

Establishing Law Enforcement Planning Units Within Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Mark S. Calhoun, *Director of Planning, Law Enforcement Division, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230*

Abstract: A guide for fish and wildlife law enforcement chief executive officers is provided which includes a definition and overview of law enforcement planning as a distinct profession and describing its utility within the law enforcement function. Specific examples of duties are enumerated as are guidelines for soliciting and hiring a professional law enforcement planner and establishing a functional unit.

Proc. Annu. Conf. Southeast. Assoc. Fish and Wildl. Agencies 44:423-433

As defined by O. W. Wilson (1952, page 2) law enforcement planning is “the process of developing a method or procedure or arrangement of parts intended to facilitate the achievement of a defined objective.” A more comprehensive definition of planning offered by Charles Swanson (1988, page 402) identifies planning as “a management function concerned with visualizing future situations, making estimates concerning them, identifying the issues, needs and potential danger points, analyzing and evaluating the alternative ways and means for reaching desired goals according to certain schedule, estimating the necessary funds and resources to do the work, and initiating action in time to prepare what may be needed to cope with changing conditions and contingent events.”

Planning in its genetic form is the most basic of management functions. Keeping in mind both Wilson’s and Swanson’s definitions, it is easy to understand that law enforcement agencies which understand and place emphasis on planning generally have clear and concise policies and procedural statements, quantifiable performance standards, and realistic goals and objectives. By focusing on planning as a management tool, law enforcement agencies are able to channel their resources and talents in both an efficient and effective manner.

“Planning is the rational design or pattern for all departmental undertakings rather than relying on chance, according to John P. Kenny (1959, page 28). It is a forward-focused process that provides the means for an agency to obtain its goals. It is a process in the truest form of the word in that each step is progressive, building

on the previous step and ultimately folding back on itself to insure that its original objectives are satisfied.

Although planning as an academic pursuit is not considered a “hard” science, there is a specific body of knowledge and recognized processes which are germane to the planning process. These processes provide a rational, logical foundation from which an agency can develop and deliver professional police services to the community it is charged to serve.

Why Plan?

An old time management axiom goes, “every hour spent in effective planning saves 3 to 4 in execution and achieves better results. By failing to plan, you are planning to fail.” The effective and efficient allocation of resources depends on planning to succeed. However, as management theorist Arthur B. Toan (1968, page 25) points out, “one of the most interesting and disquieting things about plans is that they rarely work out quite as anticipated.” The creation of a law enforcement planning unit will increase an agency’s chances to plan effectively and avoid the problems spoken of by Toan. While plans will still go awry, the agency will be in a better position to respond and adapt to the problems encountered in a coordinated and timely manner.

Today’s policing is big business. Many law enforcement agencies now have big budgets, big staffs, and big responsibilities which lead to big repercussions if management fails to recognize, understand, and plan effectively to deal with the internal and external complexities associated with policing today. The creation of a planning unit to face these challenges does not mean that top-level staff can abrogate their responsibilities. Rather, it allows top managers to be freed of handling daily details and focus on the broader problem solving and planning issues which face an agency (Kenny 1982, page 137).

Although the concept of planning has been around since the 19th century, the practice of planning has only in the last 20 years begun to come into its own. As planning has become a functional specialty much like investigations, covert operations or training have grown to become over the years. It has taken on a level of importance not normally reserved for such a young and emerging profession.

Reliance on planning as a means of dealing in an organized manner with the daily problems associated with policing has led to the growth of agencies with planning units from 20 in 1962 (Garmin 1982, page 298), to at least 500 in 1990, with several organizations representing planners on both state and national levels. This growth in law enforcement planning has led to the establishment of various models and methods of planning as well as standards of planning as evidenced by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA), devoting a chapter to planning in its Standards for Law Enforcement Agencies Manual. This recognition by CALEA as to the importance of planning within a law enforcement action gives credence to the axiom, “prior planning prevents poor performance.”

