



POLICE INVESTIGATIONS:
Improvements needed
to address relatively low clearance rates

A REPORT FROM THE CITY AUDITOR
July 2005



Office of the City Auditor
Portland, Oregon

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CITY OF
PORTLAND, OREGON

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July 29, 2005

TO: Tom Potter, Mayor
Sam Adams, Commissioner
Randy Leonard, Commissioner
Dan Saltzman, Commissioner
Erik Sten, Commissioner
Derrick Foxworth, Chief of Police

SUBJECT: Audit of Police Investigations, Report #312

Attached is Report #312 containing the results of our audit of Police Investigations. The audit was included in our annual audit schedule and was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

As a follow-up to our recommendations, we ask that the Police Chief prepare a status report in one year, detailing steps taken to address the report recommendations. This status report should be submitted to the Audit Services Division and coordinated through the Commissioner in Charge.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance we received from personnel in the Portland Police Bureau as we conducted this audit.


GARY BLACKMER
City Auditor

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Attachment

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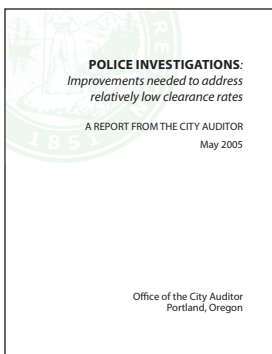
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RESPONSES TO THE AUDIT

Mayor Tom Potter
Police Chief Derrick Foxworth



Production/Design

This report was produced in-house using desktop publishing software on Pentium 4 personal computers, and a Hewlett Packard Laserjet PCL/Postscript laser printer. It was printed at the Printing and Distribution Division of the City's Bureau of General Services. Adobe InDesign CS PageMaker version was used to design and layout the finished product. Tables were created in InDesign. Some text was initially written in Microsoft Word, then imported into InDesign for formatting and layout.

Summary

Portland's rate of "clearing" serious "person crimes" is in the bottom half of similarly sized cities in the United States. "Person crimes" refer to crimes that take place while the victim is present, while "clearing" a crime case means that police have arrested a suspect in the crime or determined that no arrest can be made. Crime clearance rates are tracked nationally, according to specific standards. Specifically, Portland clears the crimes of murder, rape, aggravated assault and burglary less often than most other cities with populations between 500,000 and 1,000,000, according to national crime data from the U.S. Department of Justice. Portland does a better than average job of clearing robbery and larceny cases. There are many crimes, however, that are not assigned to detectives, even though they meet the Bureau's criteria for follow-up investigation.

Portland's clearance rate is low despite a dedicated Police Bureau staff and an organizational structure similar to its peer agencies in other cities. Compared to other cities, however, Portland has the fewest number of Detectives and the lowest ratio of Detectives per 100,000 residents, resulting in a significantly higher workload per detective than comparable cities. Portland also has one of the lowest percentages of sworn staff dedicated to detective work.

Although additional detectives could help solve more crimes, our review of other cities does not demonstrate a one-to-one correlation between the number of detectives and the number of crimes solved. In other words, hiring additional detectives will not ensure a higher clearance rate. Thus, we cannot conclusively state that improving the Bureau's clearance rate is simply a matter of hiring more detectives.

While the Bureau develops a solid model for estimating its detective staffing needs, we recommend a number of management system and process improvements which we believe would begin to address Portland's low clearance rate. For example, improvements to the detective Case Management System (CMS) are critical. Problems with the CMS have led to the creation of many stand-alone databases which isolate key information needed by all detectives. Further, because of problems with the CMS, the Police Bureau cannot generate basic, reliable crime and detective productivity statistics. Our office has discussed shortcomings in the Case Management System with the Police Bureau in the past, yet problems continue to limit the Bureau's ability to track and solve criminal cases.

Further, the Police Bureau has not articulated clear goals stating what it wants to achieve with its investigative resources. Establishing clear goals and objectives would help the Bureau focus its efforts on strategically identified needs. The City's Managing for Results (MFR) process is an opportunity for the Bureau to begin to tie resources to program-related goals and results. By engaging in MFR, the Bureau should be able to clarify what it is trying to accomplish with the investigative function, where it stands now, why, and if the current level of resources is adequate or needs adjustment.

Our experience auditing management systems indicates that improving management oversight, feedback, equipment, and information systems will positively impact the Bureau's effectiveness and improve the Bureau's accountability. We make several recommendations to address these issues:

- Improve the Police Bureau's performance measurement system, including determining overall goals and objectives for the investigative function
- Develop a model for detective staffing that incorporates clearance rate goals and other performance objectives
- Improve the Case Management System
- Make improvements to the preliminary investigations process, specifically in supervisory oversight, coaching, and training for officers who need individual help in report writing skills

- Standardize procedures on supervisory oversight, case review, and feedback for detectives in the case management process
- Explore ways to minimize turnover within the command structure of the Detective Division
- Provide additional computer equipment for detectives

Finally, once improved management systems and a detective staffing model are in place to guide strategic resource decisions and promote accountability, the Bureau should consider its needs for more detectives.

Chapter 1 Introduction

In 2004, there were over 45,000 serious crimes reported in the city of Portland. The Portland Police Bureau spends about \$26 million each year to investigate these incidents, apprehend criminals, and prepare cases for prosecution. Solving crime is critical to achieving the Bureau's goal of reducing crime and the fear of crime. Effectively solving criminal cases requires a great deal of training, coordination, supervision and information sharing. The Bureau must have an adequate number of highly trained investigators and support personnel capable of effectively handling multiple cases at one time.

In recent years, the staffing level of the detective function has been a concern of the Bureau and City Council. In addition, the Auditor's Office has long been aware of accuracy and reliability problems with the Bureau's detective Case Management System as we have sought reliable investigative performance information for our annual Service Efforts and Accomplishments (SEA) report. Because of the critical nature of this work and the lack of clear Bureau standards for staffing and case management information, we undertook this audit.

The Investigative Process

Criminal investigations can be classified into three broad areas: preliminary investigations, follow-up investigations, and special subject investigations. The preliminary investigation is the response to the initial crime incident, and is usually initiated by a patrol officer. The purpose is to collect the basic facts of the crime, such as identifying what happened, who the offender is, who witnessed the crime, and what physical evidence is present. Although the responsibilities of the first responding officers in Portland have changed over the years, the basic responsibility is to interview witnesses, to collect physical evidence, and to write a detailed Investigation Report that gives sufficient information for an effective follow-up investigation. Research

clearly indicates that the success of criminal investigations is largely dependent on the quality of the initial investigation. In Portland, the information contained in the Investigation Report frequently determines whether a case will be assigned for further investigation.

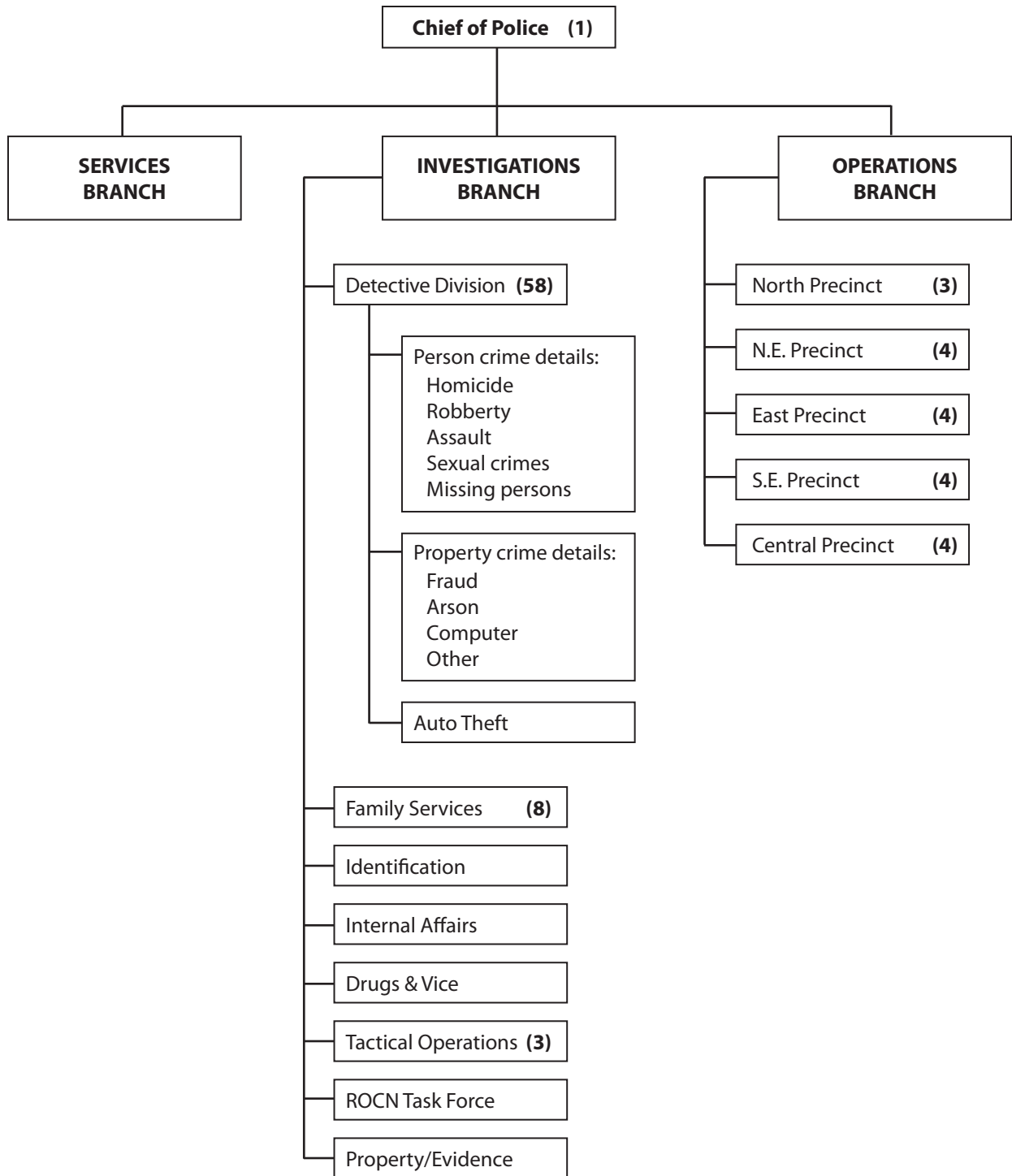
The follow-up investigation is conducted by detectives who are highly trained professionals. If the preliminary investigative effort is well done, there will be little duplication of work. Not all cases are assigned for follow-up investigation. Ideally, cases are assigned probability factors, that is, factors that indicate the probability the case can be solved. Those factors include the presence of physical evidence, a named suspect, and other leads. Research shows that it is usually inefficient to investigate cases with a low probability of solution. Each of the Police Bureau details have a written set of criteria upon which to judge the solvability of crimes. Detectives and their supervisors review initial reports to familiarize themselves with the incident and decide if a follow-up investigation is warranted. Detectives continue investigating leads that have been brought forward, search for additional leads, and if an arrest is made, prepare the case for prosecution and forward it to the District Attorney's Office.

Special subject investigations concentrate on areas of criminal activity such as vice, narcotics and organized crime. The City of Portland has several specialized units such as the Auto Theft Task Force, the Gang Enforcement Team, and the Narcotics and Vice details.

