

The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Network Mini-Guide Series: **MANAGING A CJCC IN A SMALL JURISDICTION**



Aimee Wickman, Project Associate, The Justice Management Institute
December, 2013

This project was supported by Grant No. 2010-DB-BX-K005 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the SMART Office, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not represent the official position or policies of the United States Department of Justice.

The CJCC Network Mini-Guide Series: Managing a CJCC in a Small Jurisdiction

By: Aimee Wickman

Criminal Justice Coordinating Councils (CJCCs) are central forums for creating solutions to major system-wide issues that confront their jurisdictions.¹ A primary challenge is pinpointing effective tools for prescribing solutions for the specific needs of the community. Differences in jurisdictions bring different demands to CJCCs. Thus, for CJCCs in small jurisdictions, different solutions may be required than those that might work best in large jurisdiction CJCCs.

While the distinction between “small” and “large” is subjective and is not easily defined, for the purposes of this article, we are defining “small” as those jurisdictions considered to have a low population density. These areas have a relatively small population when also taking into account the geographic size. This dynamic makes it difficult to reach out to all the individuals within their jurisdiction.² Additionally, small jurisdictions often operate under a more limited budget, with lower salaries, and fewer staff and resources.

The role of CJCCs can become acute, particularly as a source for innovative and collaborative resources with which small jurisdictions may innately have difficulties connecting. To find out more about the challenges that CJCCs face, JMI conducted a survey of 78 CJCC leaders and coordinators from around the country. Fifty percent of respondents considered themselves to represent a low population density jurisdiction and fifty percent considered themselves to represent a large population density jurisdiction. The majority of the coordinators, from both small and large jurisdictions, responded that collaboration, engagement, and consensus are the biggest challenges they face, closely followed by funding. All respondents were asked about the biggest internal management challenge with which they struggle. In both large and small jurisdictions, the most common responses were collaboration, funding, member involvement, staffing, and data. This informs us that, while the common belief may be that jurisdictions of vastly different sizes face different problems, all CJCCs seem to struggle with similar challenges. The main difference, however, is the magnitude of the issues and the options for overcoming them.

Our survey also asked the respondents to think about how their challenges may differ from a jurisdiction with a very different population density. The benefit of being small or large is that the lessons learned in either size can provide insight to those of the same size as well as offer a unique perspective to others. When asked how the challenges in a jurisdiction of a different size might differ from your own, our survey respondents had a range of opinions. Large jurisdiction CJCC members thought they may have more resources and involvement from more people. However, they felt that, due to the increased number of agencies, communication and consensus may be a more substantial

¹ “Criminal justice coordinating council,” or CJCC, is the term used in this article to refer to the full array of informal and formal committees known by a variety of names across the United States that provide a forum for key justice system agency officials and other general government officials to address criminal justice system issues.

² Fetter, Theodore J., and E. Keith Stott Jr. (1980). “Court Administration in Rural Areas.” *Public Administration Review* 40 (1): 34-39.

problem. In addition, respondents suggested that larger jurisdictions deal with more concentrated poverty, a higher volume of cases, more courts, and certain specific issue areas relevant to urban areas (e.g. gang violence and disproportionate minority confinement). Small jurisdictions responded that they differ from large jurisdictions in that they have a large geographic area to cover that often includes multiple municipalities. For that reason, there is an increased reliance on travel but with limited public transportation options. Respondents also noted that smaller jurisdictions suffer from having fewer community resources and fewer members from whom to draw in addition to limited staff, training, and employment opportunities. An issue area some feel they face more than large jurisdictions is the higher amount of drug use per capita in rural areas.

Regardless of the scope of the problem and available options, it is clear that CJCCs play an important role in creating coordinated responses to overcoming challenges in a jurisdiction. One thing on which many survey respondents agreed, from both small and large jurisdictions, is that relationships within a CJCC are more intimate in smaller jurisdictions. Everyone knows each other and, for the most part, is tuned into what is going on throughout the area. Small jurisdictions can benefit from having this tight-knit community and put their efforts toward fixing the problems that vex their criminal justice systems. For this reason, small jurisdictions can act as a microcosm and, in addition to informing other small communities, they may be able to provide a perspective useful to larger jurisdictions. Despite differences between jurisdictions of varying sizes, not to mention even among those that are the same size, CJCCs can always learn something from one another.