The Planning Process

Planning as a process is a simple, repetitive task constantly complicated by unforeseen internal and external factors impacting upon the system. When viewed by the traditionalist, planning is a 4-step, systematic procedure (Fig. 1). Beginning with the collation of information and available resources needed to address a problem in the Input Phase and moving in to the Process Phase where the actual planning takes place. From this phase, adherents of the traditionalists viewpoint see the next step in the process as the Output Phase which is the actual plan or program developed during the Planning Phase. The final Feedback Phase in the model closes the loop and drives the process through the evaluation of the initial plan and allows for refinement of the original product (Sheehan and Coleman 1979, page 169). This basic process is widely used in both the private and public sectors and lends itself well to law enforcement planning.

In 1975, The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) took the basic systems approach to planning and resurfaced it as the Integrated Criminal Apprehension Program (ICAP) Model and Logic Flow (Fig. 2). This process added an analysis phase to the basic systems approach (Pindur 1983, page 6). While such a subtle change could be overlooked as inconsequential, it helped define the role of law enforcement planning as it officially recognized analysis of influencing factors as a major and distinct step in the planning process.

As this process has evolved and progressed, the ICAP model has been expanded upon and refined several times. Alfred Stone and Stuart DeLuca proposed a 6-step planning process which has been accepted by many: (1) needs assessment, (2) goals and objective setting, (3) definition of alternative methods, (4) cost/benefit assessment, (5) selection of methodology, and (6) definition of evaluation method (Stone and Deluca 1985, page 110).

This process is basically a derivation of the ICAP and Systems models. It better delineates the steps within the analysis and planning phases, but it lacks the recognition of external factors and their impact on the planning process.

A more appropriate planning model incorporates the impact of externalities on the plans and programs of an agency. By borrowing from the school of strategic management, a comprehensive planning model can be developed which encompasses

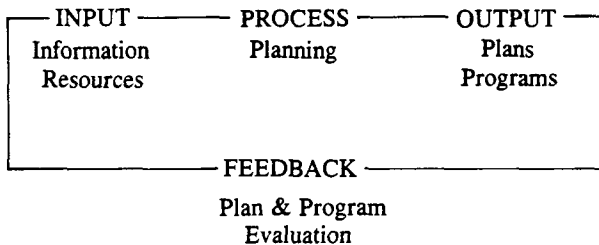


Figure 1. Traditional 4-step systems perspective planning model (Sheehan and Coleman 1979, page 169).

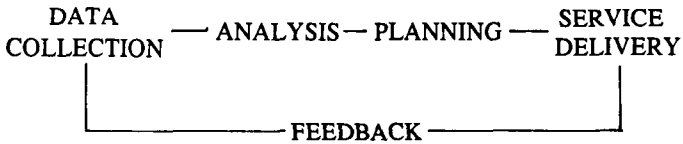


Figure 2. Integrated criminal apprehension program model and logic flow (Pindur 1983, page 6).

the principals of the aforementioned models as well as the “environmental awareness” elements of the strategic management process (Fig. 3) (Lyles 1981, pages 61–75). This model factors in the analysis of both internal as well as external factors which will impact upon a given plan. This analysis or environmental scan allows for the identification and weighting of both threats and opportunities in relation to the development of a plan.

While law enforcement planners may pick and choose among the planning models available to them, they basically use them to develop plans in the following 6 major planning categories:

1. Procedural Plans—Those documents which set out and establish agency policy. Examples of such plans would be general orders, unit standard operating procedures, and policies (Wilson 1952, pages 5–7).
2. Tactical Plans—The application of procedural plans to tactical situations such as hostage plans, drug raid procedures, and sting operation guidelines (Wilson 1952, pages 5–7).