**How the Portland
Police Bureau is
organized for criminal
investigations**

In the Portland Police Bureau, the responsibility for follow-up investigations is divided between the Investigations Branch and the Operations (patrol) Branch (Figure 1). The Investigations Branch is the home of the Detective Division, and has 69 detectives responsible for investigating serious crimes against persons and economic crimes such as fraud. The Operations Branch has 19 detectives located in the five precincts. They conduct follow-up investigations on property crimes such as burglary and larceny. Until the mid-1990's all investigative work was centrally located in the Detective Division. The Bureau began placing detectives in the precincts in order to be closer to neighborhoods and to provide more direct and frequent interaction with patrol officers. This was part of the Bureau's overall community policing strategy and is an organization adopted in six of the eight other cities we contacted.

Figure 1 Authorized detective staffing – functional organization



Note: Precinct detectives focus mainly on burglary; bureau total of 89 detectives as of May 2004

Source: Police Bureau and Support Division, as of May 2004

Positive aspects of current organization

Despite heavy workloads and declining resources, we found several positive aspects of the current investigative organization. First, we found a highly dedicated staff of professionals who were willing to share ideas and information to improve the organization. In fact, the Bureau has previously recognized several of the issues we point out in the audit, and has made efforts at improvement. For example, the Bureau is in the testing phase to implement an electronic field reporting system. This is a key element in improving report-writing and record-keeping. However, it was not implemented during our audit period. Also, for the past several years, there have been intermittent efforts to improve the preliminary investigative process and the Case Management System. Management and staff realize that these areas need improvement, and have taken actions to address them through their strategic planning process.

Second, detectives' overall satisfaction appears to be high. The Bureau's 2003 employee survey shows that detectives feel they have a good working relationship with peers and supervisors, and an appropriate level of autonomy. The survey also showed, however, that detectives have concerns about fairness, particularly in promotions and assignments. In addition, there are negative perceptions about the level of information sharing in the Bureau, resistance to change or serious service improvement, and the level of support in the Bureau for community policing.

Third, the organization itself is structured similar to other city police departments we contacted in the course of this audit. Virtually every agency has a central Detective Division responsible for serious person and economic crime, and detectives assigned to precincts primarily to handle property crime.⁽¹⁾

(1) Cities with decentralized detectives were Boston, Charlotte, Kansas City, Sacramento, Seattle and Tucson. Cities with centralized detectives were Mesa ("no room at precincts") and San Jose (no precincts).

Audit objective, scope and methodology

The major objective of this audit was to review and make recommendations for improvements to the Bureau's investigative function. Specifically, we assessed staffing levels for detectives in the major Bureau details, the utility of the automated Case Management System, the state and use of performance measures for the investigative function in the Bureau, and general case management policies and procedures.

We focused our audit on the major details of the Bureau where most detectives are located: the Detective Division (focusing on the major details of Homicide, Robbery, Sexual Assault, and Fraud), and precincts where detectives primarily handle property crimes. We focused on these details because we felt they offered the best chance for comparisons to other jurisdictions' police organizations.

We did not review specific crime solving practices. These are highly specialized tasks which are outside the expertise of this office. Instead, we concentrated on those general management practices that are typical in most organizations and for which there was better defined criteria.

We conducted over 100 interviews with Bureau staff over the course of this review. We interviewed staff from the major Detective Division details and from each of the five precinct details, including extensive interviews with support personnel throughout the Bureau. We reviewed professional literature, and spoke with private consultants about our findings and methods. Bureau officials were kept apprised of our progress and potential findings throughout the process.

To develop comparative clearance rates, we requested and received calendar year 1999 to 2003 clearance rate information for all cities with populations over 250,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice. To compare our staffing levels to other agencies, we reviewed the budgets and/or contacted fourteen other police agencies of between 500,000 and one million residents.

To compare Portland's methods and organization to others, we developed a list of nine agencies with reputations for being well-managed. This was done with input from Bureau staff and from our review of professional literature. We conducted detailed interviews with representatives of these agencies on topics including the use and organization of automated case management systems, the deployment of detective resources, and the availability of computer equipment for detectives.

Areas for further study

We did not review the Family Services Division due to its specialized needs. It is an important multi-jurisdictional operation that should be reviewed at a later date via a joint effort with Multnomah County and perhaps the State of Oregon.

As we point out in the audit, many of the major crime categories have low clearance rates, yet forcible rape is the only category with a significant downward trend over the last five years. Because of the serious nature of these offenses, this should be an area of additional study.

We conducted our work in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Chapter 2 **Clearance rates are low, but so is staffing level**

Portland has a lower clearance rate for person crime than similarly sized cities, according to our analysis of national crime data. However, our review of current staffing levels also shows that the Police Bureau has significantly fewer authorized detectives than other similar cities, resulting in higher workloads. In addition, the Bureau currently has no comprehensive, logical method for determining an adequate level of detective staffing, and it has no clear goals and objectives for investigations. The Bureau needs to develop a staffing model that takes into account how detectives should be deployed and the desired results. Importantly, until the Bureau decides on clear goals and objectives for investigations, it may not be able to finalize a rational estimate of staffing needs.

Portland crime clearance rates and staffing levels are low compared to other cities

The “crime clearance rate” is the basic means of measuring the effectiveness of an investigative organization. The crime clearance rate is calculated by dividing the number of crimes “cleared” by arrest or by exception, by the number of crimes reported . A crime is cleared by exception when the Bureau has identified a suspect, but that suspect cannot be obtained either because he or she is dead, out of the jurisdiction, or perhaps already in custody for other offenses. A crime is also cleared if the arrest of one suspect solves several other cases.

A primary source of crime statistics in the U.S. is the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program run by the U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The program is a cooperative statistical effort of more than 17,000 city, county and state law enforcement agencies administered by the FBI since 1930. We requested detailed clearance information for a five-year period from

the FBI for every city over 250,000 and conducted our comparison for those cities in Portland's population range of 500,000 to 1,000,000. Calendar year 2003 is the latest data available for other cities. We obtained Portland's 2004 data for Figure 2 from the Portland Police Bureau.

The 14 cities we used to compare staffing levels in this chapter are those within this population range and for which we could obtain information on the number of detectives employed. We concentrated on serious crimes against persons and more serious property crime. These crimes include murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft. Collectively, these are referred to as Index Crimes.

As shown in Figure 2, over 45,000 Index Crimes were reported in Portland in 2004. During that year 7,301 cases were cleared. It should be noted that some of these may be crimes committed in prior years, but cleared in 2004.

Figure 2 Portland – 2004 Index Crimes and clearances

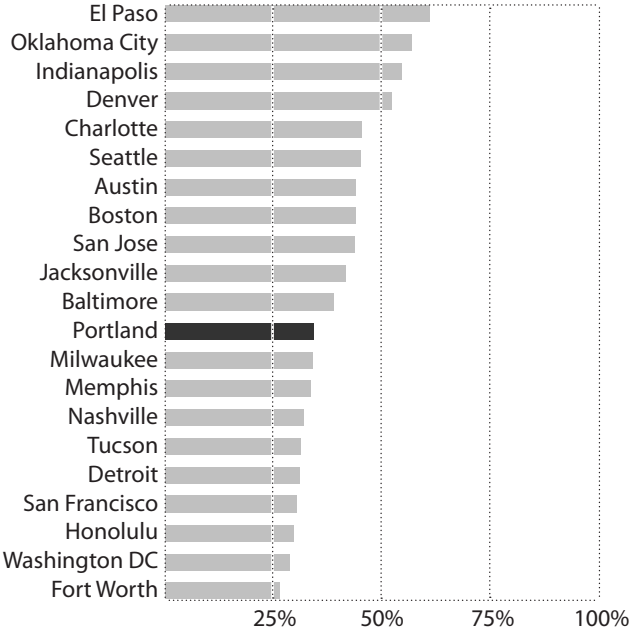
CRIME	Reported	Cleared
Murder	33	23 (70%)
Aggravated assault	2,323	1,016 (44%)
Robbery	1,283	387 (30%)
Larceny theft	28,445	4,629 (16%)
Forcible rape	272	36 (13%)
Motor vehicle theft	6,092	648 (11%)
Burglary	7,324	562 (8%)
TOTAL	45,772	7,301 (16%)

Source: Portland Police Data System, Police Bureau Planning and Support Division

Portland clearance rates for serious crimes is in the bottom half of similarly sized cities

For the five-year period, 1999 to 2003, Portland had the 12th lowest clearance rate for Index Crimes against persons of the 20 cities we compared it to (Figure 3). Further, Portland ranked in the bottom third for the crimes of murder, rape, aggravated assault, and burglary. The Bureau did better at clearing property crimes in general, ranking seventh of the 21 cities. This is primarily due to the relatively high clearance rate among less serious larceny-theft cases. See Appendix A for more detailed charts.

Figure 3 Person Crimes clearance rates - 5 years (1999-2003)



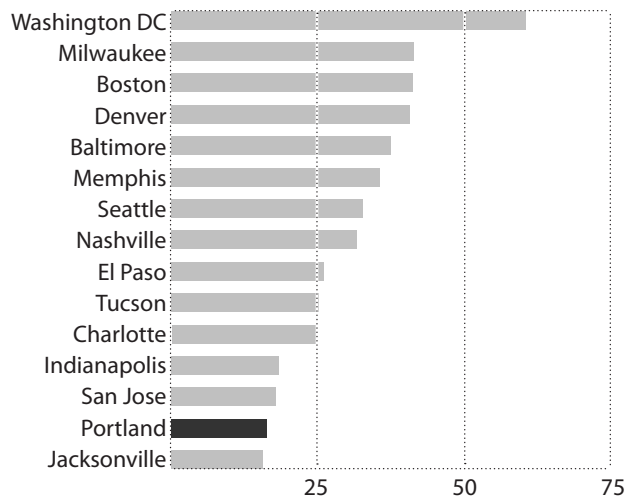
Source: UCR data and Portland Police Data System, Police Bureau Planning and Support Division

Staffing is also low, while workload is very high

Portland has significantly fewer detectives than any city we reviewed. The Bureau’s authorized level of 89 detectives is 33 fewer than the next lowest city, Jacksonville, Florida. When compared on the basis of detectives per 100,000 residents, Portland ranks second to last, with half the average of other cities (Figure 4). Additionally, Portland ranks third to last in the number of detectives employed as a percent of the total sworn workforce, at about 9 percent compared to the average of 11 percent.

The Bureau’s number of authorized detectives has declined for the past several years, from a high of 120 in FY 1994-95 to the current low of 89.

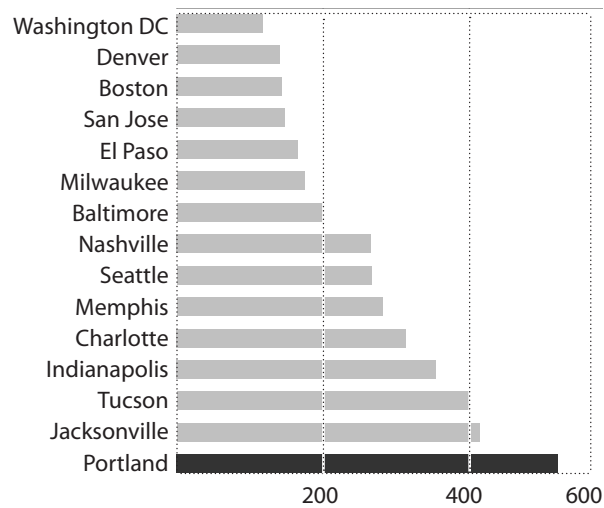
Figure 4 Number of authorized detectives per 100,000 population



Source: Audit Services review of other city budget documents and phone contacts

Note: Detectives are FY 2004-05, population is as of 2003, which is the date of the latest U.S. Census estimate.

