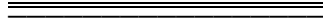
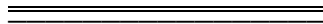


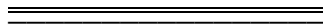
**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**



Needs Assessments in Designing a New Police Building



**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
Leadership Command College**



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ABSTRACT

The issues confronting law enforcement executives assessing needs for a new police facility should be considered within a clearly constructed, professionally developed framework and this research attempts to provide guidance on how that assessment should occur. The issues are complex, the task one that an executive may face only once during a career, and a failure to make the correct assessments prior to design and construction may be felt within the agency for decades.

In this research the author has reviewed existing books and periodicals and surveyed a diverse group of mid-level to upper-level police managers, inquiring as to the successes and failures of these managers in similar projects. The literature covers a wide range of considerations and methods for obtaining the best description of the actual needs of the agency at an early date in the process. There is, however, a common thread of approach throughout each of the researcher's articles. In reviewing survey results, a similar theme makes itself apparent when the facility users report their assessment of the level of success of their own projects.

The clear result of the research is that a failure to identify the experience of agency employees and include this information within the original basic needs assessment will likely compromise the development of a comprehensive design solution and ultimately produce a facility less effective than could have otherwise been the case.

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INTRODUCTION

In order to assure the availability of funds for facility renovation or new construction the police organizations of this country are frequently called upon to forecast their requirements well into the future. This forecasting process may require decisions involving disciplines where traditional police training contributes very little. As a result, the methods used in forecasting future requirements may not measure up to any acceptable level of professional standards. There are few places where this becomes more evident than in establishing future departmental requirements for the design of a new police building.

Police building requirements should be identified by a process more substantial and defined than an executive's personal preference or an educated best-guess estimate. Therein lays the purpose of this research, to facilitate support for a process of accurately programming a police department's new building design process. The research will address the question which considers what should be taken into account for developing an acceptable police building design.

In addressing this question, the research process will be three fold. First, an examination will be conducted of books describing previous instances of successful and unsuccessful programming techniques. Second, a search of the police orientated publications for articles describing relevant construction experiences will reveal previously utilized assessment strategies. Third, a survey will be conducted of police departments which have built new headquarters in the recent past. The surveys will be directed to agencies employing between 50 and 250 officers, thus allowing a broad base of construction experiences on projects of varying sizes.

The researcher anticipates that a commonality of elements will be identified among the agencies who consider their completed facilities to be a successful design. A similar

commonality is expected to be evident in the agencies the feel their results were less than satisfactory. It is also anticipated that the inclusion of the broadest possible spectrum of employee input will facilitate the most acceptable completed facility. A heavy reliance on employee experience is expected to provide a significant contribution to success. Employee participation will result in an atmosphere of ownership not achievable by any other means. Thus, by embracing the successful techniques and avoiding the failures an agency may establish a formal and repeatable assessment process for reuse during future construction projects.

A guide or model will be useful in guiding agencies through future building projects. The appropriate identification of such a model will provide a more direct route to a successful conclusion and enhance an agency's likelihood of successfully forecasting their future needs and developing a building design, which will meet the needs and requirements of the future.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The International Association of Chiefs of Police routinely examines areas of technical interest to the law enforcement community. Smith, T. & Horton, E. (2002) comment in depth on the IACP process in their article. In the area of needs assessments they explain how IACP advocates an 18 step process which begins by identifying problems with the existing facility and concludes with developing a strategy for the physical movement of equipment and services. In their article discussing the process, Smith and Horton review each of the IACP's specified steps which include:

the identification and documentation of facility problems, building an internal police planning team, building a consensus for political support, identifying and securing planning funds, documenting a policing philosophy, establishing a project pre-design team, establishing community support for projects, conducting spatial needs analysis,

evaluating facility options, conducting a site evaluation, developing preliminary project design/construction costs, obtaining project funding, securing and purchasing the site, the delivery of design and construction services, the selection of an architect, designing the facility, and developing an occupancy strategy. (p. 53)

The actual process of developing a justice facility design and layout does not take place until virtually the end of the process. In the estimation of the IACP, the evaluation of potential issues in the very beginning constitutes a major component of the process. A hallmark of their proposal is summed up by the idea that effective planning is the most cost effective step a jurisdiction can take.

