EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Implementing an Agency-Level
Performance Measurement System:
A Guide for Law Enforcement Executives[*]

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), with funding from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), developed an *agency-level* Performance Measurement System for law enforcement agencies. This guide conveys the importance of a comprehensive performance measurement system and outlines key components of the PERF system, which law enforcement executives can modify and adapt to suit the needs of their individual agencies and communities. The PERF measurement system is unique because it focuses law enforcement agencies' attention on a broader spectrum of activities– those that have not been measured consistently, but are imperative to understanding what law enforcement agencies produce for their communities.

There is a strong need for comprehensive agency-level performance measurement within the law enforcement community. A comprehensive performance measurement system is needed because citizens demand and are entitled to information on the workings of government. Such a measurement system can also increase community satisfaction and trust in the police. A system that produces information for citizens regarding the workings and results of their law enforcement agency can make citizens feel more accounted to and can let them assess whether the agency is making good use of public funds.

A comprehensive performance measurement system can also help law enforcement executives manage their departments. A system could improve agency effectiveness and efficiency by setting specific goals and objectives to guide the agency that are consistent with what the agency's constituency believes the agency should produce. If the system is linked to key accountability structures within the department it will produce behaviors on the part of personnel at all levels that are geared toward the achievement of the goals and objectives.

The PERF agency-level Performance Measurement System is comprised of a model of overall performance expectations (representing what law enforcement do or should produce for their communities); tools to help measure progress toward meeting the expectations (measures and methods); and organizational structures to hold agencies, and the employees within them, accountable for meeting the expectations. The System formalizes overarching goals for law enforcement, provides scientific ways to assess an agency's progress toward meeting these goals, and structures ways in which agencies can promote behavior in accordance with goals. The PERF Performance Measurement System emphasizes the collection and analysis of data on a broader range of performance outcomes beyond the usual outcome of reducing crime. This approach allows agencies to measure the many different ways modern law enforcement impacts a community. The System is intended to be general enough so that it could be relevant to many different types of agencies. In order to accomplish this, PERF staff developed a somewhat customizable system. PERF achieved this by developing a model with common law enforcement outcomes as well as by providing a broad range of measures

and accountability structures. Thus, most law enforcement agencies can identify with the model's performance expectations, and law enforcement executives can choose measures and accountability structures based on the needs of their individual agencies and communities and the availability of resources.

Following the description of the PERF System, we present information from the case study that PERF conducted in Prince William County (PWC) Police Department, which has a well-established and successful agency-level performance measurement system. In this document we provide a description of the system together with some of the lessons learned by the police department during implementation and maintenance. This coverage should help agencies that are considering a performance measurement system envision one in place and anticipate the process of implementation and maintenance. We present the PWC experience to help other agencies implement a performance system, avoid some of the problems the PWCPD experienced, and provide a concrete set of "lessons learned" from an actual department. Performance measures should be grounded in the local conditions. Therefore, rather than offering one set of measures for all agencies to use, a menu of measurement items from which agencies can choose is offered. While the PWC Police Department uses only a portion of our measures, the PWC experience serves as an important illustration of how stakeholders can develop a comprehensive performance measurement system in their own jurisdiction that identifies areas of local concern to the community and responds to those concerns.

II. METHODS

Data collection for this project was carried out in Lowell, MA and Prince William County (PWC), VA. Residents of the city of Lowell and staff from the Lowell Police Department assisted with the initial development of the PERF Performance Measurement Model and PWC served as our case study site. For both sites, PERF employed a multi-method data collection process. PERF staff collected agency documents and archival data, conducted interviews and focus groups, and conducted observations of key meetings and other relevant activities.

A. <u>Data collection with the Lowell (MA) Police Department</u>

PERF chose the Lowell (MA) Police Department (LPD) to assist with the early stages of this project. A key first step was to develop the performance expectations for the PERF model. To this end, we worked with Superintendent Ed Davis of the LPD to gather information from both community members and agency personnel regarding the expectations they have for police.   For instance, Superintendent Davis conducted interviews with members of both his Internal Authorizing Environment (IAE) and External Authorizing Environment (EAE) asking them "what concrete results should LPD be producing for our constituents?" PERF staff attended the interviews as observers and took detailed notes that were later analyzed and used as one source of information for developing the performance expectations in the model. IAE participants included a variety of personnel from the LPD. EAE participants included the Chancellor of a local

university, the city manager, city mayor, members of city council, and other formal and informal community leaders.