To gain a better picture of the impact of CJCCs on small jurisdictions, The Justice Management Institute (JMI) conducted separate interviews with two of the members of the National Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Network who represent small communities.³ Brian McKenrick is the CJCC Coordinator in Clinton County, Iowa. The Clinton County CJCC was established in 2009. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Clinton County had a population of 49,116 and a population density of 70.7 people per square mile. Toby Olvera is the CJCC Coordinator in Coconino County, Arizona. Coconino's CJCC was established in 2006. Coconino, which includes the city of Flagstaff, has a larger population than Clinton County with 134,421. However, the county, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, covers 18,661.21 square miles; giving Coconino a population density of six people per square mile. Clinton and Coconino Counties obviously do not necessarily face the same type of crime issues that one might find in a large urban jurisdiction, like Chicago or Los Angeles, but they face similar struggles nonetheless. In this CJCC Mini-Guide Series, Brian and Toby explain the importance of having a CJCC in a small jurisdiction to deal with issues in the criminal justice system and how their CJCCs have confronted some of the major challenges; which can inform jurisdictions both small and large.⁴

³ This Mini-Guide Series is being presented by The Justice Management Institute as part of the National Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Network project. For more information, please visit: www.jmijustice.org.

⁴ Visit Appendix A of this article to see the membership of both Coconino and Clinton Counties Criminal Justice Coordinating Councils.

Why is it important to have a CJCC in a small jurisdiction like yours?

Brian K. McKenrick: Smaller communities have the same limitations on resources as large jurisdictions, and therefore they can benefit from the collaboration and cooperation CJCCs foster and provide.

Toby V. Olvera: The needs of a small jurisdiction vary in scale but not in type from those of larger jurisdictions. Because we lack the resources that others have at their disposal, working in a collaborative fashion is perhaps even more vital since it allows us to utilize our limited resources in the most efficient manner possible.

Brian McKenrick is the Coordinator for the Justice Coordinating Commission in Clinton County, Iowa

How was your CJCC initiated? Whose idea was it?

BKM: In Clinton County, we were experiencing significant jail overcrowding. At one point, we were housing nearly as many individuals in neighboring county jails as we held in our own facility. Our sheriff, looking toward the prospect of replacing our jail built in 1969, contacted the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) for technical assistance. Among their recommendations was forming a CJCC in order to improve data collection and analysis of our jail population as well as identify areas where we could improve the overall efficiency of the entire justice system.

Toby Olvera is the Coordinator for the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council in Coconino County, Arizona

TVO: Like many jurisdictions, Coconino County was struggling with an ever increasing jail population that was taxing our resources and posed a threat to the long-term sustainability of our jail. Over the years the county had formed an informal CJCC that was meeting to address problems on an ad-hoc basis, and this group brought in consultants from NIC to help with our jail management issues. The NIC ultimately recommended that we formalize our CJCC and use this group to help manage overcrowding issues in the future and to improve overall system functioning.

What recommendations can you provide on how to either gain funding for full-time staff or how to do your best without it?

BKM: When a small workgroup of our stakeholders visited other communities with a CJCC, they heard firsthand the importance of staffing. One of the first tasks that the Clinton County Justice Coordinating Commission (the Commission) undertook upon its formation was to hire a full time coordinator. The only way this was possible was through the support of our county's Board of Supervisors.

TVO: Coconino County did not have full-time staffing until very recently. We began with a coordinator hired basically as a part-time independent contractor and then county employees and council members took on the coordinator position in addition to their full-time duties. Though obviously having people working for the council on what was essentially a volunteer, part-time basis was a tremendous commitment on their part, their dedication and accomplishments are what paved the way for regular

staffing. I think looking back at the lessons we learned, having someone passionate about the mission of the CJCC who will take on the role and help score some amazing successes really opened the door for staffing. Funding agencies were able to look at those concrete examples of how the organization increases efficiencies and improves public safety to make the decision to staff easy.

Do you ever feel overlooked as a small jurisdiction even though you might have the same issues as larger jurisdictions? If so, how do you deal with that?

BKM: It certainly is hard being a smaller community on the edge of the state. In the last four years, I have shared Clinton County's experience with every other community that would listen. At times, that has resulted in the formation of some productive partnerships. For example, a group of Iowa communities have started the Iowa Therapeutic Alternatives to Incarceration Coalition. Additionally, one of the goals that I have pushed within the CJCC is improving data integration and automation. With a statewide project already in the works, we will be working alongside the state to supplement and enhance the statewide project at a local level. It is my hope that this coordinated project will really place Clinton County on the map as a model for the state.

TVO: I believe our council is unique in our state so I view being a less populous jurisdiction works to our advantage in that we have much more flexibility and greater communication amongst our stakeholders. Because of that I do not feel we are overlooked so much as we are pioneering a new approach to criminal justice in our area and leading by example.

