Advancing Prosecutorial Effectiveness and Fairness through Data and Innovation

RESEARCH & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT

Florida International University (FIU) and Loyola University Chicago are implementing a two-year project with four prosecutor's offices in **Chicago**, **Jacksonville**, **Milwaukee**, and **Tampa**. The project stems from a growing recognition that prosecutors need to become more data-driven and evidence-based. Most prosecutor's offices lack the ability to systematically and objectively measure their performance. Our four partner offices are interested in developing greater data collection and analytical capacity to run their offices more effectively and fairly.

The backdrop for this project is the *Safety and Justice Challenge*, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation initiative to reduce jail misuse and overuse as both a crucial component and a major driver of America's over-reliance on incarceration. Unnecessary jail incarceration carries significant costs to individuals, families, communities, and society at large. These costs take their greatest toll on low-income people and communities of color.

The prosecution project has a goal to advance both social science and prosecutorial practice. The project aims to update the social science research on prosecution and sentencing using current quantitative and qualitative data from partner prosecutor's offices. Prosecutorial practice is advanced through the following four objectives:

1. Improve *data and analytical* capacity	The project examines each office's case management system to assess the scope of current data fields, to determine how to improve the use of existing data, and to explore how to capture new data fields with minimal effort. Current data analytical capacity will also be assessed to help partner offices build more effective and sustainable models internally and/or in partnerships with local research resources.
2. Develop and implement new *performance indicators* to assess progress over time	The project assists offices to develop and implement performance indicators that broaden the focus beyond conviction rates by including new indicators for problem-solving and community prosecution that better reflect developments nationally. The new comprehensive performance indicators tool will consist of a set of indicators, implementation guide, and data collection tools. These new indicators will provide data needed to improve strategies, reallocate resources, and develop policies that are more responsive to community needs.
3. Respond to the need to ameliorate *racial and ethnic disparities* in the justice system	The project equips prosecutor's offices committed to tackling these disparities with new data and knowledge. Data are examined by decision points and specific offense categories because disparities and solutions may vary by stage and crime type. The project relies on administrative data, select case file reviews, observations, and semi-structured interviews. Working together with government and community partners, findings will be translated into recommendations for policy and practice.
4. *Communicate more effectively* within and outside the prosecutor's offices	The project develops regular *internal reporting* systems where management teams assess statistical outcomes over successive time intervals, and against their overall goals and objectives. These reports will help re-evaluate existing priorities and establish new benchmarks. The project aims to improve *external reporting* policies and practices to enable prosecutors to communicate the important work they do to the media and the general public.

PROJECT TEAM includes Besiki Kutateladze, Ryan Meldrum, Rebecca Richardson, and Lisa Stolzenberg from *Florida International University*, and Don Stemen, Elizabeth Webster, and David Olson from *Loyola University Chicago*. FIU manages the overall project implementation and the field work in prosecutor's offices in Jacksonville and Tampa, while Loyola leads the field work in Chicago and Milwaukee.