

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** First, define the problem exactly as it exists in your particular community. Describe the nature and magnitude of the problem using valid, updated statistical data, and cite the source and date of your information. Prior data may be used to show changes in the magnitude or severity of the problem. Remember to document the problem and not the symptoms or solutions of the problem. Second, identify your existing efforts, current resources and programs being utilized to deal with the problem.

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### **PROBLEM STATEMENT:**

#### **The City of Anderson Police Department**

Composing and transmitting required paperwork for law enforcement related activities is time-consuming and oftentimes the final product is riddled with human errors. State and local requirements dictate that police officers confirm in writing the individual officers' response(s) to criminal complaints as well as complaints made by private citizens who are victimized (or who have knowledge of criminal activity). Furthermore, judiciary procedures require that victims of crime have a copy of a properly filled out Uniform Crime Report (UCR) in hand when they approach the court to seek a warrant or other types of relief against defendants.

In addition to the time and quality problems associated with handwritten incident reports, the South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) has mandated that local law enforcement agencies within the state begin *electronically* transmitting all incident reports to SLED by the end of calendar year 2003. Currently, in an effort to meet the interim requirements of SLED's UCR department, City of Anderson Police Department personnel manually codes all officers' incident reports that are submitted to the department in hard copy form by officers. These coded reports are then mailed to SLED via the United States Postal Service (USPO). This is another step in the process that adds time and decreases the department's efficiency.

In conjunction with the problems associated with composing, compiling, and transmitting several thousand incident reports to SLED each year, effectively managing department resources and personnel on a limited budget requires up-to-date and accurate crime analysis. Crime rates and "hot spots" must be constantly re-evaluated and correlated to other areas and previous periods in time in order to understand the changes in the crime rates and the movement of criminal activity within a particular jurisdiction. This ability, commonly referred to as *Crime Mapping*, provides the management of a policing agency the data and information that it needs to allocate its workforce efficiently, thereby maximizing the quality of life and the safety of the public with a limited amount of tax dollars. In other words, departments that employ crime mapping are enabled to work smarter, respond to crime quicker, and decrease crime rates while adding little or no additional personnel, equipment, and miscellaneous expense to its budget. The City of Anderson Police Department has historically been conducting rudimentary analysis of this type by hand. Non-electronic research of this type can take from between a few days and several weeks to complete. At best, it yields a composite of crime as of a previous point in time. At worst, the finished product is useless to law enforcement since it is often too old to use for any purpose except inclusion in the annual report.

During fiscal year 2002, City of Anderson Police Officers responded to 32,782 calls-for service, hand-wrote 4,127 criminal incident reports and hand-wrote 1,599 traffic accident reports.<sup>1</sup> The 32,782 calls for police service resulted in arrests of hundreds of suspects and produced 2,316 criminal charges and 4,509 traffic citations. The 2,316 criminal charges resulted in actual custodial arrests, necessitating paperwork in addition to incident reports. Included in these charges are both violent and nonviolent offenders. In the aforementioned time frame, officers investigated a number of serious crimes including 3 murders, 14 rapes, 15 arsons, 44 aggravated assaults, 48 robberies, 174, motor vehicle thefts, 224 larceny-thefts, and 352 burglaries. Compared to lesser crimes, incident reports narrating investigations of serious crimes require a substantial amount of time to compose, proof, correct, and code. In addition, the manual coding now employed by department personnel uses a disproportionate amount of time and resources as compared to their other duties.

Also included in the FY02 (32,782) calls-for-service were 21 shooting assaults, 58 chases, 102 “armed suspect(s)”, 375 fights in progress, 461 assaults, 836 civil disturbances, 2,051 calls investigating suspicious person(s), 2,078 arguments, and 6,199 stops of “suspicious vehicles”. These are further examples of the types of calls that officers are required to document on criminal incident reports (UCRs) so that private citizens can later procure a warrant or seek other relief against criminal perpetrators through the court system.

In FY02 the department’s narcotic division made 200 General Sessions (state court) criminal cases and 254 Municipal (city court) criminal cases against known or suspected (potential) narcotics traffickers. Officers seized powdered cocaine worth \$741, Methamphetamines worth \$2,420, Assorted Pills worth \$5,300, Marijuana worth \$8,432.26, and \$113,680 worth of Crack-Cocaine.<sup>2</sup> Officers must write individual incident reports involving every drug arrest and every drug-related seizure. Narcotics investigators typically write numerous reports concerning citizen complaints of *suspected* drug activity. Recent procedures have been implemented by SLED that require criminal incident reports involving drugs to have an additional sheet filled out during the coding process. This additional requirement increases the amount of time involved in the paperwork aspect of law enforcement and decreases the amount of resources available to actually “fight” crime.

According to internal information<sup>3</sup> that was tabulated in response to the questions “How much time does the various aspects of SLED coding require?” and “What are the analytical capabilities of the current system?” the following answer was given:

It takes an average of 8 minutes to code each incident report. If a supplemental report is [necessary] it takes approximately 10 minutes for each one to be completed. Twenty percent of the reports require a supplemental report. Drug reports require a separate page to be completed for each drug that is listed on the incident report. These reports take approximately 16 minutes to complete. Thirty-two percent of the reports are drug reports.

Fifty-eight percent of all reports have some kind of officer error. When [reports] have these errors it takes us twice as long to code them. Twenty-five percent of them have illegible narratives that are hard to read. When trying to decipher the narratives it could take 20 minutes or longer to complete a report...Fifty percent of our reports have

been returned for errors...When we receive these reports back, it takes approximately 15 minutes to look up the information and complete a new form. The current computer sys-

<sup>1</sup> City of Anderson Police Department Fiscal year 2002 Annual Report. Page 3.