What types of projects have your CJCC initiated?

BKM: One of the first projects initiated by the Commission was a court reminder program. One of the problems we identified early on was the number of warrants being issued for failure to appear in court. Doctors, dentists, and hair stylists have understood for a long time that reminding clients of their appointments improves the rate of appearance. Similarly, volunteers make phone calls once a week in Clinton County to individuals scheduled for review hearings to remind them of their court appearance. This low cost program has significantly reduced the rate of warrants being issued, thereby saving the time of judges, court administration, clerk of court, communications professionals, law enforcement officers, and jail staff.



Doctors, dentists, and hair stylists have understood for a long time that reminding clients of their appointments improves the rate of appearance. Similarly, volunteers make phone calls once a week in Clinton County to individuals scheduled for review hearings to remind them of their court appearance.



The Commission has also begun a warrant resolution program to clear out hundreds of warrants clogging up our system. Most of these warrants are actually old bench warrants issued for failure to appear or to make a payment. In these cases, we can actually recall the warrant, enter judgment for amounts owed, and collect the revenue through the Iowa Offset Program. For other pending cases, our county attorney is reviewing case files to

determine whether those cases can even be prosecuted after so much time has passed. After this process, we will be able to more effectively direct law enforcement and prosecutorial resources at violent offenders.

TVO: We have initiated countless projects with varying degrees of success. I think the more successful initiatives have been:

- Crisis Intervention Training for law enforcement officers
- A jail-based substance abuse treatment program
- Court Reminder Call System
- Veteran's Court
- Mental Health Court
- System Performance Study

Exodus, our jail based substance abuse treatment program, has been extraordinarily successful and that success has helped gain support for other initiatives. I believe the success of the program has helped tremendously with the buy-in from all of our members.

How do you know that having a CJCC is cost effective?

BKM: The easiest way to measure the economic impact of our CJCC is to compare our jail population—and the related expenses for housing inmates in other counties—prior to the formation of the CJCC with the average annual expense since that time. Coming from a small jurisdiction with a small budget, this information is readily available.

TVO: Because a significant portion of our county and municipal budgets are expended on public safety related programs, the relatively minor expenditure in a group that can have system-wide impact on both efficiencies and public safety is really obvious to everyone involved.

When has cost been the biggest barrier?

BKM: There are two primary examples where cost has limited our ability to implement projects:

- Hiring a full time licensed social worker to screen inmates for needed services and to connect them with community resources upon their release.
- Purchasing a more functional and user-friendly records management system for law enforcement.

TVO: Until last year our CJCC operated without any dedicated full-time staffing. Members would normally take on the council duties in addition to their regular jobs which was difficult for them and somewhat limiting in terms of capitalizing on known successes and opportunities the group would develop. In the absence of regular staff, sometimes it was difficult to focus on more than one or two key undertakings at any given time.

For any initiatives you have mentioned so far, how do you come up with the resources to do these things? Any specific strategies?

BKM: The best advice I can give is to be clear and concise with why you need the funding, what it will specifically go to, and how you will measure whether there is a benefit. If you can accomplish those three things, you should be able to obtain the financial support required. Success in this field is

incredibly dependent upon communication, because most of the individuals you will be speaking to for funding have little exposure or understanding to the issues you are trying to solve.

TVO: The most important thing is to broaden your perspective of what the criminal justice system is. For instance, if we identify a need for substance abuse treatment resources, we work with our health department to see what they have utilized outside the criminal justice context. For the probation program mentioned above, we worked with the county information technology and Geographic Information System (GIS)⁵ department to take existing, off-the-shelf technology currently utilized elsewhere in our county and make it work for our purposes. The important thing is to remember the criminal justice “system” is not just law enforcement, judges, and jailers and it is vital to build relationships with all the entities throughout the area.

How do you prioritize your efforts within the constraints of limited resources? With so many great models out there, how do you decide where to start?

BKM: We started with the low-hanging fruit. The easier stuff—more logistical problem solving than program development—does not cost very much, and getting those small successes under your belt will help maintain the interest and buy-in from stakeholders.

TVO: I believe in every situation your first priority has to be ensuring there is an accurate definition of the problem. With respect to coordinating councils tasked with improving public safety and promoting efficient system operations that means creating the infrastructure necessary to regularly assess the operational and substantive functioning of the local justice system. For operational measurements this means creating measurements of things like case flow and caseloads in the various agencies. Substantive measurements involve assessing the outcomes of criminal justice programming—things like crime rate, recidivism, and program outcomes. Once you have these standard measurements in place then you can move on to the exciting things such as instituting new programs which will vary based on local needs. Though it is tempting to jump right into new programs like specialty courts or crime prevention initiatives, without those baseline measurements you will be at a disadvantage and largely guessing at what problems need to be addressed and what the best way is to address them. As a benefit to this approach, you are able to point to actual results of council efforts as a way to ensure the long-term sustainability of the council.