The workload for detectives is also significantly higher in Portland than for other cities, in terms of crimes per detective (Figure 5). Portland is over twice the average and 26 percent above the second highest city, Jacksonville. In addition, the number of crimes per detective has risen by about 9 percent over the last ten years.

Figure 5 Index Crimes per detective, 2003

Source: UCR data, Audit Services review of other city budget documents, and phone contacts

Many crimes not investigated

Bureau staff told us they are frustrated by the fact that they do not have time to investigate many crimes they feel should be assigned. Because of limitations of the Case Management System, it was not possible for us to independently confirm the number of cases not assigned due to a lack of detective staff. However, the Detective Division provided data on case assignments derived from hand sorting cases for a special project. While all homicide cases are assigned for investigation, this is not the case with other crimes. For example, less than one percent of approximately 38,000 fraud cases were assigned in 2004 according to Bureau information. In addition, out of about 350 robbery cases that were appropriate for further investigation, about 225 were actually assigned.

Even though each unit has a clear set of written criteria upon which to prioritize the assignment of crimes for follow-up, they do not routinely track the reasons some cases are assigned and some are not. It is therefore not possible to accurately determine the number not assigned for each various reason.

Estimating needed staffing levels requires performance goals and objectives

Estimating the number of staff needed for investigative functions is difficult. First, we found no nationally recognized standards for appropriate detective workload. Second, the number of investigators needed in a particular community depends on a number of factors, such as the expected level of results (for example, what is considered to be an acceptable clearance rate), the extent to which misdemeanor crimes are investigated by patrol officers versus detectives, and the use of computer technology.

We believe two critical factors in a staffing model are the community's expectation regarding which crimes should be investigated and what an acceptable clearance rate is. Should all crimes be investigated, or only those with workable leads? Should crimes against persons take precedence over property crimes? Is it acceptable to clear 10 percent of Index Crimes or should we strive to clear 50 percent? The answers to these questions will result in very different staffing levels. While the individual detective details have clear, written criteria for prioritizing case assignments, they do not have quantifiable goals and objectives describing overall results they are trying to achieve (see Chapter 4).

The Bureau needs to be able to communicate to Council and the public effectively and to justify its detective staffing needs. However, before a workable model for determining staffing needs can be developed, the Bureau must establish clear goals and objectives for the investigation function.

Hiring more detectives may not be the only solution to improving clearance rates

Our review of other cities' clearance rates and detective staffing levels (as shown in Figures 3 and 4) indicates there is not a one-to-one correlation between the number of detectives and resulting clearance rates. For example, two of the fourteen comparison cities (Washington, D.C., and Milwaukee) in the top half of number of detectives per capita, were also in the bottom half of clearance rates. Likewise, three of the cities in the lower half of number of detectives per capita (Jacksonville, Charlotte, and Indianapolis) were also in the top half for crimes cleared.

Although the relationship between detective staffing levels and clearance rates is not fully understood, we believe that better management systems could result in improvements. We contacted nine other cities, reviewed professional literature, and spoke with staff from the Bureau to help define important management issues that may have an impact on clearance rates.

The final chapters of this report deal with improvements to management systems that could have a positive impact on the effectiveness of investigations. Chapter 3 addresses problems with the Case Management System, one of the most important tools available for improving productivity and accountability. Chapter 4 includes our findings related to important detective management processes including the preliminary investigations process, detective supervisory oversight and case monitoring, and performance measurement. Equally important are controlling command staff turnover and providing computer technology for detectives. Together, we believe action on these items will improve the Bureau's ability to effectively solve criminal cases.

Chapter 3 **Case Management System is largely ineffective**

Although the Portland Police Bureau's Detective Case Management System (CMS) has some of the basic elements needed to be useful, it is underutilized, mistrusted by staff, and lacks the proper policies, procedures, training, and support to be effective. Without an effective and reliable CMS, a greater effort is required to manage and track cases efficiently. For example, detectives may not be aware that others are already working a case or may lose track of a case altogether. In addition, meaningful productivity information is difficult to collect, which in turn hampers long-term planning and a reliable assessment of detective staffing needs.

Most detective details at the Police Bureau have developed stand-alone databases in order to meet their basic case management needs. This directs resources away from key responsibilities, wastes time entering the same information multiple times, and creates "information silos" – islands of isolated data which should be accessible throughout the Bureau's investigative functions but are not.

Why a case management system is important

An effective detective case management system can provide a foundation for efficient detective work. It makes it possible to easily share important case information among detectives, supervisors, and others. It provides information about assigned cases and those that are not assigned. This enables an effective organization to assess its ability to follow through on all solvable crimes.

Our interviews with representatives of other jurisdictions and private consultants, as well as our review of professional literature shows that

a good CMS is a critical component of an effective crime-solving organization. To quote a police consultant in Washington, "information is the life-blood of a modern law enforcement agency."

We surveyed eight police agencies around the country to gauge the importance and use of case management systems. We found that a well-designed system serves many functions:

- Supervisors can use a CMS to assign cases and to balance workload equitably among detectives. It can help them to ensure that adequate progress is made and to continually assess the existing deployment of resources. It gives them immediate access to current information to respond to victims, the District Attorney, the Chief, and other agencies.
- Detectives can use a CMS to manage and organize their investigative work. It provides tools for writing reports, tracking leads, updating case status, and coordinating with other detectives.
- A good system can provide meaningful detective productivity information which can be used to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of detective operations. This in turn provides necessary information regarding the overall allocation of detective resources and helps answer the question, "how many detectives do we need?"
- A properly designed CMS can provide accountability throughout the Bureau by standardizing basic processes such as reporting, updating, and tracking for all cases.

A good CMS is flexible, reliable, easy-to-use, and centralized (that is, structured around one database or system of linked databases). Data is entered only once. It has clearly written procedures, effective training and user support, and the commitment of the entire Bureau to its maintenance. While an individual detective detail may have a good CMS for its own use, the power of the system is seriously compromised unless the entire organization has access to the same data.

How the Portland Police Bureau detective case management functions

The Portland Police Bureau's detective CMS is a module within the Portland Police Data System (PPDS). PPDS, created by the Police Bureau in 1981, provides information services to over 100 local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. Of these, many local government partners use PPDS as their official records management system (i.e., to enter and store their case files), including Beaverton, Tigard, and Hillsboro Police Departments and the Washington and Multnomah County Sheriffs' Departments.

In addition to records management system functions, PPDS provides many other tools. These include the detective CMS; person, vehicle, and address searches; tactical inquiry; a sub-system for tracking potentially stolen goods at pawn shops; court scheduling; and access to other systems such as the Oregon Law Enforcement Data System (LEDS).

Several outside agencies use the CMS to manage detective case work, including Washington and Multnomah County sheriffs, and city police in Milwaukie, Hillsboro, and Tigard.

The Police Bureau provides nearly all training and support for PPDS, and the City houses PPDS on its mainframe. In 2004, the Bureau received approximately \$400,000 in fees for these services, although this funding only marginally supports PPDS programming, maintenance, and training, according to Data Processing Division Managers.

Paper flow and data entry into CMS and other databases

In order to understand the CMS, it is useful to know how information is entered into the system. This is summarized below.

- Patrol officers respond to incidents and fill out Investigation Reports in the field, which are given to the Records Division for data entry into the PPDS.
- Approximately three days are needed for Records to enter information from the Investigation Reports. In the past, large backlogs have significantly extended the number of days for full data entry. The Records Division copies Investigation Re-

ports as needed for distribution to the appropriate detective detail and precinct, as well as to other agencies.

- In order to begin working cases more quickly, many detectives have an informal arrangement whereby they receive a photocopy of Investigation Reports directly from the responding officer.
- The detective sergeant reviews copies of incoming Investigation Reports for possible assignment. In some instances, detectives self-assign cases. What is done with cases that are not assigned varies from detail to detail. In some, unassigned cases are entered into a detail's stand-alone database for future reference. In others, copies of the reports are either filed or discarded.
- In most details, but not all, case assignment information is entered into the CMS portion of PPDS by a clerk, or, in some instances, the detective Sergeant. When opened, the CMS pulls up basic information about the case from PPDS, such as the case number, offense, associated persons, and so on. Detective staff enter information into the CMS such as the detective assigned, date, detail, and detective status.
- The same information must also be entered into the detail's stand-alone database(s). Also, many details enter additional information about the case that is not entered into the Bureau's official systems. Importantly, detective staff must enter the information that had originally been entered into PPDS by Records, since this data cannot be pulled into the stand-alone systems (with the exception of one system which does pull data from PPDS).
- As cases progress, detectives are expected to provide information to their supervisors or clerks which will be used to update case status for the CMS and stand-alone systems.
- When a case has been cleared or suspended, this is communicated to Records, which enters it into the PPDS. This information must also be entered into the CMS (which tracks case status separately) and any other stand-alone systems in use.

The Bureau is currently in the process of implementing an electronic field reporting system which should substantively change the first several steps in the paper flow described above. Project documents indicate that officers will electronically create and submit Investigation Reports to their supervisors for approval and that Records will subsequently enter some additional information. If successfully implemented, Bureau officials tell us that sergeants will be able to review cases as soon as they are approved using a special browser. However, all case assignment and management activities will still be carried out using the CMS residing within PPDS.

Current CMS could be useful but numerous problems have caused inaccuracies that hinder efficiency and crime-solving efforts

We found no conclusive evidence that the CMS is inherently unreliable, or that its inaccuracies stem from programming errors. It is clear, however, that the CMS has significant problems which render the system ineffective. The following sections describe our findings related to the CMS and the impacts on Police Bureau investigations.

Use of PPDS Case Management System is inconsistent; its use is neither standardized nor required

Use of the CMS is inconsistent among the investigative details. While the Central Detective Division details currently enter case assignments into the CMS, precinct detectives have not “officially” been brought into the system, according to Data Processing Division management. That is, they are not required to use the detective CMS, and do not receive information about the system, updates, and changes. Further, it has traditionally been up to individual details to decide how the CMS would be utilized and its use has never been standardized. This can lead to significant problems coordinating investigation work. For example, police officials described several instances in which detectives found they were unknowingly working the same cases as other detectives.

We found that few sergeants or detectives use the CMS during the course of their work (other than for assigning cases). Many rely instead on a variety of individual systems such as spreadsheets, notebooks, or simply their memories for managing cases and tracking

progress. While it is clear that the sergeants and detectives are capable and dedicated, these varied and informal methods provide no means for ensuring consistency and accountability across the Bureau and may unnecessarily make their work more difficult.

Stand-alone databases waste resources

A fundamental problem with case management in the Police Bureau is the use of many stand-alone database systems: every major detail in the Detective Division has at least one stand-alone database. Several were developed by a consultant while others were created by Police Bureau sergeants, detectives or clerks.

As we describe the problems inherent to these databases, it is important to keep in mind that their existence reflects the need that detectives and their supervisors have for reliable and comprehensive case management information. Further, while there may be a legitimate need for a stand-alone database in some cases, any additional system created to do what PPDS and the CMS are capable of doing represents a loss to the Bureau.

The use of stand-alone systems means that clerks (or sergeants) are entering the same data in more than one place. We found several instances of clerks entering the same data into two systems and one instance of a clerk who entered almost the same data into four different systems. Not only does this waste time that could be spent on other tasks, it can lead to errors being introduced into the data.

Stand-alone systems do not receive official support or back-up and the security of these systems depends on the initiative of an individual or team. This could negatively impact the reliability and accessibility of the data. We found a stand-alone database, developed by a private contractor and into which a previous clerk had entered a substantial amount of historical data, was no longer used by the current clerk because she was not aware of its function or location on her computer. Data Processing Division managers told us that there are many examples of such stand-alone databases that have been subsequently abandoned upon the departure of a detective or sergeant. The time and money used creating these

stand-alone databases represents a redirection of resources away from the Bureau's critical needs.