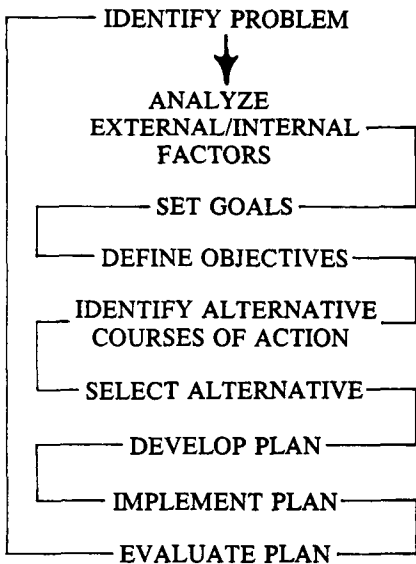


Figure 3. Comprehensive environmental factor-based planning model.

3. **Operational Plans**—The work programs of the line units such as monthly work schedules, special assignment schedules, and directed patrol activity rosters. (Wilson 1952, pages 5–7).

4. **Contingency Plans**—Those plans which address special situations such as hazardous material accidents, riots, and hurricanes (Stone and Deluca 1985, pages 110–126).

5. **Management Plans**—As opposed to operational plans, these relate to the budget, purchasing of equipment and other plans and processes which are necessary for the agency to be prepared to perform its mission (Wilson 1952, pages 5–7).

6. **Strategic Plans**—While more of a process than a plan per se, these plans require the involvement of all personnel in deciding where the agency wants to be in the future and what it wants to be in the future. This process can be applied to any of the previous 5 types of plans (Stone and Deluca 1985, pages 110–126).

While planners generally follow a certain model when developing a plan, they may and should change the model based upon the type and size of the plan being developed. This required flexibility has lead law enforcement planning into almost every facet of modern law enforcement (Table 1). However, regardless of the model or type of plan, most planning is ultimately driven by the following 7 factors: (1) Where we are now, (2) Where we want to go, (3) How we want to travel, (4) When we want to leave, (5) When we want to arrive, (6) Who will lead, (7) How much it will cost.

Table 1. Selected areas of involvement for law enforcement planners.

Area of involvement
Budget development and monitoring
Annual report preparation
Production of periodic statistical reports
Design specifications for equipment purchase
Recommend items of equipment for purchase
Development policies and/or procedures
Evaluation of departmental programs and projects
Recommend changes to department operations
Develop long range plans
Strategic planning
Perform strategic and/or tactical crime analysis
Review current case law for training purposes
Develop goals and objectives
Review and recommend manpower allocation designs
Design work/shift schedules
Prepare grant applications
Coordinate administrative task forces
Develop emergency-disaster plans
Perform cost/benefit analysis
Develop and maintain departmental written forms.

Overview of Planning

A thorough understanding of the planning process discussed earlier by senior management is an asset when an agency decides to establish a planning unit. However, a great deal of thought and planning should precede the actual hiring of any planner. Attention needs to be given to space requirements, unit size, unit placement within the organization, office equipment, and location before any decision to initiate a unit is finalized.

As a rule-of-thumb, an agency should consider hiring at least 1 planner per every 100 employees. Experience has shown that this level is adequate for departments of up to 300 employees. As most game and fish law enforcement agencies fall within this category, the remainder of this paper will focus on that audience.

After deciding on the number of planners to hire, the next step is deciding how to staff the unit. A mixture of sworn and civilian planners would provide an agency with the broadest cross-spectrum of knowledge, experience, and technical expertise. However, many agencies do employ units composed entirely of either sworn or civilian personnel successfully.

Employing a totally civilianized unit has several advantages: (1) Personnel are removed from department politics, (2) it provides an "outside" viewpoint, (3) personnel are hired with requisite skills, and (4) are less expensive than a sworn employee of the same pay grade (i.e., no basic or in-service requirements, no uniform costs, no vehicle costs, no law enforcement equipment, no law enforcement retirement benefits).

