AFIS Livescan is widely implemented, the turnaround time may be based on relatively few fingerprint transactions.	Show number of fingerprint transactions upon which turnaround is based
Number/percentage of missing children found through MCIC	This is an appropriate measure of impact of MCIC.	None
Percentage of felony criminal history records with complete disposition data.	This is an appropriate measure of the completeness of criminal history records.	None

Source: Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, interviews with FDLE staff, and 1998-99 Legislative Budget Request

The demand for network access to the Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC) system has also been affected by changes in information technology. Mobile digital technology will enable law enforcement agencies to equip every patrol car with computers capable of network access to the Florida Crime Information Center system. As more agencies move towards this new technology, the demand for network access will increase dramatically. With installation of a new message switch scheduled for mid-1998, the Florida Crime Information Center system's network capacity will no longer be limited. While the requested Fiscal Year 1998-99 standard for *number of FCIC agencies/workstations networked* has been increased, it may not reflect the increased demand for access resulting from the advent of the new mobile terminal technology. In Exhibit 4, we recommend that the Legislature consider raising the standards for three output measures that are impacted by changes in information technology.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Local law enforcement's use of the Criminal Justice Information Program's services and technology increased substantially from Fiscal Year 1995-96 to 1996-97. The Fiscal Year 1996-97 measures, however, provide limited information about the quality of the Program's services and technology.

The Legislature has improved the Fiscal Year 1997-98 and 1998-99 measures to address the shortcomings of the Fiscal Year 1996-97 measures. For example, the Legislature added measures that better assess the quality of the Program's services, such as data accuracy and customer satisfaction measures.

We provide a number of recommendations for further improving the Fiscal Year 1998-99 measures. We recommend that the Legislature clarify the meaning of several measures and further improve the Program's outcome measures, especially those related to data quality, timeliness and accessibility. As we recommended in OPPAGA Report 96-47, *Status Report on FDLE's Initial Efforts in Performance-based Program Budgeting*, the Department should develop unit cost measures for Fiscal Year 1998-99. Unit cost measures would enable the Legislature to determine the efficiency with which the Department performs its basic functions. These and other recommendations are described in Exhibit 3.

We also recommend that the Department improve its methodology for developing standards by incorporating the impact of technological changes. The Department should also ensure that reliable baseline data are used to develop standards, particularly the standard for the accuracy of criminal history data. These and other recommendations are described in Exhibit 4.

Agency Response

The Executive Director of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement agreed with our recommendations and described actions the Department is taking to address our concerns. A copy of his full response is available upon request.

Exhibit 4
The Legislature Should Consider Adjusting Some of the Proposed
1998-99 Performance Standards

Output Measures	1998-99 Standard	OPPAGA Comments and Recommendations
Number of Missing Children cases worked through Missing Children Information Clearinghouse (MCIC)*	561	Increase standard. Requested standard is the same as actual Fiscal Year 1996-97 performance and does not reflect expected increases in cases for Fiscal Years 1997-98 and 1998-99.
Number of agencies/ Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC) workstations networked	800 / 13,000	Increase standard to reflect technological changes (new message switch, mobile digital technology).
Number of FCIC data transactions	400 million	Increase standard to reflect technological changes (new message switch, mobile digital technology).
Number of hot files, Computerized Criminal History (CCH), and Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) records maintained	6.22 million	Reasonable standard, but measure reflects arrest activities of local law enforcement, rather than Program performance.
Number of requests for crime statistics	7,725	Increase standard to adequately account for requests made through the Department's web site. Performance on this measure for the first six months of Fiscal Year 1997-98 was 14,485.
Number of responses to requests for criminal history record checks	1,708,486	None
Number of registered sexual predators / offenders identified to the public	21,608	Decrease standard to exclude offenders still incarcerated at the end of Fiscal Year 1998-99. FDLE is required to identify all sexual offenders / predators within 60 days of their release from prison, not offenders / predators still incarcerated.
Number of responses to requests for sexual predator/offender information	76,627	None
Number of counties/agencies on-line with AFIS Livescan	40	Reasonable standard; 40 counties represent 98% of fingerprint submissions.
Outcome Measures	1998-99 Standard	OPPAGA Comments and Recommendations
Percentage of on-line responses to FCIC customer within defined timeframe (3 seconds)	96%	None
Percentage of responses to criminal history record check to customers within defined timeframes	90%	None
Percentage of time FCIC is running and accessible	99%	None
Percentage of criminal history data on file compiled accurately (CCH files)	80%	Until accurate baseline data is available, the appropriateness of the standard cannot be determined.
Number/ percent of criminals identified during criminal history record checks for sensitive employment, licensing, or gun purchase	205,018 / 12%	Reasonable standard, but standard reflects #/% of criminals in population screened, not the Program's performance. External factors may change #/% up or down.
Percentage of customers satisfied with on-line crime data provided by FCIC	98%	None
Percentage of customers satisfied with available crimes statistics	97%	None
Percentage of customers satisfied with criminal history record check service	94%	None
Average turnaround time for AFIS Livescan	10 minutes	None
Number of missing children found through MCIC*	40	Adjust standard to reflect the expected increase in the number of MCIC cases worked.
Percentage of felony criminal history records with complete disposition data	77%	None

*Measures related to the Missing Children Information Clearinghouse (MCIC) were under the Investigations/Protection PB² Program in Fiscal Year 1997-98 and were transferred to the Information Program in Fiscal Year 1998-99.

Source: Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, interviews with FDLE staff, and 1998-99 Legislative Budget Request

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