

**WHAT WILL THE IMPACT OF REGIONALIZED IN-SERVICE
TRAINING BE ON THE DAVIS POLICE DEPARTMENT
BY THE YEAR 2002?**

JOURNAL ARTICLE

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This Command College Independent Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.

Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing the future--creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

“You can never plan the future by the past”

Edmund Burke

Regionalized In-service Training For Law Enforcement Personnel

The primary importance of establishing an effective in-service training program is to protect the lives and well being of the community and police personnel. This imperative is, of course, intermingled with the need to establish a productive and efficient work force. In spite of the obvious importance to law enforcement’s overall objectives, most agencies approach training in a piecemeal fashion, diminishing its worth. This is true for the six law enforcement agencies that provide service to Yolo County, California. Like many other areas of the nation, we are faced with a training dilemma: how to provide for the ever increasing demand for needed in-service training with shrinking budgets.

Most of the police departments in Yolo County have had to deal with budget restrictions while watching law enforcement become more technical in nature. The proliferation of technology has required most agencies to broaden the scope of their training. Agencies now must minimally include education on mobile data terminals, computer aided dispatch, and automated records management systems.

It is likely that the technical aspects of law enforcement will continue. In 1995 President Clinton and U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno became interested in dual use technology, technology that has uses for law enforcement and the military. The formation of federal agencies like the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NTTC) and the Technology Reinvestment Project (TRP) are likely to guarantee that high technology projects will be moved from the laboratory and the military into the law enforcement market.¹ Currently, there

are millions of dollars of government contracts available to encourage the creation or transfer of useful military technology into the crime fighting arena.² State of the art technology training is generally available to even small rural agencies at some nearby city, private institution, or through commercial vendors. Unfortunately, this training is expensive and can deplete staffing to an unacceptable level.

The State of California, through the Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training, (POST) mandates that certain subjects shall be taught on a periodic basis.³ The number and duration of courses required for sworn police officers over the past fifteen years has steadily increased. In addition, in recent years POST has begun mandating training for civilian employees, namely dispatchers.

For the six agencies who represent the major law enforcement departments in Yolo County to accomplish just the mandated 24 hour POST training every two years, each agency would have to present the same class four times. This means that the same class would be taught 24 times. In spite of this, there would still be some individuals missed because of vacation, injury or illness. In addition, this does not include the peace officers in the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, and County Welfare Fraud Investigators. The obvious duplication of effort does not even address those areas that are not mandated, but are desirable by most agencies to help develop officers into more efficient and effective employees. Nor does it address the problem of training on advanced technology equipment.

In the 1996-1997 U.S. Supreme Court term 99 cases were heard. Of the 99 cases, nearly one quarter dealt with some aspect of criminal law; 11 cited police training as a key in the ruling.⁴ When combined with state and local legislation, it is obvious that if officers tasked with enforcing

the law are to keep abreast of the most advanced techniques and the most recent case law, they will need frequent and in-depth training.

There are few professions that equal law enforcement in public exposure and scrutiny. If an officer takes controversial action, the first question asked by those observing or investigating is, “How well trained was the officer?” It is important for today’s law enforcement leaders to provide training to increase efficiency and productivity. But, in today’s litigious society, managers have an affirmative responsibility to provide training to protect the employees and the organization from law suits. In fact, in a 1989 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *City of Canton v. Harris*, “the court ruled that a municipality can, under some circumstances, be held liable for constitutional violations resulting from a failure to train employees.”⁵

In light of the civil ramifications for departments failing to adequately train personnel, the state mandates, and the proliferation of technological advances in law enforcement, how can agencies hope to accomplish their overall training mission? One method is the integration of training resources. This is the course of action being explored by this author for his agency in Yolo County.

- **Forging the Future**

As important as it is to understand historically where we have been on the issue of in-service law enforcement training and what current areas impact the issue, it is equally important that law enforcement managers project what the future holds.

By using a Nominal Group Technique, (NGT) a study of possible trends and events that could influence regionalization of police in-service training for Yolo County was conducted. Using the timeline of 2002 as a guide to help establish the predictions, experts in the field of finance, regionalization, and/or police training were asked to project what trends and events they

believed would help shape the future of regionalized in-service training. For purposes of this project, “trends” are defined as having a past, present, and future, something that is either qualitative or quantitative, and its past does not necessarily determine the future. “Events” are defined as demonstratable, something specific that does or does not happen, and has a significant impact. The experts predicted that the following trends would both have a high probability of occurrence and a significant impact: 1) a change in the level of community expectations, 2) POST changing its reimbursement policy for funding of schools away from the officer’s home agency, 3) a change in required state mandated training, 4) officer’s skills not keeping pace with the demand from the community, 5) changes in municipal budgets, 6) technology in the workplace.

The panel of experts refined a large number of identified events into the following six major events: 1) change in police chief or sheriff, 2) Yolo County files for bankruptcy, 3) a major lawsuit following a police misconduct incident, 4) a local scandal involving the police department, 5) a major tax revolt resulting in the loss of General Fund tax revenue, 6) redistribution of tax dollars to welfare as part of welfare reform. These events were considered by the panel as having the greatest impact on the law enforcement agencies that could drive the geographic area towards a regionalized training center.