Do you have difficulty with access to resources and service providers? If so, how have you dealt with that?

BKM: Emphatically yes. We continue to have difficulty working with a limited number of service providers in the community. This is not for lack of will but a lack of resources. We have had a problem particularly with respect to mental health. The state's regionalization of mental health services over the past couple of years has created a lot of uncertainty in the field and stifled the creation of innovative partnerships.

⁵ For more information on the use of GIS in CJCCs, please visit our website to read the CJCC Mini-Guide Series article on the use of [GIS in Multnomah County, Oregon](#).

TVO: Because of our rural character and large service area, service providers and resources are sometimes hard to come by. I wish there was a good solution to offer but really the best way we have to address it is ensuring we are getting the most out of the resources we do have available. We do not have the luxury of inefficiency which makes the mission of the council all the more important.

How have you dealt with cutting costs while still being innovative?

BKM: Our Commission was created in the midst of the 2008 recession. Our budget started small—less than \$100,000—so cutting costs has not been an issue for the Commission. This is especially true when, by contrast, we were spending in excess of \$400,000 each year housing inmates in neighboring counties. The aforementioned cuts to mental health services have hindered our ability to address those issues in the jail.

TVO: To a certain degree we have historically sought out grant funding to fund initiatives. This has its limits, most notably in that most grants are not infinite funding sources and at some point the money runs out. To ensure sustainability of our efforts, I am working towards implementing more cost-benefit analysis into our approach so that we can prioritize where we allocate our resources and ensure that we are getting the most ‘bang for the buck.’

Many of the large jurisdictions discuss various forms of technology developments (e.g. data warehouses, integrated case management and data systems, electronic filing, etc.). However, these are initiatives that might not be available with a small jurisdiction’s budget. How do you get past this issue and keep up to date in the world of technology?

BKM: Despite our size, nearly every organization in our system uses some type of records or case management system. That means that the data is there. The challenge is just harvesting that data. At a minimum, prosecutors can remotely access systems in the Sheriff’s Office and City of Clinton Police Department to copy video evidence and review jail data. Even though there is not automation, information sharing can still be improved.

One of the ways we have reduced cost is to spread it across multiple jurisdictions. The City of Clinton, the county seat, has contracted with the county’s information technology professionals to provide support to the police department. This enables hardware and software purchases to be spread out across multiple jurisdictions, which in turn has improved coordination and compatibility.

Right now we are exploring other technical assistance resources available to improve data integration and automation in our local systems while the State of Iowa continues its own criminal justice information systems project.

TVO: We have been lucky to have fairly sophisticated systems in place, though certainly nothing on par with what the larger jurisdictions are able to field. The biggest challenge for us has been getting beyond basic descriptive statistics to analyze trends and program effectiveness. To overcome this, we have reached out to the state Statistical Analysis Center for help in expanding our capacity.

What have been the biggest hurdles?

BKM: It can be difficult at times to express the importance of collecting certain data and establish routines in member agencies/offices to collect and report the data. Another significant hurdle that we routinely face is emphasizing that under the framework of our CJCC the member entities must take ownership of tasks instead of relying upon CJCC staff to perform all of the necessary work.

TVO: Limited resources. Because our council has so many creative, intelligent members, there is no shortage of good ideas. Finding ways to implement them with limited funding sources is always a challenge.

What are the biggest benefits to working within a small jurisdiction?

BKM: By far the biggest benefit in a small jurisdiction is the natural camaraderie between stakeholders. Everyone knows each other very well, since it is a smaller community. There also is a lot less bureaucratic tape to cut through to implement changes.

TVO: The biggest benefit to working within a jurisdiction with a relatively small population is the cordial, genuine relationships that everyone has.

What do you think you can learn from larger jurisdictions? And what can they learn from you?

BKM: Larger jurisdictions have been addressing these issues for much longer, which makes them a powerhouse of information. However, larger jurisdictions could probably learn how a truly collaborative and cooperative environment (common in smaller jurisdictions) can unleash success. The ideal CJCC would combine the knowledge and resources of a larger jurisdiction with the attitude and environment of a smaller jurisdiction.

TVO: Coordinating councils, no matter the size of the jurisdiction, all have the same mission so it is really just about scale. I think the value of networked councils is we can look to what works and what does not elsewhere and then modify it or scale it based on our needs and unique circumstances.