Information silos prevent information sharing

The existence of many separate database systems creates information silos – information that is readily available to only a few people. Information silos impede investigation activities by making information difficult to access. We found that detectives from one detail occasionally take advantage of stand-alone systems used by another detail. For example, detective staff told us that homicide detectives have used the suspect information features of the sex crimes database in their work. While a small group of detectives may benefit from access to a good stand-alone system, such fragmented bits of information can negatively impact investigations across the Bureau.

Inability to generate basic crime and productivity statistics

The CMS cannot generate reliable management information. The monthly detective case management report contains numerous errors and outdated information. Because there is no one ultimately responsible for cleaning the data, however, management reports continue to be inaccurate. Most detective staff we spoke with indicated the reports serve little purpose.

Data Processing Division management told us that they have just begun a process to remove out-dated information from the CMS. The monthly report that they run, which is currently close to 500 pages, would likely be no longer than 40 pages if old data were removed. Almost 96,000 cases are listed in the report that have an official UCR status of unfounded, suspended, or cleared by arrest. Because the amount of old information has grown so large, the process of removing it will take time. When completed, they hope to implement a regular audit process in order to keep the database better maintained.

As currently used, the CMS does not provide information on the number of unassigned cases, which prevented us from assessing the extent to which cases appropriate for further investigation are not as-

signed due to lack of personnel or other resources. This data is even more important for the Bureau to use in making resource allocation decisions.

Bureau officials and staff described the substantial amount of time needed to create reports about detective activities for management. Because they could not easily access information from the CMS, they instead sorted through paper reports by hand. In one instance, it took a clerk several days to create a basic report for her detail on unassigned, assigned, and cleared cases for 2004.

Finally, information about detective productivity is problematic. Although their responsibilities include court appearances, preparation of cases for the District Attorney, serving warrants, and assisting patrol officers, the only aspects tracked and reported on are “cases cleared” and “reports written.” Further, the “reports written” figure under-represents the actual number of reports completed by detectives due to backlogs in the Records Division.

Lack of policies and procedures, support, and training

Training and ongoing user support is vital to the reliability of any database system. There is no formal training program for Bureau CMS users. Data Processing Division management told us that they have requested a training position every year for 25 years but the request has never been filled. Further, they have lost significant staffing due to Administrative Services Review.

Clerks we spoke with had either figured out how to use the system on their own, or were able to get help from others with more experience with the system. While the system is fairly intuitive, we found substantial variation among users about the purpose of several key data fields. In addition, many clerks told us that they had no idea whom to call for assistance with the system. Finally, only one clerk had a copy of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which govern use of the CMS, but it was significantly out of date. The existing SOPs, however, are also out of date and do not contain the current detective case status codes.

The lack of training, user support, and availability of current SOPs has led to poor data entry practices, which worsen CMS data accuracy problems.

CMS is viewed as unreliable and inaccurate

Almost every detective and supervisor we talked with was concerned about inaccuracies in CMS data. The persistent belief that the CMS is not reliable caused many details to develop their own stand-alone systems. This perception also led many to stop using the system, which can perpetuate problems of data accuracy.

Ongoing complaints about bad data led one sergeant to take over data entry duties for over a year in order to better understand what the problems are.

We did not find evidence that the system itself creates errors in the data. Rather, we believe the inaccuracies are the result of a combination of several factors:

- Poor data entry practices that stem from a lack of training, user support and standardized procedures
- Inconsistent use
- Some data entry fields that are confusing and poorly defined
- Detectives not providing status updates to clerks or supervisors in a timely manner
- Out-dated data that should be cleaned

Management support for an effective CMS is lacking

We believe that many of the problems with the CMS result from a lack of recognition of the system and its purpose. Although there have been recent attempts to improve the system's use and reliability, each of these attempts has lacked, among other things, the full support from the Bureau's upper management levels which would ensure the dedication of needed resources.

Chapter 4 **Management processes and controls need improvement**

In addition to effective automated information systems, a large organization such as the Portland Police Bureau needs a comprehensive system of policies and procedures that are clearly written and understood by employees, sufficient training and equipment to complete tasks efficiently, and a system for evaluation and feedback for continuous improvement. Our review indicates that while a number of management processes and controls are in place for the investigative function, several critical elements need improvement. Specifically, officers need to do a better job of completing preliminary investigations, patrol sergeants need improved evaluative techniques, detectives need more computer equipment, and the Bureau should explore methods to reduce turnover within the Investigations command structure.

Preliminary Investigations process needs strengthening particularly in supervisory review and feedback, and general report-writing

The preliminary investigation process, which is initiated and generally completed by patrol officers responding to a crime scene, has long been recognized as a critical factor in the solution of crimes. The thoroughness with which an officer completes the written description of events, collects physical evidence, takes witness accounts and searches for initial clues, often determines whether a case will be solved by the follow-up detectives or even assigned. In addition, incomplete or erroneous reports lead to duplicate work being performed by detectives.

More responsibility has been given to patrol officers to complete preliminary investigations over the years. Officers are now expected to collect DNA evidence, sometimes interview suspects in custody,

and for some less serious cases, prepare cases for the District Attorney's office. In the past these have all been duties for detectives. In cases where a serious crime has been committed, patrol officers are required to call their supervisors, who in turn notify detectives and their supervisors. Depending on the nature of the incident, detectives will immediately respond. In the case of a homicide, detectives try to reach the scene within one hour. The patrol officer's primary job in that case is to secure the crime scene.

Patrol officers complete the initial investigation for less serious incidents. The reports they complete are submitted to patrol supervisors usually about thirty minutes before the end of a shift. Patrol sergeants review the reports, ask officers to complete missing information or correct deficiencies, and sign the reports for forwarding to the Records Division for processing. In the case of robberies, officers fax reports to the Robbery Division so detectives can respond immediately the following morning.

Elements of a good preliminary investigative process

In order to have a well-run process the system needs to contain:

- Clearly identified roles for the patrol officers
- Useful procedures, clearly written and available to officers in the field
- Adequate training and skills in the collection of physical evidence and report-writing
- An evaluation system to provide feedback to officers who need additional coaching and training opportunities

The culmination of this activity should be a well written, thorough Investigation Report that helps detectives assess the need for further action, and provides timely evidence collection.

We conducted a series of interviews with detectives, detective supervisors, patrol officers, and their supervisors to determine the extent to which the current system matches these elements, to assess the completeness of Investigation Reports, and to provide a basis for recommending improvements.

Reports often incomplete, missing critical elements

Detective supervisors and patrol supervisors told us that there is a problem with consistency in the reports. Some reports are very poorly written and lack details to the extent that detectives sometimes must go out into the field to reconstruct events before they know whether or not to assign the case. One detective supervisor said the quality ranges from “mediocre to poor.” In reports we reviewed, important details were often missing, while some did not contain enough information for detectives to even determine precisely what type of crime took place. Others did not describe any search for physical evidence or for witnesses. These are critical elements which detectives use to determine whether and what type of follow-up is required.

Officers understand roles, but written procedures are hard to find and not useful.

Officers we spoke with said it is clear when to contact detectives and when to handle situations themselves. They also understand when to contact supervisors. However, one officer said that he understands the role, but it had not been explicitly communicated or explained. Most of what they learn is in the basic academy training they receive when they are first hired.

All ten of the officers and sergeants we spoke with said there are probably various General Orders and directives explaining field procedures, but no one was able to find them during our interviews. The lack of clearly written, readily available procedures likely contributes to officers not understanding when to undertake certain tasks such as evidence collection and neighborhood canvassing. Written, easily accessible procedures can reinforce training and help officers be more thorough. Patrol sergeants, however, told us officers understand what they are supposed to do but often do not have time as they need to respond to other dispatched calls for service. Appendix B is an example of clearly written field procedures for patrol officers and detectives for a burglary reduction program instituted by the City of Mesa, Arizona.

Little on-going training is received on collecting physical evidence

Officers we spoke with expressed a desire for more training on the collection of physical evidence. They were surprised, for example, with how little training they received on collecting DNA evidence. A short video was shown recently at a roll call at their precincts, but one officer commented that afterwards he did not know where the DNA kits were kept, much less how to use them. A Training Division representative said that there are periodic instructional notices and some limited training when new techniques are introduced, but also generally agreed that more training is needed.

Because reports are submitted at the end of a shift, patrol sergeants do not have sufficient time to review reports, and there is no systematic feedback for officers who need more help

Patrol officers and sergeants told us they are frustrated at the limited amount of time available to review reports. Sergeants review as many as possible and try to catch officers before their shifts end, in order to correct deficiencies. Reports they do not have time to review are held over for the next shift patrol supervisor. If there are deficiencies in these reports it is very difficult to have them corrected. The sergeant must send it through as is or hold it until the officer comes back for another shift. Detectives told us this causes a problem as it is critical that witnesses be interviewed and evidence be collected as soon as possible after a crime has occurred.

Patrol sergeants say they correct as many problems as possible in the reports, but mostly on an informal basis. There is no formal, organized evaluation process intended to identify patterns of deficiencies in individual officers. Without such a process, officers who need additional coaching and training will not get it, and will likely continue to submit problematic reports. Officers we spoke with said they would welcome additional help and feedback. Lack of a complete feedback system likely explains why previous report writing improvement efforts have not yielded lasting results.

Bureau management recognizes problems

Bureau managers have recognized these issues and taken steps to make improvements. For example, many staff members and managers we interviewed remembered an increased emphasis on improved preliminary investigations within the past few years, although no one could remember specifics. Most of them recalled an effort to improve report-writing that was conducted bureau-wide about four years ago. Unfortunately, after an initial concentrated effort that reportedly yielded improvements, follow-up was insufficient to maintain lasting results. Also, the Assistant Chief of the Operations Branch told us he has instructed Bureau precinct detectives to meet with officers as frequently as needed to improve their report writing skills.

In addition, the electronic reporting system now being tested should enable officers to complete reports in the field, and submit reports immediately to supervisors for review and approval. If effectively implemented, this system has the potential to help officers submit reports in a more timely manner, and with fewer errors.

Supervisory oversight of detective work and case monitoring lacks consistency

Although detectives, for the most part, seem satisfied with the way cases are assigned and reviewed with supervisors, we believe the process could be improved with more standardized procedures for case assignment, tracking and review.

Effective, productive detective work depends on a number of good management principles:

- Case assignments should be made on a rational basis of existing detective workloads, using a case management system
- Case reviews should be done by supervisors at regular intervals to ensure adequate progress and to determine whether to continue an investigation or suspend it
- Decisions to suspend or continue investigations should be made in a consultation between detectives and their supervisors

We conducted interviews with detectives and their supervisors, and reviewed policies and procedures to determine the extent to which current operations meet these principles.

We found that although detective supervisors are actively involved in case assignment, management and review, it is largely on an informal basis. For example, cases are generally assigned at random, or are self-assigned. This method appears to work well for certain details such as Homicide. However, to ensure that cases are handled efficiently in other details, most cases should be assigned based on existing caseloads, backlogs, individual expertise, or individual interest, using a centralized case management system.

We also found that supervisory review generally occurs at regular staff meetings and on an informal basis. Although detectives feel this meets their needs, the lack of a formalized process cannot ensure accountability or consistency. While current supervisors are generally very active in case monitoring through a variety of means, an informal system relies heavily on individual initiative and dedicated personnel. With the frequent turnover of command staff, as discussed later in this chapter, the Bureau cannot always be assured of having such personnel.