It may be important to identify specific trends and events to aid in predicting the future. However, these trends and events do not take place without some interaction. It is more meaningful for managers to take those trends and events and develop scenarios that describe possible future states. By combining the refined data from the panel, a most likely scenario was developed for the future in Yolo County.

The scenario included a high probability that there will be a regionalized in-service training center developed in Yolo County in the next five to ten years. This direction for the training

programs is impacted by a likely continuation of the tax revolt started in 1978 with the passage of Proposition 13. The reduction in revenues will, of course, negatively impact police budgets. Money will continue to be drained from training budgets to support day to day field operations and staffing.

In addition, there will likely be scandals and legal battles in any or all of the law enforcement agencies in the County. These scandals and law suits will, no doubt, result in a call from the community for improved police service. Community perception will likely reflect that the law enforcement agencies in the County are no longer meeting the expectations of the citizens. There will be little toleration for excuses about a lack of funding.

The plan for successful integration will probably suffer some close calls. For example, the probability of success is greatly diminished if any one of the Police Chiefs or the Sheriff are opposed. Since any attempts to fully integrate training programs will conceivably take several years, and since most agency heads in the State of California last only an average of four years, it is probable that at least one agency will experience a department head change before the completion of the unification. Any organized resistance could cause the collapse of the project.

Just as there will be some close calls, there will be some windfalls. For example, there is a probability there could be new federal money made available as part of the "Clinton Cop" program. In 1997 the federal government began a dramatic revision of the welfare system. This revision continues into the future. The scenario includes a political move on the part of the Democratic Party to bolster support in the 2000 election campaign. President Clinton in an effort to boost the Democratic Candidate, shifted money from welfare to law enforcement. This money was made available through the "Clinton Cop" program.

Scenarios are useful only if they serve some purpose. The design of developing this scenario is to assist the law enforcement leader in establishing viable strategic and transition management plans.

- **Strategic Planning to Success**

Whenever an organization begins to undertake any significant change, there is uncertainty and anxiety. People feel they have lost the ability to predict and anticipate what is going to happen. They have lost control of their environment. One way to mitigate the negative impacts of implementing a significant change in the organizational environment is to develop a strategic plan. Strategic planning is, "A systemic way to create and manage a desirable future."⁶ In other words, it is a map and a compass that an employee can use to get from the current organizational state to the desired future state.

To make this plan successful, eight strategies Yolo County agencies would need to execute to implement an integrated training program were identified. Generally, the first phases of any plan are the most critical. This plan would begin with the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the agencies. It would include the macro and micro mission statements and the vision statement. Next, an integrated policy body would be formed to have policy control over the project. The policy body would meet with participating agencies to develop expectations, scope of control, and the limitations of the participants. One of the main goals of the initial meetings would be to build lines of communications. Ideally, the better the communication, the less people would feel they had lost control. Of key importance is the next step, a needs assessment survey and a current resources availability survey. This analysis would include a search for the appropriate site location, needed capital supplies, structural needs and funding sources. All of these steps need to have feedback. A system for receiving information

and complaints would need to be setup to insure issues are acted upon efficiently and effectively. The operational staff would be selected near the end of the process, followed by the establishment of an implementation calendar. Finally, the agencies using the facility would be trained on the operation and the policies governing the use of the center.

The strategy of bringing together the policy making body and the participating agencies is critical to successful implementation. Line officers need to share in the ownership of the project. This principal of inclusion should carry throughout the entire project.

- **Transition Management**

To change the manner in which an organization operates is transition management. The transition management plan for combining the training programs in Yolo County takes into account the stakeholders' sphere of influence and their commitment, or lack of it, to the project. It allows the law enforcement leader the opportunity to develop a stepwise approach to implementation.

The transition management plan starts by outlining the development of the MOU and identifying those individuals whose support is critical, for example , the natural leaders who exist in every organization. The second and third step deal with the research and the surveys used to determine needed policies and procedures. The fourth step in this transition plan is establishing a reward system for recognition. Providing credit where credit is due is one of the best ways of rewarding individuals who positively participate in the process. Charting who is responsible for particular activities to avoid duplication of effort is the fifth element of this transition management plan. A review of the process and the MOU by each agency, the employee associations, and the City Attorney is the sixth step. The seventh and final stage is the critical examination of the plan

through an after action report. This step is not designed to fix blame. Rather, it is an opportunity to examine the action, or inaction, of the participants in an effort to learn from mistakes or to streamline the process.

- **Conclusion**

In summary, law enforcement agencies in Yolo County are facing a challenge. They are expected to meet the ever-changing expectations of their communities, in a rapidly changing technological environment, while meeting state mandates, and avoiding civil litigation, all on overburdened budgets. One way to meet this challenge is to reduce the duplication that currently exists. Agencies in Yolo County need to explore regionalizing their training programs. Presenting training in the traditional manner will not likely succeed in the future. A noted futurist is quoted in a 1985 article as saying, "Every crisis brings opportunity."⁷ This is true of the training programs in Yolo County and many other similar cities and counties across the State of California.

NOTES

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3. Cal. Penal Code, sec.13500, et seq.
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