To build on the information collected through the interviews, PERF and Superintendent Davis identified a subset of LPD personnel and community members to participate in a task force, which had the responsibility to nominate potential performance expectations to be included in the model. The task force met twice and discussed what it is that police everywhere, including the Lowell police, do or *should be doing or producing* for their communities.

After the interviews, focus groups and task force meetings, PERF staff partnered with scholars who have expertise in police performance measurement; together they analyzed the raw data.[1] Their objective was to aggregate the information collected during the interviews and meetings and identify performance outcomes that reflected that community input and could be generalized to agencies nationwide. Each team member developed his/her own list of performance expectations/outcomes and then the group conferred to produce a single performance expectations model.

B. Data collection with Prince William County (PWC)

The case study approach employed for this project encompassed multiple methods of data collection such as interviews (with police personnel, county employees, elected officials, and residents of the county), observations of relevant meetings, archival document analysis (including strategic plans, internal memos, department documents, and other materials), and focus groups (of police department officers and supervisors).

PERF staff sought information on a number of key issues related to PWCPD's performance measurement system. For example, PERF documented the history of the System's development as well as PWCPD's current performance measurement system. Care was taken to fully understand how PWCPD links management structures to measures. PERF staff also focused on how the police department (and the county) manages and monitors the System. We outlined the process of developing strategies and objectives (e.g., via task force meetings). Additionally, PERF staff explored key stakeholders' satisfaction with the system; where they think the system might be improved; and how the system has impacted the effectiveness and efficiency of the police department, citizen perceptions of the police department, and other outcomes.

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[1] These experts included Mary Ann Wycoff, Tim Oettmeier, and Phyllis McDonald.

III. RESULTS

A. The PERF model

As discussed above, we developed our model with the help of the Lowell (MA) community and police department. There are three major components of our comprehensive agency-level performance measurement system: (1) performance expectations, (2) measures, and (3) accountability structures.
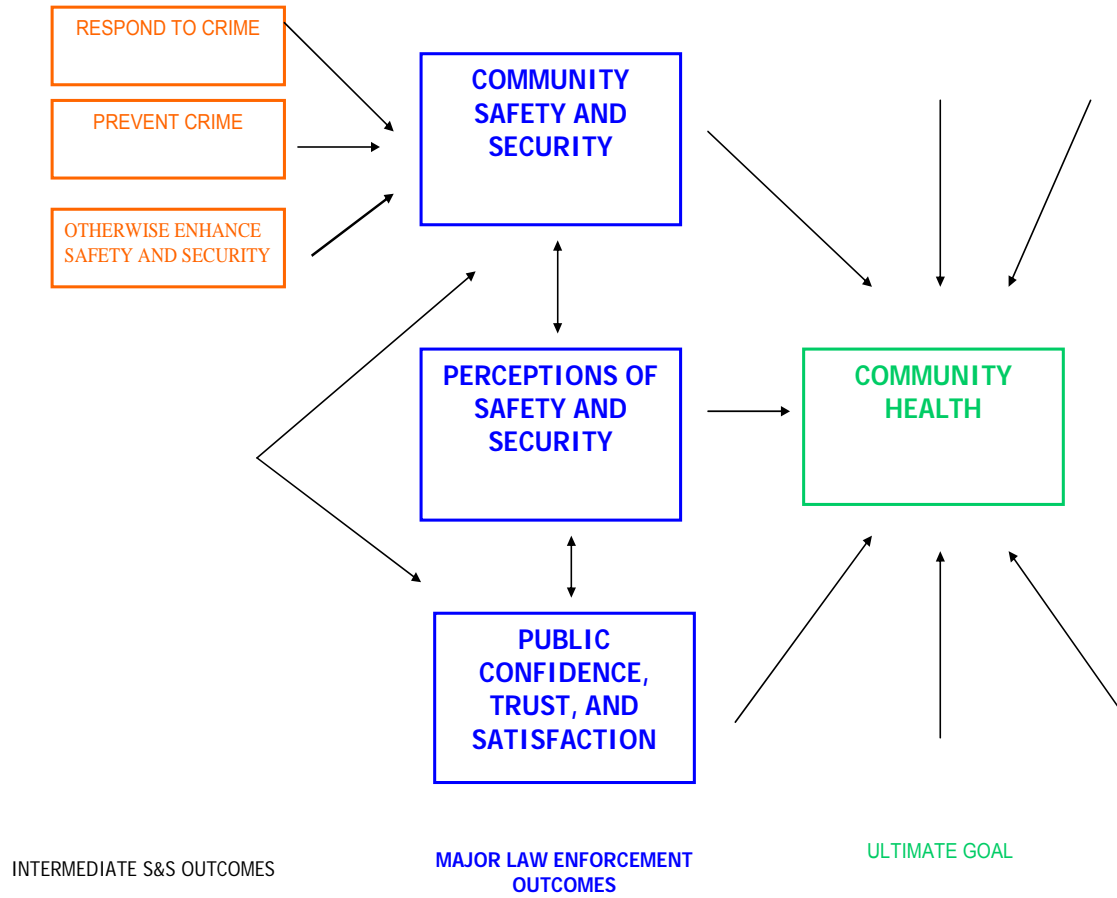
1. *Performance expectations for law enforcement*