In the foreword referring to an earlier version of the IACP publication, Darwick (1978) establishes that the IACP has documented multiple instances of new facilities failing to meet the tenant's expectations. He lays that failure at the feet of a design process that has failed to adequately understand the requirements and needs of the acquiring agency. He further makes the point that architects alone cannot answer all the questions necessary to develop a successful product. Mr. Darwick stresses not only that the police administrators require assistance due to lack of training and experience in the issue, he also makes the point that it is imperative agency executives consider suggestions from the entire police staff. This latter point became apparent during the survey phase of this researcher's work. Darwick advocates a professional study to include the following points: organizational structure, administrative/management procedures, future allocation of manpower, operational procedures, personnel management, communications requirements, records management, and service functions. Darwick gives particular emphasis to the case of many administrators opinion that making the building bigger will solve whatever facility problems they face, when in reality such an approach may only serve to increase the size

of existing problems. He sees a comprehensive review of organizational structures, administrative and operational procedures, and functional requirements as a more effective approach.

Scenario testing and transition planning are two components of needs assessments processes advocated by Calderwood-Chiechi (2002) as essential to achieving successfully completed facilities. The creation of employee teams to evaluate the effectiveness of various layout proposals in terms of their functionality is presented as a primary method of avoiding completed projects that hinder rather than enhance functionality. In her experience the simulation of actual police activities in a mockup of the proposed facility will contribute to the early identification and elimination of potential design flaws.

Ms. Calderwood-Chiechi also views early planning in the mechanics of transitioning functions from one building to another as vital to a smooth changeover with minimal disruption of services. Additionally, the creation of teams to formulate plans relating to different transition specialties like move logistics, policies and procedures, and testing and acceptance form an important part of her vision. Her opinion regarding the importance of employee teams reflects the opinions expressed earlier by Darwick (1978). Specific team assignments relating to her methodology are noted as follows: furniture, fixtures, and equipment transition team jail transition team, move logistics transition team, testing and acceptance transition team policies and procedures transition team, orientation and training team, contracts and services transition team.

Some well-defined processes must be followed to determine when a new facility is required. In their article, Ball and Reeves (2002) outline a continual process of review and evaluation as a determinant of correct design. The evaluation is conducted without pause

throughout the life of the facility and identifies needs and requirement changes as they occur. A self-assessment is recommended to compare the existing facilities to some recognized standard such as CALEA. This allows selection of design professionals who are familiar with the requirements set forth by these recognized bodies. A particular emphasis in this article is placed on the interview of every employee regarding what is required to perform his or her particular job tasks. Ball and Reeves further explore in some detail the necessity for reducing the information obtained to a form where it can be presented to city officials and the public. A synopsis of the elements visited by Ball & Reeves (2002) includes: conduct a self-assessment obtain a political consensus, conduct a detailed space needs assessment, identify sources of funding, direct a public information campaign.

Vogel (1954) provides an interesting contrast demonstrating the change in approach over the past 50 years. He dedicates most of his writing to discussions of the mechanics involved in siting the project and designing the facility layout. Even at that early date, however, Mr. Vogel refers to a survey conducted by the University of Washington in which questionnaires were provided to city police chiefs. The data from this study was used to compare satisfactory and unsatisfactory facilities and identify good design practices, however Vogel does not elaborate on the practical results. Vogel's writing also takes the position that police stations planned as a portion of larger facilities are an erroneous approach. Rather, the law enforcement portion of any project should be considered as a separate entity and later evaluated to determine if additional functions could be included without causing a compromise.

Vogel's perspective is an interesting contrast to the American Institute of Architects (1993) position that "facility planning for any one component should be conducted with a sensitivity to the larger system context and the dynamics of its operations. The facilities may be

independent structures in separate sites, coordinated on a single site, or incorporated in a single building” (p.73).