<sup>2</sup> City of Anderson Police Department Fiscal year 2002 Annual Report. Page 28. All values are “street value”.

<sup>3</sup> Internal memo (email) dated December 23, 2002. Ms. Amy Sexton, Administrative Assistant to the Chief.

tem that we are using is not able to rate or map statistical information. We cannot do any kind of analysis whatsoever.

The following table depicts numerically the time involved in addressing the above referenced matters:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u># Hours of Minutes Time Involved Coding Only</u>
Number of Incident Reports by Officers FY02:	4127	8.0	550.3
Percent of Reports That Require a Supplemental (20%):	826	2.0	27.5
Drug Reports That Req. Additional Report Page (32%):	1321	8.0	176.1
Reports That Have At Least One Error (58%):	2394	8.0	319.2
Illegible Errors in Narratives (25%):	1032	12.0	206.4
Number of Reports Returned for Errors (50%):	2064	15.0	516.0
Total Number of Hours To Meet SLED Coding Requirements:			1795.5
Number of Hours per Month to Meet SLED Coding Requirements:			149.6
Number of Hours per Business Day to Meet SLED Coding Requirements:			7.1

As tabulated in the above chart it takes approximately 7.1 man-hours on average per business day for City of Anderson Police Department personnel to code and index all of its UCR reports as per SLED’s manual coding requirements. In response to another question - “How many people are involved in the SLED / UCR coding process?” - six different persons were named.<sup>4</sup> This transfer of the reports from one person to another requires additional time per report that is not included in the above tabulation. We believe that it would be safe to infer that – including the inter-office transfer time – on average, every business day, the amount of time required for the state mandated process of coding UCRs is equivalent to a full time person.

**EXISTING EFFORTS and CURRENT RESOURCES**

The City of Anderson Police Department currently has a computer system that allows support personnel to enter handwritten criminal charges and tickets into a database. The system also permits the booking department to enter data regarding arrestees’ charges and allows office personnel to receive and account for fine and bond moneys by printing receipts for “customers”.

At present, all incident and traffic reports must be hand-written. Our existing system is incapable of allowing data entry of criminal incident reports into a database. When officers are finished writing a report, they bring their handwritten report(s) to the front office where the reports are corrected and “coded” to meet SLED’s interim requirements (for those department’s lacking the capability to electronic submit reports). After the coding process is concluded, the reports are rechecked, copied, and transmitted to SLED via the mail. As a final step, all reports are scanned into the current information system for later retrieval, as needed. However, the existing system is incapable of any type of analysis. It is limited to simply “taking a picture” of the incident report and saving it on disk. In short, the current system is useless for analysis and has no practical application to proactive law enforcement activities.

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<sup>4</sup> Internal memo (email) dated December 23, 2002. Captain G. Keith Smith, (Senior Captain, Director of Records Department)

### CONCLUSION:

The influx of reports regarding violent crime, drug crime, and property crime is continuous. It is virtually impossible for the existing personnel to continue to write, correct, code and decipher the excessive number of error-ridden UCRs that are filled out by the department's officers.

After extensive analysis, City of Anderson Police Department management personnel have determined that a South Carolina Incident Based Reporting System<sup>5</sup> (SCIBRS), compatible with SLED's requirements for electronic submission of UCR incident reports to SLED, will greatly increase efficiency of department personnel and enhance the quality of life of citizens by making existing personnel more efficient. In an effort to determine the practical ramifications of implementing this type of program into the City of Anderson's Law Enforcement efforts, department personnel have visited several police agencies that are currently "up and running" with SCIBRS programs within the state of South Carolina. In those departments utilizing SCIBRS programs, the reporting process is more efficient because reports are "done right the first time" due to the fact that these programs prohibit officers from submitting incomplete or improperly filled out reports. In addition, SCIBRS computer generated reports can be completed much faster due to the use of drop down menus, which anticipate and limit an officer's options during the data entry phase of any section. Finally, these programs allow the same data entered into the UCR reports to be correlated and analyzed for crime mapping purposes, and can be selected to control for any area and any time frame, thereby eliminating the time-consuming activities of copying and re-entering of UCR data into another database when analysis is needed.

An electronic SCIBRS project has a practical application in that it will allow the City of Anderson Police Department to become more proactive in its efforts toward crime prevention via community oriented policing, rather than simply maintaining our current levels. This proposed project would enable the City of Anderson Police Department to develop and transmit reports in a more efficient and error-free manner. Furthermore, the program will meet SLED's mandates. The time saved by officers being enabled to complete and transmit reports more efficiently can be utilized by those same officers to aggressively combat crime in their assigned neighborhoods, thereby decreasing the crime rate without adding costly personnel. Finally, by developing problem solving solutions for our communities through crime analysis and mapping, the intelligence-gathering aspect of the existing community oriented policing function will be enhanced.

Police Department funding through the general revenue is projected to stay at its current level for at least two more years thus precluding the department from adding additional personnel or equipment without outside funding. Internal analysis indicates that the department can address an increased number of calls-for-service and more efficiently apprehend criminals by installing and utilizing intelligence gathering equipment. If implemented, a SCIBRS program will allow the department to increase arrests and decrease the violent crime rate without adding additional long-term cost. The cost of implementing this project is beyond the reach of our agency's current resources. The increased expenditure will not be feasible without outside assistance.

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<sup>5</sup> The terms *South Carolina Incident Based Reporting System (SCIBRS)* and *National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS)* may be used synonymously.