Performance Expectations in our model refer to desirable law enforcement outcomes; i.e., valuable results that occur (or should occur) in society as a *consequence* of what the police do. We have designed these expectations to be general in nature (e.g., increasing safety and security) so that they are applicable to most law enforcement agencies regardless of geography, agency size, or jurisdiction. We divide our performance expectations into three major law enforcement outcomes (see Figure 1 below): Community Safety and Security; Perceptions of Safety and Security; and Confidence, Trust and Satisfaction. Also included in the model are intermediate safety and security outcomes: Respond to Crime, Prevent Crime, and Otherwise Enhance Safety and Security.[2] And, finally, the ultimate outcome is Community Health.

The major law enforcement outcomes are the very things that law enforcement should be "producing" for their community and therefore are the key dimensions on which law enforcement should be measured. The overall goal of Community Health exemplifies a performance expectation that cannot be met by law enforcement alone. Indeed many agencies, organizations, and individuals contribute to a community's health. The purpose of including it in this model is to demonstrate its importance as an overall goal, as described by members of the IAE and EAE. For purposes of this project, we examined just law enforcement's role in enhancing community health.

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[2] The intermediate safety and security outcomes are directly related to the first major law enforcement outcome, Community Safety and Security. Responding to crime, preventing crime, and otherwise enhancing safety and security (e.g., promoting traffic safety) are necessary objectives to be met in order to achieve a safer and more secure community.

Figure 1: Law Enforcement Outcomes Contributing To Overall Community

RESPOND TO CRIME

PREVENT CRIME

OTHERWISE ENHANCE
SAFETY AND SECURITY

COMMUNITY
SAFETY AND
SECURITY

PERCEPTIONS OF
SAFETY AND
SECURITY

COMMUNITY
HEALTH

PUBLIC
CONFIDENCE,
TRUST, AND
SATISFACTION

INTERMEDIATE S&S OUTCOMES

MAJOR LAW ENFORCEMENT
OUTCOMES

ULTIMATE GOAL

2. *Measures*

In addition to a model of performance expectations, PERF developed an array of measures that agencies could adopt in order to gauge their progress toward meeting the performance expectations (outcomes). Ideally these data could be used to assist agencies in strategic planning for future years in terms of allocating resources towards their most pressing concerns (e.g., helping to reduce citizens' fear of crime).

Because agencies vary in terms of the resources they have to commit to performance measurement and in terms of available information sources, PERF identified numerous measures for each of the performance expectations. The measures are divided into two types: survey and non-survey data. Survey data allows law enforcement agencies to gather information directly from their various constituencies on a broad array of issues and events (e.g., citizens' opinions about the effectiveness of the law enforcement agency, citizens' self reports of criminal victimization). Non-survey data provides law enforcement the ability to analyze a wealth of information from various data sources collected by the law enforcement agency itself or by some other entity (e.g., the District Attorney's Office, the community's Office of Zoning). Overall, the measures provide decision makers an assortment of options from which to choose, allowing for a tailored system for their agency and community.

We do not expect agencies will use all of the performance expectation measures. The concept of parsimony is critical. We believe it is very important to keep the performance measurement task manageable and that departments should only collect the key indicators necessary to effectively track agency performance. In fact, agencies should not collect any data for which they do not have a specific analytic plan. If an agency does not know how it will use a specific data element then that agency should take an intensive look at whether it is necessary for it to be collected at all. The PERF system should be thought of as a buffet of measures where agencies select items to represent each of the performance expectation categories identified in Figure 1.

PERF identified existing measures that had been developed by scholars or agencies, some of which had been tested for reliability and validity. As expected, it was not possible to find a full complement of existing measures to correspond to the model's performance expectations. To fill the "gap," PERF staff used various means to identify measures that have not traditionally been used to measure police performance. These "new" measures were either altered from previous studies, or they were identified anew–in some cases these new measures were borrowed from other fields.