The AIA further acknowledges that the project architect may have little or no direct experience in law enforcement facilities. The facilities are recognized as being constructed infrequently and remaining in use for extended periods of time. As a response to this situation the AIA recommend convening a team with a broader scope of experience and particularly mention a programming consultant to evaluate different functional configurations and standards. They are very specific in pronouncing that each agency will have its own unique requirements, despite the similarity of goals.

METHODOLOGY

What should be considered in a needs assessment for developing an acceptable police facility design? The answer to the research question will be a broad range of considerations rather than a single easily quantified response. Within the law enforcement community the size, mission, and administrative restraints that may exist in any specific agency precludes any one simple answer. Rather, a baseline best practice strategy that can be adapted to various agencies will be sought.

It is anticipated that attempting to perform needs assessments relying on assets existing strictly within the agency will lead to disappointing results. A professional product is expected to be attained only when the assistance of a professional consultant outside the normal channels of inquiry is allowed to evaluate the current operations, make projections of future needs based on agency input and political inclination, and in general take a perspective free from pre-existing prejudice.

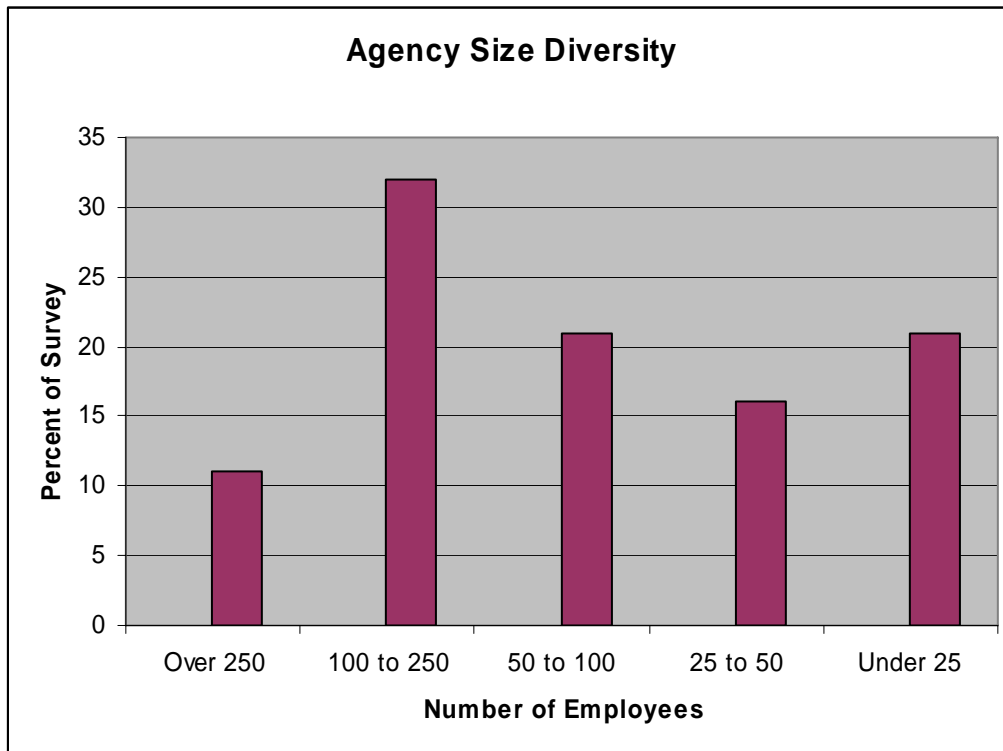
In order to sample prior experiences of other agencies, a survey was provided to representatives of 21 Texas agencies and one agency located in Alaska. The size of the agencies ranged from 5 officers to over 3000 officers. Agencies represented were county sheriff's offices, municipal police departments, and university police departments. The individuals receiving the survey were mid-level to upper-level management and in assignments where they might reasonably be expected to have input into the design of a new facility for their agency. Eleven of the respondents (50%) indicated that they had been in some way involved in the process.