Case suspension or continuation decisions are done differently in various details. In most situations continuation decisions should be done in consultations between detectives and their supervisors. There should be regular documented case reviews and deadlines for case progress.

The current set of Standard Operating Procedures for the Detective Division only very generally references the supervisory role of sergeants in monitoring and reviewing case status. A more rigorous set of policies and procedures requiring supervisory review and sign-offs, as well as reminders to discuss suspension/continuation decisions would help supervisors address a growing number of case assignments. This task would be facilitated by an improved CMS as discussed in Chapter 3.

The investigation function has few useful performance measures, and lacks quantifiable goals and objectives

Performance measurement is a part of a larger management process. Performance measures are derived from an agency's mission, goals and objectives and should be a reliable indicator of progress toward achieving desired results. Without good performance information an organization will have trouble justifying its resource needs and allocating resources to achieve strategic goals that benefit the community. The chance for efficient operation and appropriate allocation of resources is greatly increased with good management and performance information.

This audit report should be placed in context of the City's overall Managing For Results initiative. The deficiencies we note in this section of the audit are similar to those found in other Bureaus throughout the City. Bureaus are attempting to develop meaningful performance measures that demonstrate progress toward City goals and objectives. Because the investigation function represents a major public safety investment, with a budget larger than many other entire bureaus, it needs a rigorous review and concentrated effort by Bureau staff. As with all other bureaus, the City Auditor's Office offers assistance to the Police Bureau in developing a set of meaningful and comprehensive measures.

Elements of a good set of performance measures

Characteristics of good performance measures, based on Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Concept Statement #2, are as follows:

- Relevance – The set of measures should provide all data necessary to provide a basis for understanding the accomplishments of the organization's goals and objectives
- Understandability – They should be readily understandable. The number of measures should be concise yet comprehensive
- Comparability – Measures should allow for comparison to prior fiscal years, targets set by the entity, external standards, and to other entities
- Timeliness – Information should be reported while meaningful for decision-makers

- Consistency – Information should be reported consistently, over time
- Reliability – Information should be reliable and free from bias. The systems used to produce the data should be controlled and reliable

Existing measures are not complete or reliable

We reviewed performance measures related to the investigations function from major Bureau documents including the Adopted City Budget, the SEA, the Bureau’s monthly Performance Measures report, and the Bureau’s Strategic Plan. Figure 6 lists investigation related measures from those documents.

We found there are no goals, objectives or targets upon which to base an assessment of whether or not the program is achieving desired results. Most of the measures, therefore, exist in a management vacuum, leaving the reviewer not knowing whether overall progress is positive or negative.

The measures are not comprehensively displayed in any one document. A reader trying to understand the organization must go to several sources to get necessary information.

The measures themselves are relevant, but taken together do not provide a full picture of whether the organization is achieving goals and objectives because of the two previously mentioned points.

The measures allow for some comparability to earlier time periods, particularly the few that are in the SEA and the Adopted City Budget. However, the measures in the monthly report show variations that are so small that they are virtually meaningless. In addition, there are no targets, standards, or goals against which to measure progress.

Most measures are reported in a timely manner.

One of the most basic measures, case assignments, is unreliable because of problems with the Case Management System from which

Figure 6 Existing measures related to Investigations

TYPE	Indicator	Source
INPUT (spending/staffing)	Total spending	<i>SEA, Budget</i>
	Authorized staffing	<i>Budget</i>
DEMAND (workload)	Crimes reported	<i>SEA, Strategic Plan</i>
	Crimes per population	<i>Budget</i>
	Major cases assigned for investigation	<i>Budget, Monthly Report</i>
	Total crimes YTD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bias • Elderly • Auto theft/no keys 	<i>Monthly Report</i>
RESULTS	Annual cases cleared <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person crimes • Property crimes 	<i>SEA</i>
	% cases cleared <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person crimes • Property crimes 	<i>SEA, Strategic Plan</i>
	Dollar value of recovered property	<i>Monthly Report</i>
	% cleared YTD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Index crimes 	<i>Monthly Report</i>

Source: Audit Services review of cited documents

the data is derived. This has been an acknowledged problem for several years, yet the Bureau continues to report the measure in the monthly Performance Measure report. We did not assess the accuracy of other measures in the monthly report. However, SEA measures are checked on an annual basis by the Auditor's Office.

Turnover in command positions could cause problems providing continuity for management improvements, while detective turnover could impact productivity

In some instances, employee turnover can be good for an organization. It provides an infusion of new knowledge, sometimes displaces poor performers, enhances the prospects of promotional opportunities for others, and if the departing employee stays in the organization, which is often the case in the Police Bureau, it provides employees with a wide range of experience as they move up the organizational ladder. The cost of excessive turnover, however, can be very high in tangible and intangible ways which include: increased workload on others due to vacancies, decreased productivity, declining employee morale, and selection and training costs. Although we did not document the specific costs in this review, detectives and others we spoke with in the Bureau told us that morale suffers, projects go uncompleted, and there is a loss of accountability when command staff changes too often.

The Detective Division appears to have a high turnover rate in the command staff and among detectives. According to our review of available Bureau organization charts and personnel records, the Division has had four commanders in the past six years. Further, lieutenants who perform middle management responsibilities for Person Crimes and Property Crimes have turned over frequently: five different lieutenants have supervised the Person Crimes details in the past six years (with two lengthy vacant periods) and three lieutenants have supervised the Property Crimes details during the same period. Sergeants who provide first line management tasks for detectives appear to also turnover frequently. For example, the Sexual Assault detail has had four sergeants in the past six years, and the Fraud detail has had five different individuals or team supervisors during the same period.

In the major crime units themselves (Homicide, Sexual Assault, Fraud and Robbery) we found annual detective staff turnover of between 17 percent and 50 percent. In some cases, however, detectives are moving to other investigative units and thus the Detective Division is not entirely losing experienced detectives. There may be, however, a loss of expertise regarding specific crimes and methods used to investigate them. On the positive side, each of the units has a base of several detectives who have served in the same unit for many years, providing a stable knowledge base.

Virtually every division detective we spoke with said that turnover in the command ranks caused problems with obtaining needed resources for doing their jobs, and by taking valuable time away from their regular work to provide on-the-job training.

Portland detectives have less access to personal computer equipment than in any other city we contacted

Computers and information sharing is critical in modern detective work. Portland's detectives use computer workstations to perform a variety of tasks. In addition to the usual email software which professional employees use to transmit and receive information, detectives use computers to access a number of specialized crime-related databases. They access the Law Enforcement Data Service for criminal history checks, driver and motor vehicle information, and access the National Criminal Information Center. They use personal computers as a direct link to the 9-1-1 dispatch system to obtain real-time information on patrol unit availability and to get call histories in order to document cases. Detectives use various software programs to obtain and display photographs of suspects, and to diagram and analyze crime scenes.

Even though Division detectives have personal desks, they must share computers. For example, in Homicide there six computers for twelve detectives, in Robbery six detectives share three computers, and in Sexual Assault there are three computers for seven detectives. Detectives told us this means they must log on and off each time they leave a workstation and hope to get back onto one when they need it. Detectives told us that they have to move sensitive files around the office and that they find it difficult to take, or make, calls while at a computer workstation.

In addition, as the Bureau moves toward an electronic field reporting system, the detectives will need to make more use of computers to access electronic incident reports and other information generated by various Divisions within the Bureau and of outside agencies.

Bureau of Technology Services (BTS) representatives also agreed that computers, in general, improve productivity. Most professional City employees have computer workstations. In fact, the City owns almost 4,500 personal computers and laptops for about 5,000 employees.

Only one of the eight other cities we contacted did not assign each detective their own personal computer. Many have laptops that Detectives can carry into the field. Each said that having the computers enhanced productivity greatly and could not imagine being without them.

BTS representatives estimate that buying computers for detectives and equipping them with appropriate software would cost about \$1,500 each. We estimate equipping all detectives in the major units we reviewed would cost less than \$30,000 (this includes precinct detectives). The Bureau could do this on a progressive basis over a number of years to minimize the budgetary impact. There may also be additional on-going maintenance charges from BTS of about \$17,000 annually.

Chapter 5 **Recommendations**

The Portland Police Bureau is at a crossroads regarding the investigations function. Resource constraints and increasing workloads require they take stock of where they are now, what they are trying to achieve, and what resources are needed to accomplish their goals. Staff must collect reliable information to assess the Bureau's current state and measure progress toward its goals. The City's Managing For Results process is an opportunity for the Bureau to begin this work. We recommend the Bureau start with a definition of goals and objectives, while simultaneously taking steps to improve its Case Management System and its policies and procedures concerning preliminary investigations and detective supervisory oversight. Once these recommendations are implemented the Bureau can assess its need for additional staff.

Management controls and processes

In order to improve the Police Bureau's ability to estimate resource needs and deploy resources effectively, management should:

- 1. Develop a comprehensive set of goals, objectives and performance measures for the investigations function.**

The Bureau should participate in the City's MFR process. Through this process the Bureau will develop a performance measurement system that is meaningful, comprehensive, and allow for greater public accountability. It will help the Bureau assess its current state and the resources needed to accomplish identified goals. The City Auditor's Office, through its commitment to the City-wide MFR process, offers its assistance in developing these measures.

2. Develop a staffing model that incorporates goals, objectives, and detective productivity data.

Once the Bureau has refined and articulated the results it hopes to achieve with the investigations function, and developed a reliable set of productivity measures, staffing needs can be assessed. A staffing model should take into account realistic objectives and reliable detective productivity information. We recommend that requests for significant additional personnel not be made until management improvements recommended here have been implemented.

3. Strengthen Detective Division case management controls by adopting a more detailed set of supervisory oversight and assignment procedures.

Detective sergeants should ensure that cases are assigned to detectives based on existing individual detective workload, expertise, and general interest (except where this is not practical, such as in Homicide), utilizing a centralized, improved case management system (Recommendation 6 below). In addition to their regular staff meetings, supervisors should review and document progress on individual cases at regular intervals. Standard review times might be established for each case, such as every ten days. At these reviews decisions should be made jointly as whether or not to continue each investigation. These reviews could be documented as part of the improved CMS. Although our audit work on this issue did not include precinct detective details, the Bureau should conduct an assessment to determine the extent to which precinct detectives could benefit from this recommendation.

4. Explore opportunities to reduce excessive turnover, especially within the command structure of the Detective Division.

We understand that the rotation of sworn personnel throughout the Bureau is an important training aid and that there is value in having employees with a breadth of experience

in the Bureau, especially as they are promoted to higher ranks. However, the Bureau must also recognize the impacts of excessive turnover on the overall health of the Bureau. We do not have a specific recommendation for this issue, but we do recognize its importance and recommend the Bureau make an effort to explore ways to reduce turnover. Perhaps obtaining informal long-to-medium term agreements with job candidates for these positions, or conducting skills and interest surveys for job candidates would help.

Detective efficiency

The following recommendations focus on areas to help detectives perform their work more efficiently and effectively. The Bureau should:

5. Strengthen the preliminary investigations process.

A number of steps should be undertaken to improve the preliminary investigations process.

a. The Bureau should develop clearly written, detailed procedures for patrol officers that would be available for field reference.

Procedures should be more explicit about how and when to undertake certain actions such as neighborhood canvassing and collection of physical evidence, and how to complete Investigation Reports in such a manner as to be of most use to detectives. The Bureau may need to interview or survey officers to determine what type of training is specifically needed for collecting physical evidence and report-writing.

b. The Bureau should institute a comprehensive evaluation system for patrol sergeants to document and provide feedback to officers who need additional coaching and training opportunities.