This project confirmed that measuring law enforcement performance can be very challenging. There are no individual measures that provide a direct gauge of law enforcement performance. Thus, none of the measures, which are described in general terms below, can stand alone as a measure of performance. The key to an effective performance measurement system is to develop a series of measures for each outcome

and triangulate findings using longitudinal data (that is, data collected consistently over time). This will help an agency create a more complete and accurate picture of the agency's progress toward meeting goals.

i. Measuring community safety and security – The survey measures for this performance expectation include victimization surveys for community members and businesses, and self-reported delinquency surveys for juveniles.   Self-reporting is an important way to measure crime in a community since not all victims report crimes to the police. Also included in this list are measures that relate to traffic safety. During PERF's development of the performance expectations model, it was clear that this particular performance expectation did not merely encompass crime. Traffic-related issues (e.g., speeding in residential neighborhoods) are of significant concern to many people and clearly impact the safety of a community. In fact, traffic infractions are sometimes more of a concern for residents than criminal activity. The non-survey measures include items such as incidents of crime, police activity, and insurance claims.

ii. Measuring perceptions of safety and security – Our measures of community perception of safety and security are organized according to "fear of crime" and "disorder." The disorder measures are also further divided into social and physical disorder. The former are behavior-related and can include loitering, public drunkenness, or loud parties. The latter is based on the appearance of the environment and can include abandoned buildings, graffiti, and trash.

iii. Measuring confidence, trust, and satisfaction – The measures for this expectation are divided into three groupings– confidence in the police, trust in the police, and satisfaction with the police. Survey and non-survey items were developed for all three of these areas.

iv. Measuring community health – Within the performance expectations model, the overall goal of community health was perhaps the most difficult for which to find corresponding existing measures. In part this is because the definition of community health varies widely from one community (indeed one individual) to the next. We provide a series of potential measures on which law enforcement could have an impact. Measures of community health on which law enforcement would have little or no impact were excluded. Some examples of measures for which law enforcement would have a potential impact include the median price of homes (which is correlated to the amount of crime in an area) and the number of nuisance properties.

Although we limited, to some degree, the types of community health measures to be included in the performance measurement system, we simultaneously broadened the scope of our data search to gather measures from a variety of non-traditional sources. So, even though we were discerning in identifying community health measures that law enforcement agencies might conceivably impact through their work, we also took a broader approach to finding potential measures from areas outside the typical law

enforcement arena. One example is our assessment of studies that used various measures to rank the "most livable cities."

3. *Accountability structures*

For purposes of ensuring that the efforts within agencies are geared toward the achievement of the performance expectations, PERF staff identified a number of potential accountability structures. Each of the structures represents a link between measures and behaviors; each promotes behavior in accordance with performance expectations. The proposed accountability structures are described in general terms and could take various forms depending upon the needs and resources of an agency. Not only does this format allow agencies the opportunity to select from several different accountability options, it provides the opportunity to be creative in its implementation.

It is important to point out that, although the overall System focuses on the agency, individuals within an agency are key to helping an agency meet its goals. Thus, several of the accountability structures mentioned here focus on individual-level behavior. Our recommendations on accountability structures are divided into organizational accountability structures and individual accountability structures.

i. Organization-level accountability structures – Accountability structures at the organization level include data driven command accountability (i.e., COMPSTAT), strategic planning, quality assurance functions, and budget management.

ii. Individual-level accountability structures – Accountability structures at the individual level are designed to promote behaviors on the part of individuals that are consistent with the performance expectations of the agency. Accountability structures at the individual level include structures such as internal affairs, personnel performance evaluations, and personnel management systems.

B. <u>The Prince William Experience</u>

Prince William County Police Department (PWCPD) was chosen as a case study site for this project in order to illustrate how one agency developed and implemented a successful performance measurement system. PWCPD's system is particularly interesting in that it is part of a larger, county-wide performance measurement system. Through the case study, we were able to describe Prince William County and the PWCPD generally, the county's performance measurement system and its application to the PWCPD, the impact of the performance measurement system on various outcomes, some challenges faced or "lessons learned" by the county and police department as they implemented their system, and, finally, how the PERF and PWC systems compare. Many of the items from the PERF performance measurement system are not represented in PWCPD system. The PWCPD system demonstrates how a police agency can implement a performance measurement system. The "how to" type lessons we impart by examining the PWCPD system are the same whether one uses a PERF–specific measurement approach or a somewhat different approach such as the

PWCPD measurement system. The PERF case study revealed a number of "lessons learned" on how to implement an agency-level performance measurement system.