In what ways does your jurisdiction deal with issues related to geographical distance between and among individuals, agencies, and resources?

BKM: Luckily, Iowa has 99 counties. When it was planned, each county seat had to be no more than one day's horse ride from anywhere in the county. As such, we do not have too many geographic challenges when compared with many other jurisdictions across the country.

TVO: One of the exciting paths we are exploring is expanding the use of technological solutions such as delivery of criminal justice programming via internet technologies. Technology has revolutionized so many different fields and I think it is vital for the criminal justice community to keep pace. We recently applied for a grant to fund a probation program designed around delivering traditional cognitive behavioral therapy and adult mentoring services to remote locations utilizing web-based conferencing and curriculum. In short, it basically takes the online education model and applies it to probation services with the idea being that we can deliver these services to at-risk populations that normally would have little to no access to them.

How do you manage the time commitment when, in a small jurisdiction, everyone has to do everything?

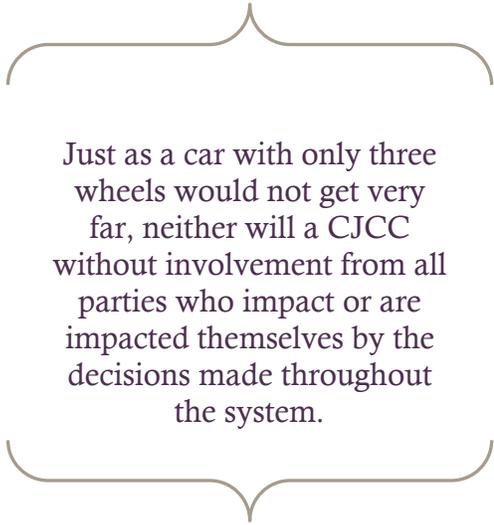
BKM: Everyone has to find their personal balance. It really all starts with goal setting, though. When working with a CJCC, it is vital to set realistic goals that take into account the time necessary to achieve them. I do not believe in setting people and organizations up for failure but rather success. If you cannot possibly achieve everything you would like in the timeframe given, sacrifice a project for action at a later date.

TVO: On paper our council has a staff of one: me. In reality, because our members are committed to the success of the council, the staffing numbers in the hundreds because every agency is willing to commit their time, their resources, and their people to ensuring what needs to be done gets done. Without that buy in, I am not sure there is any way for a council to succeed without more human resources.

What advice would you give other CJCCs in small jurisdictions?

BKM: My advice to other small jurisdictions forming a CJCC is to not dwell on the limitations naturally imposed by smaller communities which act as barriers to big projects (e.g. more limited budgets and fewer community resources) and instead focus on the small procedural improvements that can have a substantial and lasting impact. Get those small successes under your belt and build off of them.

TVO: In forming a CJCC it is vital to get broad support from all the key players in the criminal justice community including heads of law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, probation departments, court administrators, as well as local government leaders from several jurisdictions. Just as a car with only three wheels would not get very far, neither will a CJCC without involvement from all parties who impact or are impacted themselves by the decisions made throughout the system.



Just as a car with only three wheels would not get very far, neither will a CJCC without involvement from all parties who impact or are impacted themselves by the decisions made throughout the system.

This Mini-Guide Series is being presented by The Justice Management Institute as part of the National Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Network project.
For more information, please visit: www.jmijustice.org.

Appendix A CJCC Membership

The Clinton County, Iowa Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission is made up of:

- County Board of Supervisors
- District Court (general jurisdiction)
- District Associate Court (juvenile; small claims; misdemeanors; municipal infractions)
- Clerk of Court
- County Attorney
- County Sheriff
- Jail Administrator
- Gateway Area Police Administrators (group of municipal law enforcement agencies)
- Department of Corrections (probation/parole)
- County Mental Health & Substance Abuse Coordinator
- Defense Attorney
- Citizen Member from the City of Clinton
- Citizen Member from the rural areas of the County

The Executive Committee of the Coconino County, Arizona Criminal Justice Coordinating Council is made up of:

- Presiding Judge Coconino County Superior Court (Chair) (general jurisdiction)
- Presiding Judge, Coconino County Juvenile Court
- Chair of the County Board of Supervisors
- Presiding Magistrate, City of Flagstaff
- Coconino County Sheriff
- Coconino County Attorney
- Mayor, City of Flagstaff
- Flagstaff Chief of Police
- Coconino County Manager
- Flagstaff City Manager
- Coconino County Public Defender
- Court Administrator, Superior Court
- Director, Juvenile Court Services
- Chief Probation Officer