6. Improve the Case Management System.

Problems with the CMS severely challenge efficient information sharing among detectives and the generation of basic, reliable crime and detective productivity statistics. At a minimum, we recommend that the Bureau carry out the following steps. We also suggest the designation of a project manager with sufficient resources and experience to oversee these tasks.

a. Fully assess the data needs of detectives and their supervisors so that the centralized system will meet their needs.

The centralized case management system must perform at least as well as the stand-alone systems or detectives will continue to use and develop such systems instead.

b. Commit an adequate level of resources necessary to support Police Bureau data systems and its users.

CMS users do not currently have the level of support needed to ensure good data entry practices. The Bureau should update SOPs, develop and maintain a list of all CMS users, and disseminate to them all updates and pertinent information. In addition, all users should receive needed training and support. Finally, the Bureau should ensure that the current effort to clean outdated data from the system is completed successfully.

c. Require that everyone use the system, including precinct detectives.

In addition, the Bureau should require that detectives provide all updates in a timely manner.

d. Plan for an orderly incorporation of stand-alone systems into a centralized integrated system.

There is a substantial amount of important information that resides on the many stand-alone data systems developed by detectives. This data should be carefully moved to the

centralized system. Doing so will likely require changes to the existing CMS in order to support needed data fields.

7. Provide additional computer equipment for detectives.

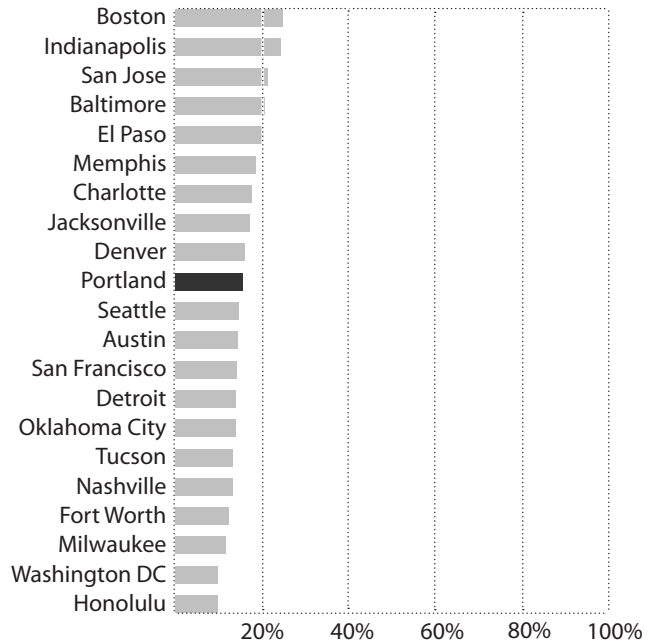
With the ever increasing reliance on information technologies, including the Bureau's investment in electronic field reporting, each detective should have his or her own computer. We estimate the initial cost would be less than \$30,000 for the major details we focused on during our audit. The Bureau could implement this on a phase-in basis over the course of several years to minimize the budgetary impact.

APPENDICES

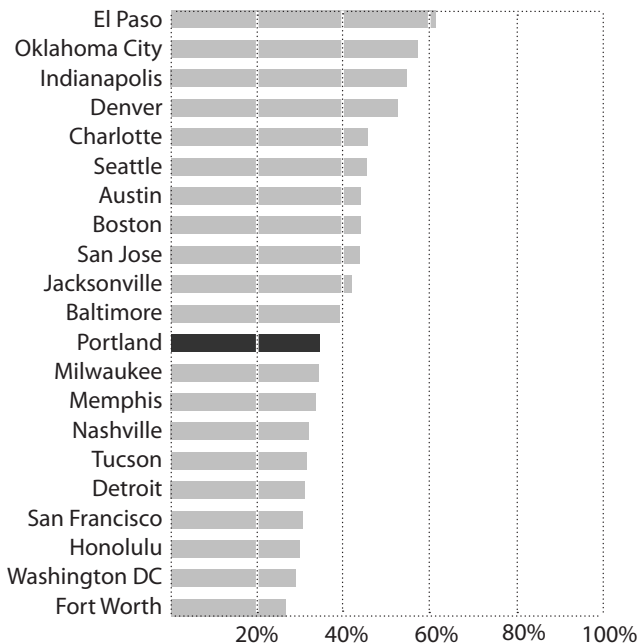
Appendix A Other city comparative information

The data in the following charts are derived from Uniform Crime Reporting data for the years 1999-2003. It represents the clearance rate for the cumulative total crimes reported and cleared during that period for each city. 2003 is the latest UCR data available. By showing five years of reported crime and clearance data we sought to smooth out significant rate spikes caused when some crimes are cleared in one year but actually reported in prior years.

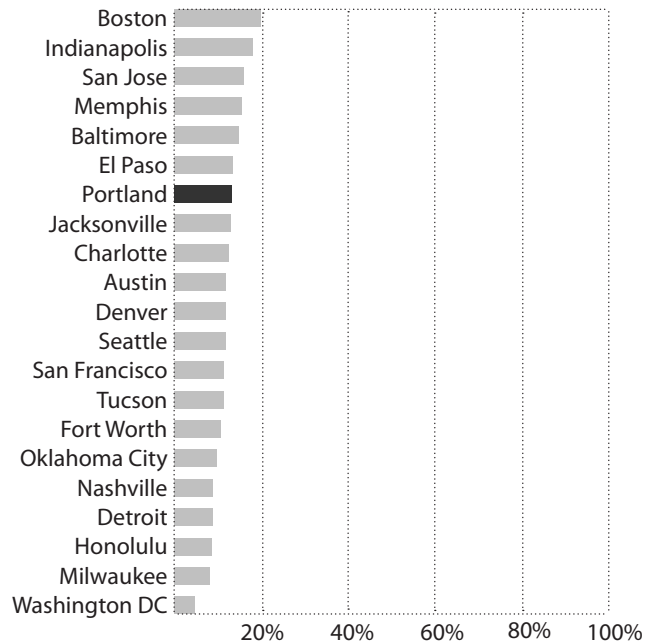
Clearance rates for person and property crimes (1999-2003)