1. *Identifying performance expectations or outcomes*

Agencies implementing a performance measurement system can either adopt the law enforcement outcomes set forth in the PERF Model or use a process to identify on their own the outcomes they want to achieve for their communities. The case study revealed the following recommendations for identifying performance expectations or outcomes.
- Involve the community.
- Identify appropriate community members to participate in the process.
- Involve agency personnel to help employees take ownership of the process.
- Educate/train the participants on the performance measurement system approach.

2. *Implementing performance measures*

The key to an effective performance measurement system is to develop a series of measures for each outcome and triangulate findings: agencies should assess the overall picture as opposed to focusing on any individual measure. This will help an agency create a more complete and accurate picture of the agency's progress toward meeting its goals. Also, placing the measures within the appropriate context will ease the interpretation of the results.

The case study results produced the following recommendations for implementing a performance measurement system.

- Start on a small scale and, once the system gains momentum, identify additional measures tailor–made for the agency's outcomes.
- Prioritize measures and collect data on only those that are necessary and informative.
- Borrow measures used by others and customize them to fit local needs.
- Do not collect only output measures, but also identify and use outcome measures.
- Collect consistent trend data to provide a picture of the agency's progress toward meeting goals.
- Compare data, when possible or appropriate, with other agencies to "benchmark" performance against that of other similar agencies.
- In county-wide systems, share information within and between agencies to improve performance measurement systems and to improve communication and collaboration among agencies.
- Performance measurement is difficult and complex work so agencies should seek help when necessary to effectively manage all aspects of a system.

3. *Implementing accountability structures*

PERF provided a general list of the types of accountability structures law enforcement agencies might consider incorporating into their performance measurement system. Prince William County utilizes several different types of accountability structures, including strategic planning, budget management, and performance reporting. Below are some recommendations to guide agencies in their consideration and implementation of accountability.

- Create a culture of integrity to ensure accurate data reporting.
- Be reasonable and understand that not all goals will be achieved.
- Use the measures on a regular basis to help better manage resources, justify programs, initiatives, new hires, and so forth.
- Implement some type of regular accountability structure such as a monthly report to keep on top of trends and areas in need of improvement.
- Tie outcomes to employee personnel evaluations to recognize employee performance that advances the agency's achievement of specific outcomes.

4. Overall Implementation

The PERF team also developed, based on the case study results, some overarching recommendations on development, implementation, and maintenance of an agency-level performance measurement system*.*

- Don't set goals too high, for it might bring about failure and a decline in momentum and enthusiasm.
- Educate and train staff at all levels so that everyone understands the measurement system.
- Ensure full participation of top management.
- Phase in the system so that agency staff are not overwhelmed.
- Anticipate a long and evolving process.
- Formalize the system internally or externally to gain buy in and support.
- Remember to look at the big picture and avoid overreactions to small changes in the direction of the results.

IV. CONCLUSION

Law enforcement in this country has undergone dramatic changes over the last few decades. These changes include an emphasis on outcomes beyond crime control and much greater accountability to the communities that law enforcement agencies serve. Both of these changes provide justification for the implementation of comprehensive performance measurement systems. Agencies need to know what it is they are producing with the public dollars and power they get from their constituencies and they have an obligation to report their performance to those same constituencies. Performance measurement systems have the potential to help an executive manage a department and direct it towards effective and efficient performance and to produce greater trust and satisfaction on the part of the residents served.

The intent of this guide is to assist law enforcement agencies and other key stakeholders in developing and implementing an agency-level performance measurement system. We describe the PERF Performance Measurement System that is intended to be a general model for any law enforcement agency. The three components of this model and virtually any comprehensive model are (1) performance expectations, (2) measures, and (3) accountability structures. The PERF model highlights key law enforcement outcomes that could be adopted by any law enforcement agency and includes a list of potential performance measures and accountability structures.

To help agency executives and other policy makers envision a performance measurement system in place and understand the development and maintenance process, PERF staff sought and found—in Prince William County, Virginia—a highly successful example of an agency-level performance measurement system. PERF staff felt strongly that the "lessons learned" from the many years of development, implementation, and modification would serve other agencies well by helping them to minimize or avoid some of the challenges experienced by PWC. We have outlined those "lessons learned" and included relevant recommendations so that law enforcement executives and other stakeholders can develop within their own jurisdictions a comprehensive performance measurement system so that each agency and law enforcement as a whole can better understand what police are producing for their communities and, indeed, so that law enforcement can improve upon those efforts.