

Police – Research Partnerships: The Wherefore and Why

**Tim Bynum
School of Criminal Justice
Michigan State University**

Background

- Roots of these Partnerships in “Action Research” – Kurt Lewin (1946)
- Key Principle – Learning by Doing
- Steps in Action Research Process – Plan, Action, Observe, Reflect
- Similar to POP/SARA model – Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment

Action Research Model

- Active, ongoing partnership between researchers and practitioner agencies
- Use research process to help solve local problems
 - Data collection to identify and understand problems
 - Strategic analysis to develop targeted interventions
 - Program monitoring and feedback for refinement
 - Assessment of impact

DOJ Sponsored Research Partnerships

- Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI) – 1998 – 12 sites
- Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) – 2001 national implementation 94 federal districts
- Comprehensive Anti-Gang Initiative (CAGI)- 12 sites – 2006
- Smart Policing/ Intelligence led Policing - 30 sites - 2010

Data-Driven Problem Analysis

- Gather data on the selected crime problem, including its sources, victims, offenders, and settings
- Analyze the data to identify specific aspects and components of the problem

Why have a Research Partner on Project Team

- Different Perspectives likely to improve process and outcome
- Brings together different skill sets to address the problem
- Researchers have knowledge of what has been successful in other jurisdictions from prior evaluations and problem analysis skills
- Practitioners have experiential knowledge about program feasibility/implementation issues

Focused Interventions and Linking to Evidence-Based Practice

Including a Research Partner facilitates:

- Developing *focused interventions* aimed at reducing the specific sources and components of the crime problem
- *Implementing* and *Monitoring* these focused intervention strategies utilizing the resources and expertise of the working group partners
- Basing interventions on “*best*” / “evidence based” practices and “*promising*” strategies ₇

Monitoring, Feedback, and Evaluation

- Monitor the implementation of the interventions
- Provide constant assessment and feedback on the conduct and effects of the interventions
- Modify and refine the interventions based on feedback assessments
- Evaluate the impacts of the interventions on the service delivery system and on the targeted crime problem

Expectations of the Researcher

- Listen first, then talk
 - Especially when the partnership is starting
 - Know his/her role
 - Listen and value
- Start where you the practitioners are, not where she/he the academics are
 - Problem solving as a group may be new
 - Usefulness to all involved

Expectations of the Researcher

- Help practitioners stop and think
 - Ready, fire, aim
 - Dealing with problems instead of responding to incidents
 - Validate and explain new ideas
- Understand the data phobia
 - Awareness of experience history

Expectations of the Researcher

- Stay focused on the bottom line
 - Outcomes v. Outputs
- Think big, but also think small
 - Interim goals
 - Implementation Issues – what is actually done

Expectations of the Researcher

- Put something good in your hands
 - Timely research findings
 - Audience
 - Brief from the bottom up
- Find a buddy
 - Informal and candid
 - Transparency in process and review

Expectations of the Researcher

- Think about how to put herself/himself out of business

Expectations of the Agency

- Be active participants
- Make decisions informed by data
- Work together in true collaboration
- Educate and be an advocate for your department
- Include the RP in meetings, full member of the project team

Expectations of the Agency

- Bring department concerns and perspectives to the team
- Share data and information
- Listen, respond, be flexible and creative

ALWAYS

- If researcher cannot be trusted, send them home
 - Risk is huge for practitioners
 - Credit where credit is due
 - Who is doing the real work?
- Guide your efforts, do not direct them
 - Provide patterns and how they were derived
 - Data analysis “coach”