Person crimes - 5 years

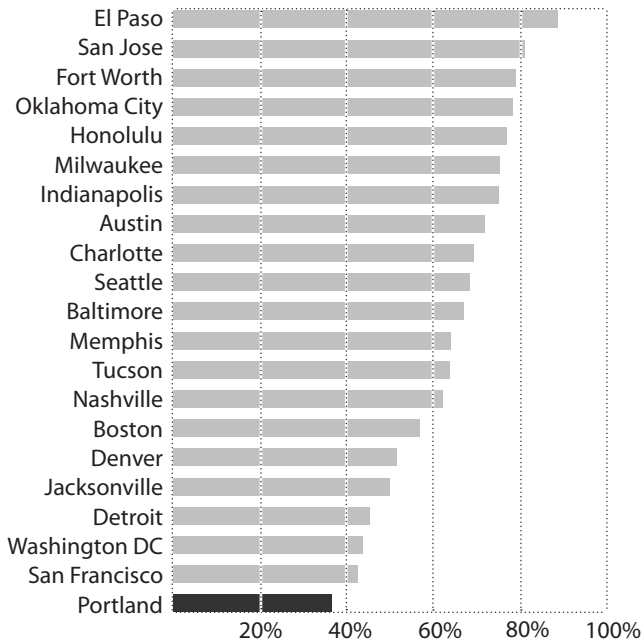


Property crimes - 5 years

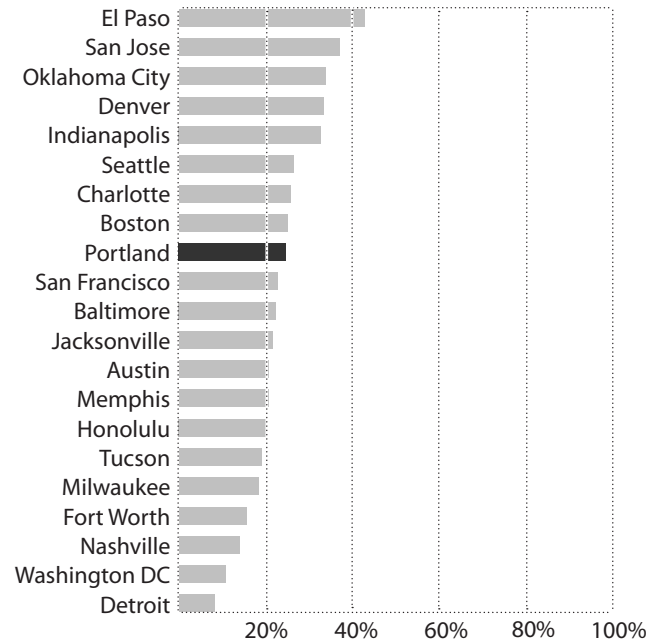


Person Crimes

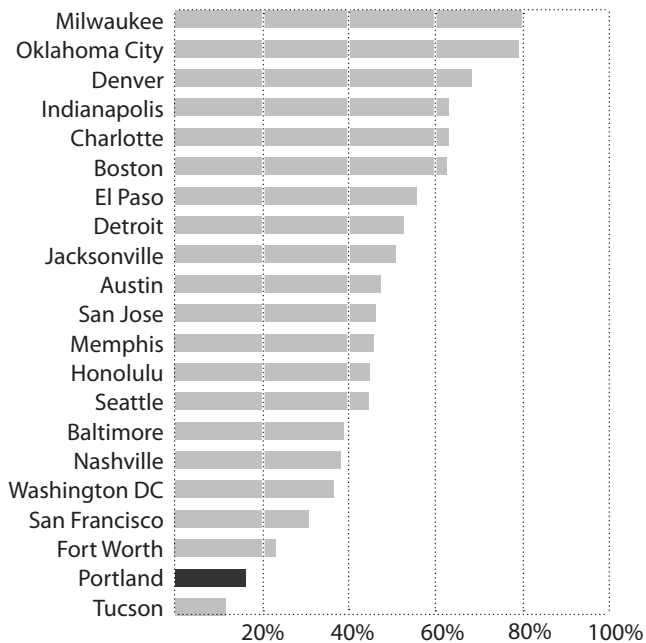
Murder - 5 years



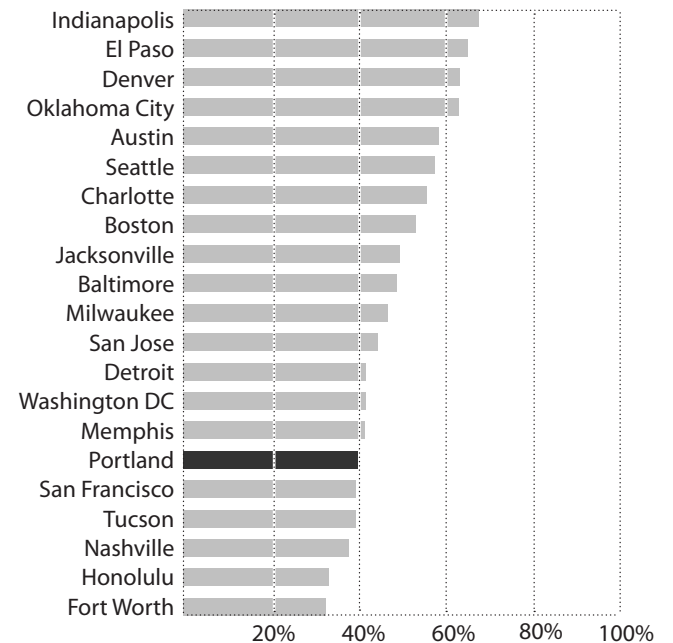
Robbery - 5 years



Rape - 5 years

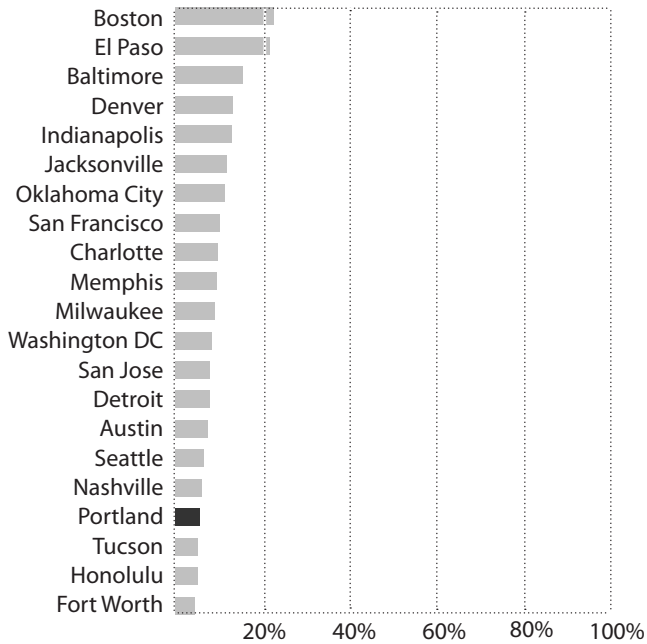


Aggravated assault - 5 years

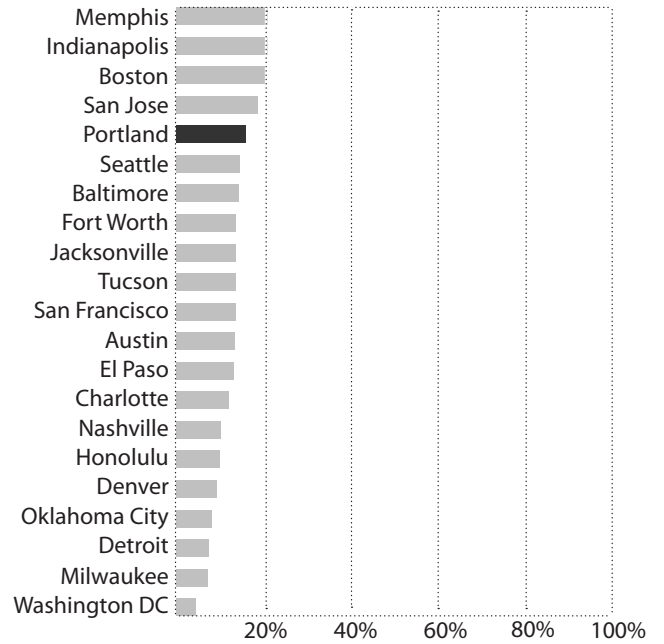


Property Crimes

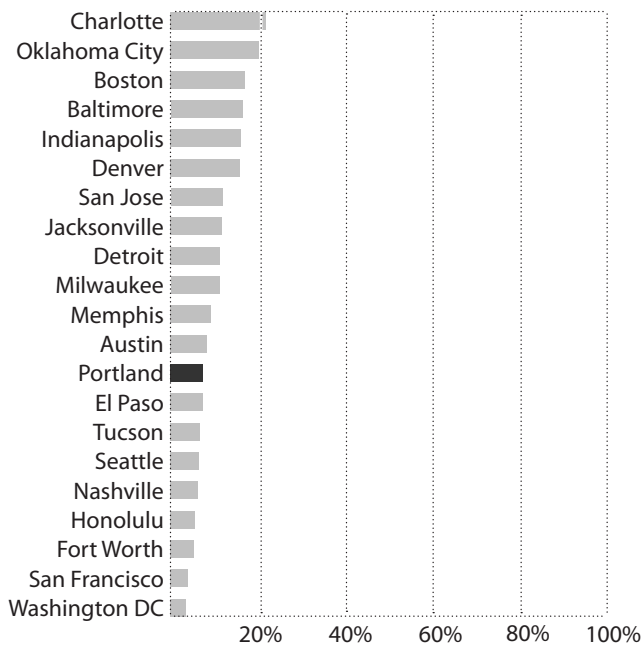
Burglary - 5 years



Larceny - 5 years



Motor vehicle theft- 5 years



Audit staff collected the following information for all cities with 2003 population between 500,000 and 1,000,000 as reported in the FBI's Uniform Crime Report. This was the most recent detailed crime data available. Staffing data was gathered through telephone interviews and reviews of budget documents. Our ratios combine 2003 population and 2005 staffing data because representatives we spoke with were unable to accurately report staffing data from 2003. In five cases, we were not able to obtain reliable detective staffing data.

CITY	2003 POPULATION	2003 INDEX CRIMES		2005 STAFFING		RATIOS		
		Total	Cleared (% of total)	Total Sworn	Detectives	Detectives/ 100,000 pop	Detectives/ Sworn	Crimes/ Detective
Austin	682,319	45,423	5,610 (12%)	-	-	-	-	-
Baltimore	644,554	48,653	9,593 (20%)	3,525	243	37.70	7%	200
Boston	589,795	35,049	9,237 (26%)	2,270	244	41.37	11%	144
Charlotte	668,003	51,728	10,680 (21%)	1,520	165	24.70	11%	314
Washington DC	563,384	40,420	4,326 (11%)	3,800	343	60.88	9%	118
Denver	565,905	32,595	4,866 (15%)	1,445	232	41.00	16%	140
Detroit	927,766	83,533	14,123 (17%)	-	-	-	-	-
El Paso	586,392	25,282	5,350 (21%)	1,349	153	26.09	11%	165
Fort Worth	576,339	41,280	4,879 (12%)	-	-	-	-	-
Indianapolis	800,167	52,453	10,515 (20%)	-	148	18.50	-	354
Jacksonville	776,417	50,520	10,224 (20%)	1,586	122	15.71	8%	414
Memphis	653,858	65,853	8,542 (13%)	2,101	234	35.79	11%	281
Milwaukee	594,269	43,088	4,115 (10%)	2,056	247	41.56	12%	174
Nashville	554,888	46,982	5,720 (12%)	1,312	177	31.90	13%	265
Oklahoma City	521,681	52,237	7,070 (14%)	-	-	-	-	-
Portland	545,271	46,387	6,253 (13%)	1,045	89	16.32	9%	521
San Francisco	772,065	43,888	6,976 (16%)	-	-	-	-	-
San Jose	909,890	24,126	4,276 (18%)	1,456	163	17.91	11%	148
Seattle	576,296	50,250	6,632 (13%)	1,224	189	32.80	15%	266
Tucson	514,618	52,007	7,063 (14%)	978	130	25.26	13%	400

Appendix B **Field investigation procedures:
Burglary Reduction Program,
Mesa, Arizona**

RESPONSES TO THE AUDIT



Office of Mayor Tom Potter
City of Portland

July 25, 2005

TO: Gary Blackmer, City Auditor

FROM: Tom Potter, Mayor *Tom Potter me*

SUBJECT: Police Investigations Audit

Thank you for your thorough and informative report on the findings of your audit of the Portland Police Bureau's Police Investigations process. It very clearly demonstrates both the good work and the needs of the Detective Division, and I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this draft.

As you know, the community policing philosophy requires that we continually assess our performance with internal audits, and externally by surveying our external partners and members of the community we serve. This audit is very timely as we move forward with taking community policing to the next level of institutionalization. We look forward to working with your recommendations to improve public safety.

Thank you again for your thorough and insightful report.



CITY OF
PORTLAND, OREGON
BUREAU OF POLICE

TOM POTTER, MAYOR
Derrick Foxworth, Chief of Police
1111 S.W. 2nd Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97204

Integrity Compassion Accountability Respect Excellence Service

July 13, 2005

Gary Blackmer
City Auditor
1221 SW 4th Ave Room 140
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Mr. Blackmer:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft of the audit of the Police Bureau's detective function recently performed by the Auditor's Office. As always, the Auditor's Office has completed a very well-researched and thorough report. I found it to be fair and accurate in its description of our current staffing issues as well as some of the challenges the Police Bureau is facing in regard to the Investigations Branch.

Members of the Police Bureau have spent considerable time reviewing the report and its recommendations. We have responded to the recommendations on the attached pages. After reviewing these, if you have additional insights or questions, we would be happy to sit down with you and review our response.

In the meantime, I want to thank you again for directing a solid report, which focuses on a part of the Police Bureau that greatly impacts members of our community. Victims of crime deserve to have their case investigated to the best of our ability. Achieving a higher rate of clearance is obviously the top goal of the Investigations Branch. Your report takes steps in educating and informing others outside the Police Bureau on issues that must be addressed to achieve our goal. Members of your staff were professional and easy to work with; please extend our appreciation to them as well.

Sincerely,


DERRICK FOXWORTH
Chief of Police

DF/tws

cc: Mayor Tom Potter
Assistant Chief Jim Ferraris

Portland Police Bureau Response to the Auditor's Report "Police Investigations"

The Office of the City Auditor has completed its 2005 audit of the investigative function of the Portland Police Bureau. The Police Bureau was pleased to have the Auditor's Office complete this project and cooperated fully with the audit.

The report clearly summarizes the issues affecting the Investigations Branch: There have been increased demands placed on investigations to include the emphasis on Measure 11 crimes; the increased polices, procedures and documentation of officer-involved shooting investigations; internal criminal investigations, and escalating new crime trends involving Identity Theft and Computer Crimes. Portland has also seen an increase in Part 1 crime and an increased population.

During the time of increased demands and expectations, personnel resources have been reduced. As the audit found, over the last ten years, the number of allocated detective positions in the Police Bureau has decreased from 118 to 88, and there has been a reduction in the non-sworn support staff as well. As with the officer positions, the allocated detective positions are rarely full or are staffed with detectives who are still being trained. In the meantime, Portland is at or near the bottom of the list of comparable cities when reviewing the number of authorized detectives per 100,000 population, Index Crimes per detective, and ratio of detectives to officers.

In regard to the clearance rates cited in the report, the dates of review on index crimes need to be clarified. The audit reviewed the clearance of index crimes through the end of each year for 1999-2003. Many cases are solved after the end of a calendar year. For example, the Police Bureau's review of homicide cases for some of the years covered in the audit show a higher clearance rate as of present day versus the clearance rate as of the end of a particular calendar year.

The report makes seven recommendations the Bureau should consider prior to assessing the need for additional investigative personnel. The recommendations are below along with the Police Bureau's response.

Recommendation 1

Develop a comprehensive set of goals, objectives and performance measures for the investigative function.

Response:

This recommendation could be implemented with little or no fiscal impact. The audit team has already conducted some research on comparable city clearance rates. Clearance rates are but one benchmark to set goals, objectives, and performance measures. Research with comparable cities should be done to identify additional benchmarks to provide a broad spectrum of goals.

Community input should also be used to establish goals unique to Portland and community policing. The Police Bureau should take the time to research other city comparisons and survey citizens. Once the benchmarks are identified, the Investigations and Operations Branches would

need to set goals and identify objectives. Discussions to include separate goals for persons and property crimes and even further dissection to include different goals for specific details, would need to be identified. Performance measurements for divisions, details, and individuals would also need to be developed. All of this must be a collaborated effort between Investigations and Operations along with the City's MFR process. The time frame for implementation to include the research and discussions would be about four to six months.

Recommendation 2

Develop a staffing model that incorporates goals, objectives, and detective productivity data.