The survey responses divided the agencies into five groupings by the total of certified and civilian employees. A determination was made as to whether the agency has recently renovated an existing facility, constructed a new facility, or given official consideration to these issues in the recent past. An attempt was made to determine if all groups of employees in the agency were consulted and if their input was considered on an equal footing. Finally, the respondent was asked to express an opinion as to the success or failure of the process to meet their goals. If the project was not deemed a success they were asked their opinion on how the process failed to provide satisfactory performance. A copy of the survey document is attached as Appendix A.

FINDINGS

Questions one through four of the 18 items on the survey document establish the employee size group into which group the agency fit. Of the 22 agencies given surveys, 19 (86% of the total supplied with surveys) responded with correctly completed forms. Four (21% of the agencies returning surveys) of the agencies listed their ranks as under 25 employees. Three (16%) of the agencies replied that their strength was 25 to 50 employees. Four (21%) agencies were noted as employing 50 to 100 individuals. The largest group was represented by six (32%) agencies indicating a total strength of 100 to 250 and the smallest group was composed of two

(11%) agencies stating they were over 250 employees. No correlation was noted between the size of the agency responding and any tendency towards a more or less successful design project. Moreover, no correlation was noted between size and any of the other questions on the survey.



Of these 19 responding agencies, five (26%) advised they have no current involvement in the process, and 17 (89%) are working on some aspect of the issue. Seven agencies (37%) responded that they currently have such an undertaking in a planning phase. In evaluating the completed survey instruments, it was observed that several agencies were involved in multiple projects and thus were included in multiple categories. As a result, the percentages of agencies responding in the various manners do not add up to 100%.

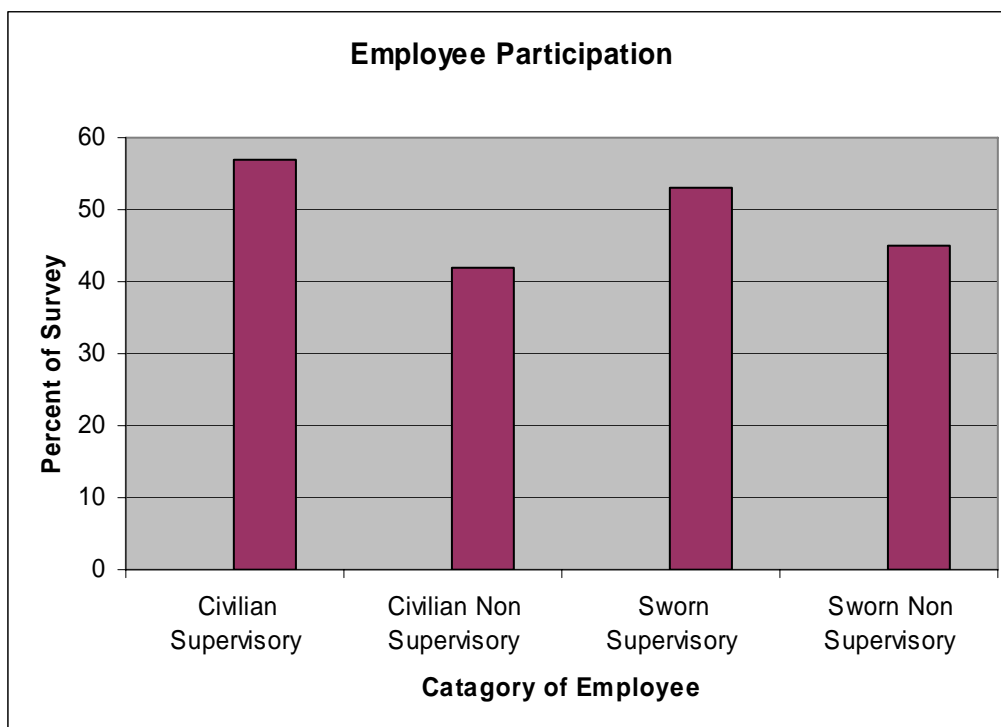
Question five asked if the agency over the past several years had built, renovated, or considered such options. Eight agencies (42%) have recently renovated an existing structure for police use. Ten agencies (53%) of the responding 19 indicated that they have recently built an

entirely new police building, and seven (37%) responded that they had or were currently considering such issues.