However, as posited earlier, a combination of sworn and civilian is a preferred option as employing civilians also has several disadvantages: (1) Civilians are not attuned to agency politics, (2) they may not have police experience, (3) they are not familiar with agency personnel, (4) they may have no "street" experience, (5) they may have no/limited knowledge of service area, and (6) they may be shunned as "outsiders."

Upon deciding on a unit staffing combination, a decision should be made regarding command of the unit and its placement both within the agency's organizational and physical structure. If civilians are employed, consideration should be given to designating a civilian as unit commander. This insures a measure of continuity as they would be immune to transfer whereas a sworn employee would not. Regardless of who is chosen, the unit should be positioned within the agency's bureaucracy where there is "no more than 1 person in the chain of command between the director of the . . . unit and the agency's chief executive officer" (Anon. 1987, p. 14). The unit should be physically located in a high traffic area between the chief's office and the field officer's report room or its equivalent to insure interaction between the troops and the planning unit. However, if no centralized roll call training is conducted, the unit should be located as close to its immediate supervisor's office as practical.

Since a majority of planning projects result in the production of some type of written document, it would be wise to supply each planner with a microcomputer to assist them in report writing, data analysis and other computer-oriented processes.

A small laser printer should also be considered for the unit as it will reduce the per unit costs of developing those products which would require otherwise expensive camera-ready artwork. In addition to the computer equipment, each planner will require their own work space with a telephone and a calculator. Other equipment such as drafting tables and specialized software packages may be necessary based on the expected duties of the unit.

As illustrated in Table 1, planning units become involved in myriad activities. When considering establishing a unit and deciding on its duties, the Los Angeles Police Department Model provides a solid, realistic description of what most planning units are responsible for within an agency (Table 2). Even though the model is 30 years old, it provides a good foundation from which to base a new unit on (Wilson 1952, page 11).

Hiring the Planning Staff

Once all of the decisions have been made regarding placement, staff size, equipment and the like, it is time to finally hire a staff. Wilson (1952, page 307) suggests that planners be hired who have “sound knowledge of police administration bolstered by sound judgement, initiative, enthusiasm, and persuasiveness. They must have imagination in order to conceive fresh solutions to problems which may have their roots in traditional, stultified practices, they must be personable and work well with other people.” While hiring such an individual may seem impossible, the task can be made less onerous by advertising for the exact attributes deemed necessary for a planner to succeed within the agency.

The Civilian Planner

When hiring a civilian planner, an agency enjoys the luxury of soliciting applicants from a theoretical national pool of potential planners. However, when hiring from this pool an agency should be prepared to pay the individual commensurate to their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Compensation should be on scale with other technical specialties employed within the agency. Below is a guide for estimating the potential salary of a civilian planner:

Table 2. Los Angeles Police Department planning unit model (Wilson 1952).

Unit functions
Develop and report on potential improvements in police administration, management, et cetera, based on study of current trends and methods.
Design and control of paper forms.
Analyze current pending legislation and legal opinions relating to police.
Maintain liaison with city attorney’s office.
Compile/analyze/interpret and disseminate information on crime statistics and workload.
Maintain department manuals.
Prepare annual report and budget.
Prepare maps, charts, and other graphics/artwork for use.

1. Civilian unit commander with at least a M.A./M.S. should be placed in the same pay grade as other major unit commanders. In most agencies that would be equivalent to a captain's rank.

2. Civilian unit commanders with a B.A./B.S. should be compensated on the same level as second echelon commanders. That, in most agencies, would equate to lieutenant's pay.

3. Journeymen planners in a multi-member unit should make at least the equivalent of a first-line supervisor. In most agencies that would equate to a sergeant's billet.

4. If the unit will be larger than 2 full-time planners, the least experienced planner should receive no less than normal officer's pay.