Once the Bureau has refined and articulated the results it hopes to achieve with the investigation function, and developed a reliable set of productivity measures, staffing needs can be assessed. A staffing model should take into account realistic objectives and reliable detective productivity information. We recommend that requests for significant additional personnel not be made until management improvements recommended here have been implemented.

Response:

The Police Bureau agrees with the recommendation to develop a staffing model. However, given the length of time needed to hire, train, and promote new investigators, we recommend requesting additional personnel at the same time management improvements are implemented.

The results of a major study of the police criminal investigation process in the U.S. released in 2001, found that out of 1,746 agencies surveyed, "on average, investigators comprised about 17% of the sworn officers" in these agencies. In reviewing the June 2, 2005, Bureau staffing report, there were 89 authorized Detective positions out of 1,002 sworn personnel (1,046 minus 44 frozen positions). Thus, 9% of the authorized sworn positions in the Portland Police Bureau are Detectives.

The Portland Police Bureau has looked at Managing Patrol Performance (MPP) for a staffing model regarding patrol. The developer of this model has also looked at criminal investigations staffing. Using a staffing factor approach and calculating the expected case workload, the recommended number of detectives was determined. Staffing factor calculates the number of hours available for investigations for an average investigator (2,080 hours minus hours not available due to vacation, holidays, sick leave, training, comp time, administrative time, military leave, etc.).²

To implement this recommendation, the Police Bureau would contract with Police Management Advisors to develop an investigation staffing model. This work would build on the programming and work already completed as part of MPP.

Recommendation 3

Strengthen Detective Division case management controls by adopting a more detailed set of supervisory oversight and assignment procedures.

Response:

Work has already been started to implement this recommendation. It should be noted that although this recommendation refers to Detective Division case management controls, this recommendation encompasses all divisions where detectives are assigned.

To ensure Bureau-wide compliance with this recommendation, a Bureau Directive should be created addressing the supervisory oversight and assignment procedures as well as the requirement that everyone use the system. The support for and development of this Directive is further discussed in the Bureau's response to recommendation 6C. Detective Division supervisory personnel, along with supervisors from the other Investigative Divisions and Operations, will need to collaborate to develop a formal procedure for oversight.

Recommendation 4

Explore opportunities to reduce excessive turnover, especially within the command structure of the Detective Division.

Response:

While we do not disagree with this recommendation, the implementation of this recommendation may not be obtainable. Many factors contribute to the turnover rate of investigators and command staff. Labor agreements dictate that detectives may exercise their seniority to shifts. When this right is exercised, or when a promotion, retirement or transfer to another division occur, vacancies are created in the details within the division. To address staffing in relation to workload in each detail, internal transfers occur. The job experience in each detail is then effected.

The Bureau has no control over shift transfers, promotions, or retirements. We also try to accommodate employees seeking additional career opportunities in other assignments outside of the Detective Division. This broadens their investigative experiences and makes for a happier workplace. Any long-term restrictions on transfers would be seen as negative and would penalize hard-working Bureau members.

We believe the issue of inexperienced detectives is somewhat exaggerated due to the timing of this audit. During the last two to three years, there have been significant retirements within the Division, causing over a third of the division to be staffed with newly promoted detectives. As these promoted detectives gain time in rank the experience level will increase.

The causes for command staff turnover is similar to the detective turnover. Lieutenants and commanders within the division, with few exceptions, were promoted out of the position or

retired. Only one commander and two lieutenants within the last five years were transferred from the division for reasons other than promotion or retirement. The auditors suggest obtaining informal long-to-medium term agreements with job candidates. This would have a negative effect on recruiting for these positions, as the applicant pool for posted lieutenant vacancies is already very limited.

Recommendation 5

Recommendation 5, to strengthen the preliminary investigations process has two parts: (5a), that the bureau should develop clearly written, detailed procedures for patrol officers, and (5b) that the bureau should institute a comprehensive evaluation system for sergeants to document and provide feedback to officers who need additional coaching and training opportunities.

Response:

In the mid to late 1990s, the Portland Police Bureau developed training curricula to address the quality of investigations conducted by patrol officers. The material was presented in advanced academy and in-service settings over a number of years. Additionally, a system (Trait Writing Assessment) was developed to evaluate police reports and to provide feedback to officers regarding report quality. Support material for the system was developed and distributed to all RUs within the Bureau as well. This system was the subject of a memorandum from the Chief of Police mandating that it be implemented.

Training was given to all supervisors in the Police Bureau on how to use the Trait Writing Assessment and material was distributed at that time. Additional classes were conducted at precincts to reinforce its use. At the same time that reports were receiving attention, recruit officers were receiving classes on conducting investigations. This training provided a context with which officers received information and practice in conducting criminal investigations. The officers then were assigned to write a report on their investigation. The reports were evaluated and detailed feedback was provided to each officer.

These efforts probably did not have a long-term effect because of limited organizational support and because they ran counter to the prevailing culture. Although a memorandum was issued that required the use of the Trait Writing Assessment, the Bureau's Directives were not updated to make the change permanent. Once the attention and focus of management moved to other areas, the progress made in writing diminished over time to the point that no positive effect is discernable.

The culture of the Police Bureau emphasizes that its members are specialists: criminalists look for latent evidence at crime scenes, Detectives investigate felony crimes and conduct interviews with suspects, Gang Enforcement Team officers deal with gang crimes, Domestic Violence Reduction Unit responds to ongoing domestic crimes, Auto Theft Task Force officers investigate

auto theft, etc. The belief that officers need to remain free to respond to emergency calls is reinforced culturally (as well as organizationally to a degree). Without the constant attention and direction from first-line supervisors, any attempt to overcome the prevailing culture was destined to fail.

Action recommended

In order to accomplish this goal, the Police Bureau should rewrite the directive on report writing to include the use of the Trait Writing Assessment. In addition, all RUS should receive the material and facilitate its use.

The Police Bureau should also write a new directive aimed at patrol officers that outline the tasks and responsibilities for conducting an investigation. At the same time, the Investigators Checklist should be distributed to all uniformed officers in the Bureau, and training on conducting criminal investigations should also be reinstated in advanced academy and annual in-service.

To overcome part of the cultural issues, officers' efforts at good report writing should be rewarded—this could include monetary rewards (pay grades for attaining certain skill levels), awards, letters of commendation, and any other extrinsic motivator allowed by contract and city code. Finally, the promotional process should include a demonstration of good writing skills.

Recommendation 5b

5b) that the bureau should institute a comprehensive evaluation system for sergeants to document and provide feedback to officers who need additional coaching and training opportunities.

Response:

Once again, the Bureau's continued support of report writing can also be viewed in terms of staffing; it takes time for sergeants to evaluate reports and then give feedback to the officers who wrote them. The existing staffing and scheduling is not conducive to this effort.

In addition, over the last several years, the Police Bureau has discussed and developed various performance evaluation systems. A few years ago, the Bureau even launched a pilot project to attempt performance evaluations.

While the Police Bureau agrees with this recommendation, there would have to be significant changes made to current labor agreements to allow this kind of evaluation to move forward. Though there is no formal system, we do feel that sergeants routinely provide feedback to officers regarding their work as time allows. The supervisory role outlined in the sergeant's academy could be bolstered, however, to define the need for sergeants to properly oversee officers' report writing abilities and work with those officers who are submitting insufficient reports.

Recommendation 6 a, b, c, and d

Improve Case Management System

6a: Fully assess the data needs of detectives and their supervisors so that the centralized system will meet their needs.

Response:

The auditors are correct in their assessment that the Case Management System (CMS) meet the needs of the users to guarantee the continued use and support of the system. The reliability, or the lack of, has turned users away from the present CMS. Addressed in further detail in recommendation 6D is the misconception of the present stand-alone systems—both systems are necessary. The CMS will be used by supervisors, including command, to evaluate the investigative process and track detective productivity. The system must be reliable to win the trust of supervisors and the detectives who will be held accountable for the information contained within.

The possible incorporation of the Electronic Field Reporting into CMS would greatly enhance the credibility of the system now hampered by data input delays from the Records Division. Command and supervisors from Investigations and Operations will develop a list of inquires needed to fulfill their mission of evaluating investigations and tracking productivity. The Data Processing Division (DPD) will program CMS to be responsive to these needs. Potential incorporation of Electronic Field Reporting into CMS will be handled by the Records Division and DPD. The implementation of this recommendation will coincide with the development of the Bureau Directive.

Costs at this time are unknown, as research will need to be conducted on the merge of Electronic Field Reporting and CMS information. In addition, as in recommendation 6B, research will dictate whether the current CMS can be adapted to fulfill investigations needs or whether a new system will need to be purchased.

6b: Commit an adequate level of resources necessary to support Police Bureau data systems and its users.

Work is already underway to address this recommendation. Meetings with the Data Processing Division and the Detective Division have developed criteria for purging outdated cases from the system. The rest of the Investigations Branch will be following the Detective Division lead. Operations will meet with DPD to develop their own purge criteria.

In other recommendation responses, we have addressed the Bureau's command commitment to the CMS. We discussed the creation of a Bureau Directive, which will alleviate questions about the use of CMS and uniformly apply it to all divisions.

The commitment to an adequate system, and the support staff that will ensure good data practices will depend on costs. Whether the current CMS can be adapted or if a new system needs to be developed will impact capital costs. The merging of Electronic Field Reporting and CMS will

assist in data entry and will probably not require additional data entry personnel. If the merge cannot be completed there will be cost associated with support positions. Finally, the IT support of either system will need to be enhanced to ensure the system remains operational.

6c: Require that everyone use the system, including precinct detectives.

Response:

The Bureau agrees that this recommendation be implemented, and meetings have already been held regarding it. The Police Bureau agrees that the entire Bureau should use the Case Management System and a Bureau Directive will be created to mandate its use and outline the oversight procedures for such. As previously stated, the process to purge outdated data from CMS has begun. Once completed, the new Directive can be written and staffed. Compliance with this recommendation should be complete in 2 to 3 months. There is little or no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation.

6d: Plan for an orderly incorporation of stand-alone systems into a centralized integrated system.

Response:

The use of one data system as opposed to multiple systems is beneficial in many ways to include less data entry and broadened access. However, the stand-alone systems referred to in the Auditor's report are actually investigative databases unique to each detail within the Detective Division. The Case Management System is designed to track cases and gauge investigative efficiency and detective productivity.

The stand-alone systems are used to identify suspects, provide crime analysis, track crime trends, and report data to related associations. Each of these investigative databases is designed to be responsive to the crime(s) each detail is responsible for. For example, a robbery database is completely different from a fraud database.

The data entered into each database is also distinctly different from the information input into the Case Management System. Efforts to incorporate investigative information from each distinct detail into the Case Management System would make both databases ineffective, cumbersome to use, and impossible to retrieve the necessary data.

Recommendation 7

Provide additional computer equipment for detectives.

Response:

The audit suggests that each detective have a assigned computer. Over the course of 2005, several personal computers have been purchased or ordered. The 2005 year-end goal is to have a PC on each Detective's desk in the Detective Division with the appropriate applications, software and databases.

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Police Investigations: Improvements needed to address relatively low clearance rates

Report #312, July 2005

Audit Team Members:
Ken Gavette, Katherine Gray Still,
Kristine Adams-Wannberg

This report is intended to promote the best possible management of public resources. This and other audit reports produced by the Audit Services Division are available for viewing on the web at: www.portlandonline.com/auditor/auditservices. Printed copies can be obtained by contacting the Audit Services Division.

Gary Blackmer, City Auditor
Drummond Kahn, Director of Audit Services

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