The sixth question was used to establish whether the agency had employed a formal needs assessment process or if the planning resulted from preference on the part of the executive team. A formalized assessment process was reportedly used in nine (45%) of the instances, while six (30 %) stated that the decision making process had been limited to the preference of the executives.

The seventh question inquired as to the involvement of the survey responder. Eleven (58%) of the individuals responding indicated that they had participated in the process personally. This was viewed as significant, as the rank or position of the individuals completing the survey would seem to indicate some ability to contribute in a substantial manner to the planning of the project. Yet, almost half of the individuals had no input.

Questions eight through 13 were directed to determining whether any particular segment of the agency had been over or under represented during the assessment process. Civilian supervisors were included in the assessment process by 11 (57%) of the agencies while civilians in non – supervisory positions were consulted by eight (42%). It had been anticipated that non-certified employees would have been given less opportunity to express their opinions than the certified officers. This appears not to be the case, as lower ranking certified supervisors were considered by ten (53%) of the agencies and rank and file certified officers consulted by nine (45%).

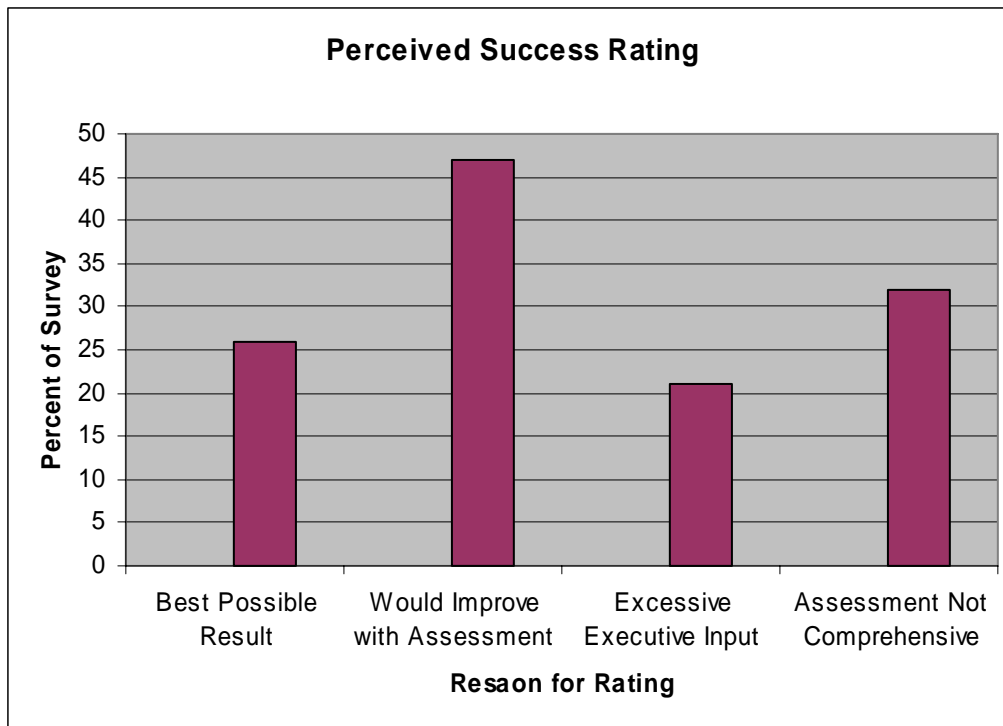


Question 14 determined whether the project had actually been completed and nine (47%) of the agencies responded that it had. It appears that if the survey were conducted a second time at a later date the percentage of implemented projects would increase.

Question 15 asked if the results were all that could be expected given budget restraints, and only five (26%) responded in the affirmative. Reviewing the results of the completed projects, nine (47%) of the respondents indicated opinions that conducting or following a more effective needs assessment could have improved the final results. Four respondents (21%) indicated that a partial fault of the needs assessment process was the result of giving overmuch weight to the opinions of a particular group within the agency.