When hiring a civilian planner, the agency should advertise for someone who has the skills necessary to accomplish the duties of the job as designed by the agency. As a model, an agency should solicit someone with the following educational background:

1. B.A./B.S. or M.A./M.S. in urban affairs, urban/regional planning, public/business administration or some other closely related course of study.

2. Major course work in statistics, research methods, sociology, information systems, accounting, program evaluation, organizational theory, police science, and other similar courses.

3. Basic knowledge of strategic planning, public relations, grant writing, manpower allocation, personnel management, flow chart design, CPM, PERT, facilities planning, cost/benefit analysis, mechanical drawing, technical writing, or cartography.

4. Computer experience in the software and hardware the agency uses. If the agency is not currently computerized, but plans to, the agency should advertise for someone with experience in Wordperfect, D-Base, Lotus, SAS and/or SPSS.

In advertising for such an individual, the agency can be reasonably assured that based on sample job duties (Table 3) and selected knowledge, skills, and abilities (Table 4) listed in the job announcement, the applicants responding will at least meet the minimum requirements of the position. Unfortunately, the problem is not in finding a technically competent civilian, but rather in finding one who can function and perform those requested skills effectively within a law enforcement environment. As a hiring screen, an agency might wish to:

1. Subject all applicants who meet the minimum qualifications to the same psychological testing as recruit officers receive.

2. Make the oral interview job specific with questions on the technical aspects of planning as well as the normal personal philosophy and background questions.

3. Provide written, analytical word problems to gauge the applicants writing ability and thought processes.

Table 3. Sample job duties of a civilian law enforcement planner.

Responsible for preparation and revision of department policy and procedure.
 Performs surveys.
 Manages CALEA accreditation process.
 Serves as agency computer services coordinator.
 Prepares graphic presentations for various administrative and management studies.
 Assimilates and presents statistical data in relevant format.
 Coordinates and/or conducts various management/operations studies.
 Prepares annual report.
 Prepares annual budget.
 Interprets statistical data for assignment of manpower and work/shift schedules.
 Performs research as required.
 Is responsible for grant applications.
 Supervises office personnel (both sworn and civilian).
 Conducts cost/benefit analysis and related impact studies.
 Develops emergency/disaster contingency plans.
 Researches and coordinates equipment procurement.
 Prepares news releases.
 Services as agency public information officer.

4. Make the applicant answer the written portion of the test on the computer software and hardware currently employed by the agency (if applicable).

Hiring a civilian is time consuming when done properly. Fortunately, the rewards will be realized quickly as field and office staff begin to receive information from the unit which allows them to function more effectively in their positions. Unfortunately, the task of choosing a sworn employee for transfer to a planning unit is even more difficult.

The Sworn Planner

Officers must be selected very carefully. Some will not view their selection as a positive career move. In fact, most officers will see their assignment to planning as a “career stopper.” However, the opposite is true and when making a selection

Table 4. Sample knowledge, skills, and abilities of a civilian law enforcement planner.

Possess working knowledge of government operations and administration.
 Possess knowledge of methods and practices of administration of a law enforcement agency.
 Possess knowledge of the demographics and geography of the service delivery area.
 Have ability to gather facts, make a thorough analysis and arrive at sound conclusions.
 Possess knowledge of common quantitative techniques.
 Possess basic understanding of the operation and use of computers.
 Have ability to present information to large and small groups.
 Have ability to present ideas and recommendations clearly and concisely, both orally and in writing.
 Have ability to analyze situations to adopt quick, effective and reasonable courses of action.
 Possess basis knowledge of mechanical drawing techniques and graphic presentation.
 Have ability to meet deadlines.
 Have ability to provide training and technical advice relating to work performed.
 Have ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with other agencies.

the agency should impress upon the officer that the assignment is recognition of his potential as a problem solver as well as an opportunity to become familiar with the administrative portion of law enforcement work. Several law enforcement agencies even have a requirement in their career development programs where an officer is offered the opportunity to rotate through planning as one option in order to advance.

The officer selected should have at least 3 years street experience. A first line supervisor would be an ideal selection as he or she would more likely understand management's needs as well as the needs of the field officer. The supervisor must also have the basic educational attributes that a civilian planner would have as well as an established rapport with his or her fellow officers (Gruber 1988, pages 24-28).

The Support Staff

As a general rule, 1 planner will require 4 hours of clerical assistance per day. Therefore, a unit with at least 2 planners would require full-time clerical support. In most agencies, the unit secretary becomes a de facto planner and as such, carefully selecting someone with more than basic secretarial skills will be of benefit to the unit and the agency as well.

Often times, certain planning projects will require additional personnel. Research assistants from local colleges or universities can be hired on a project, semester, or intern basis to provide the necessary technical assistance. This not only alleviates the manpower problem, but it provides the agency with an opportunity to establish ties with the local colleges or universities which, as a result, may lend assistance to the agency by providing access to their library, providing computer time, or other such important ancillary services.

The Bottom Line

Over the past decade, the number of agencies establishing planning units has experienced a tremendous growth, yet planning is rarely taught in either recruit or in-service schools. Most officers and civilians alike have had to learn law enforcement planning while on the job. Fortunately, the process of planning is not an art; it is a science with clearly established guidelines that are being taught with increasing frequency at several of the major law enforcement training institutions.

While much of the planner's job appears on the surface to require little more than common sense, technical competence is of vital importance as questions regarding research design have to be answered; statistics are assimilated and analyzed; and reports are researched, written and presented. Too often the planning process falters due to a lack of technically competent staff. It may also become untracked by 1 of the following common weaknesses often exhibited in improperly instituted planning units (Wilson 1952, page 289).

1. Planning is attempted without needed research.
2. Planning is decentralized to the field and to administrative units with little or no coordination.

3. Planning is performed only in the chief executive's office.
4. Planners are too busy focusing on short-range plans for subordinate units that they ignore long-range plans.
5. The planning unit is understaffed and/or poorly qualified.
6. The staff do research, but are not allowed to plan.

In the final analysis, agencies who refuse to recognize the utility of a planning unit are in the long run "planning to fail." A well staffed, properly supervised, and focused planning function can be a major asset to an agency in this increasing complex field of law enforcement. While at first glance establishing a planning unit appears to be a costly endeavor, in the long run, the operation will pay for itself in terms of streamlined operational procedures, establishment of realistic goals, objectives and expectations, and a forward-looking perspective for the agency to follow. The bottom line is, "proper planning prevents poor performance."

Literature Cited

- Anonymous. 1982. Local government police management. International City Management Association. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C.
- , 1987. Standards for law enforcement agencies. Comm. on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc., Fairfax, Va.
- Gruber, G. 1988. *Police planning: there's more to it than meets the eye*. *Law and Order*, No. 5. pages 24–28.
- Kenny, J. P. 1959. *Police administration*. Charles C. Thomas, Publishers, Springfield, Mass.
- Lyles, M. A. 1981. Formulating strategic problems: Empirical analysis and model development. *Strategic Manage. J.* 2, No. 1. Pages 61–75.
- Pindur, W. 1983. *The story of ICAP in the Portsmouth Police Department*. Old Dominion Univ., Norfolk, Va.
- Sheehan, R. and G. W. Coleman. 1979. *Introduction to police administration*. Addison-Wesley, Publishers, Reading, Pa.
- Stone, A. M. and S. M. DeLuca. 1985. *Police administration: An introduction*. John Wiley & Sons, New York.
- Swanson, C. R., L. Territo, and R. W. Taylor. 1988. *Police administration: Structure, processes, behavior*. MacMillan Co., New York.
- Toan, A. B. 1968. *Using information to manage*. Ronald Press, New York.
- Wilson, O. W. 1952. *Police planning*. Charles C. Thomas, Publishers. Springfield, Mass.