In the opinion of six (32%) of those responding to the survey, the results of their project could have been improved if a more comprehensive needs assessment had been conducted or if the recommendations of the needs assessment had been implemented. Of particular interest is the fact that five out of the six agencies reporting less than optimum results also reported that the

project was completed in a manner conforming to the preference of the executives rather than by the application of a comprehensive needs assessment process.



CONCLUSION

New construction or renovation of existing facilities for police service, particularly if conducted incorrectly, is a costly and time-consuming undertaking. In order to obtain the very best possible use of public funds the process must proceed in an orderly and professional manner by observing the best available guidelines to success. This professional manner must answer the question of what issues should be considered in a needs assessment for developing police building designs.

The intent of this work was to establish the necessity of agencies conducting a thorough and comprehensive needs assessment prior to renovating an existing police facility or constructing a new one. It was also hoped that some basic steps toward an effective needs assessment could be identified and documented for consideration of agencies interested in such

projects in the future. The premise was that more attention devoted to seeking and solving potential problems during the very early stages of the project would pay large dividends in terms of improvement of the finished construction project.

The survey provided some insight into the quality of results that might be expected if a proper, professional needs assessment process were not followed. Survey results tended to support the point of view that a chief executive making design decisions without extensive interaction with employees at all levels of the organization is a likely path to unsatisfactory results. Slightly less than half the surveys addressing completed projects expressed the opinion that superior results could have been achieved if more attention had been given to the needs assessment process. While the survey sample was small, due to the diversity of the participants and the narrow range of responses, there seems little room for doubt that the results suggest valid considerations.

As expected, the review of existing literature has generated a broad range of considerations that should be observed in order to generate the necessary pre-design information and insure that important issues are not overlooked. The IACP 18 step process, the most extensive in detail, seems to provide the preeminent documentation of how agencies without extensive prior experience should conduct their deliberations. Most of the published authors included some enumeration of issues that should be in the mind of agencies contemplating these types of undertakings and most have some aspect of their opinion included in the IACP model.

All the researchers gave at least some passing support to one overriding avenue of approach: the formation of teams or groups or the interviewing of employees to provide input on what is needed was deemed to be an integral component of any successful endeavor. Agencies

with the IACP model in hand and the resolution to accept input from as many agency sources as possible, are likely to have a good beginning for their project considerations.

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Appendix A

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For purposes of this survey, we will define Needs Assessment as any process whereby information is gathered to determine what size, layout, functions, equipment, location, material, or any other items should be considered prior to construction.

What is your department size? Include sworn and civilian.

Under 25 _____

25 to 50 _____

50 to 100 _____

100 to 250 _____

Over 250 _____

How many employees are civilian? _____

In your opinion, do you need more civilian staff police department wide to handle the workload? _____

If so, how many more? _____ Do you expect this need to be addressed in the foreseeable future? _____

In the last several years, has your department renovated an old building for police use _____, built a new building _____, or begun consideration of these issues? _____

If none of these options apply, please stop here.

To your knowledge, was a formalized needs assessment process conducted _____ or were decisions made on a basis of executive preference? _____

Were you involved in the needs assessment in any way? _____

Were civilian supervisors consulted in the needs assessment? _____

Were civilian employees consulted in the needs assessment? _____

Were lower ranking sworn supervisors consulted in the needs assessment? _____

Were non supervisory sworn personnel consulted in the needs assessment? _____

Are you aware of any general group or class of employees who were not consulted? _____

Are you aware of any general group of employees whose views, in your opinion, were given overly heavy emphasis during the needs assessment process?_____

Are you aware of any general group of employees whose views, in your opinion, should have received more emphasis during the needs assessment process?_____

Was the project actually carried through to the construction phase?_____

Were the results of the construction all they could have been given the restraints of cost?_____

In your opinion, could the results have been more optimal with a more effective initial needs assessment_____, or if the needs assessment had actually been followed?_____

If you find fault with the needs assessment process, was it in the area of not asking the correct questions_____, not asking the correct people_____, or not acting on the resulting information?_____ PLEASE SELECT ONLY ONE ANSWER IN THIS QUESTION.