Change Management:
Unlocking the Full Potential of Innovation

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The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Innovative Prosecution Solutions (IPS) grant program involves a national network of dedicated criminal justice practitioners — prosecutors, law enforcement officers and other allied professionals — working together to solve critical public safety issues in their jurisdictions. Using novel crime reduction strategies and approaches, prosecutors around the country aim to reduce gang and gun crime, curtail the opioid epidemic, combat gender-based violence and human trafficking, and reduce justice-system involvement of young adults and youth.

The **Bureau of Justice Assistance** (BJA) developed and currently administers **Innovative Prosecution Solutions** (IPS) as part of BJA's "**Innovations Suite**" of crime fighting programs, which include the Smart Policing Initiative; Encouraging Innovations: Field-Initiated Programs; and Swift, Certain, and Fair Supervision. The IPS model builds on lessons learned from BJA's former crime-fighting programs to assist prosecutors in developing effective strategies and programs to address violent crime.

Many current IPS grantees are using their award funds to purchase new records management systems, conduct validity checks on existing records management systems, and develop public-facing and internal dashboards to improve data transparency. Nearly all these innovations will inevitably initiate change in office practices, policies, and procedures. Prosecutors and prosecution staff will be tasked with converting from existing to new ways of performing case management functions.

The purpose of this brief is to describe change management in the workplace and provide IPS grantees with the tools and understanding to effectively transition from "the way it is" to "the way it will be." Topics covered will include the elements of change management, stages of change, and obstacles to change. A Change Management Checklist is included to assist grantees with becoming "change-ready".

The Elements of Change Management

Change is an opportunity for transformation. Implementation of new technology will not reach its maximum capability unless an organization first examines its current work systems and culture. With leadership support, an organization is poised to address honestly both the formal and informal systems that enable the office to function. **Formal systems and processes** might entail existing methods of collecting and storing administrative data on defendants and cases, determining eligibility for diversion program opportunities, or sharing of information about victims with criminal justice partners. **Informal systems and processes** evolve through personal relationships, which may function to bypass formal controls. For example, if there is a delay in receiving digital evidence through formal channels with law enforcement, a prosecutor or legal assistant may call a colleague at the police department to facilitate a quicker response and bypass the formal delivery process.

Strategy in Focus: St. Louis County Attorney's Office

Change requires a psychological reorientation — one that enables us to come to terms with differences from the current state and accept a new way. The St. Louis County Attorney's Office (SLCAO) in Duluth, Minnesota provides a useful example. As part of the process of moving from an antiquated case management system to a cloud-based case management system, the SLCAO assembled an office-wide team to discuss its workplace culture and the formal office processes and policies in all of their legal divisions. These discussions of workplace culture involved both the formal and informal relationships utilized to get work done by attorneys and legal support staff. The St. Louis County team partnered with the new case management provider to demonstrate the capabilities of the new system to the office, which prompted a productive discussion among staff. The team also validated the data transferred from the old to the new system, which generated another examination of the formal policies and procedures that needed to change.

The change management process can be structured around five steps:

1. **Define the strategy for change**. This involves developing a plan for implementing the new process by describing the Who, What, When, Why, and How.
2. **Assess perceptions of the change**. After the strategy has been defined and communicated to team members, the affected members should assess current policies, procedures, and technologies to understand if anything needs to be changed to achieve the strategy. An understanding of the current state can provide an opportunity to prepare the change design.

3. **Design the process to inspire and engage team members**. This step involves using the information gathered in the previous step to compile and map the necessary plans to implement the new strategy.
4. **Implement the change and provide team members with tools to succeed.** This is the stage where the plans/technology are put into action. All impacted individuals should receive adequate hands-on training on the new technology and formal policy and procedure changes.
5. **Embed the new approach** into the agency or organization. Change managers should communicate with and involve team members and stakeholders early and often to achieve aligned team acceptance of the new change. To determine if the new approach is successful, it is important for the organization to examine data points that determine changes in efficiency, effectiveness, and community response.

Stages of Change

The transition steps of change involve (1) letting go of the old way, (2) fluctuating between old and new processes or practices in a 'neutral zone', and (3) embracing a new beginning with shared focus and energy.[1] As an initial step, prosecutors and support team members have to let go of the former way of doing something before they start down the new path. The most disruptive losses that team members feel are power, influence, competence, control, and identity. To help address these losses, each team member must critically assess the work they are doing and ask the following questions:

1. What works well?
2. What doesn't work well?
3. Why am I doing the work this way?

Answers to these questions help establish the rationale for change in the workplace and enable staff to let go of old practices. Leadership should also communicate actual or anticipated results of the change, which affected staff should view as desirable outcomes.

After the team lets go of the old way, they move into a 'neutral zone' that requires them to lay down the past and move forward. This is a period ripe for creative thought that allows team members to step back and take stock of existing problems. This process allows for unloading irrelevant or inefficient policies and procedures to create effective

[1] See WILLIAM BRIDGES, MANAGING TRANSITION (De Capo Press, 2nd ed., 2003).

new models and processes. Importantly, offices that are considering implementing change in practices or policies should acknowledge both the formal and informal office culture when designing processes and internal controls. For instance, when examining the approval process for certain prosecutorial decisions, a new case management system may require documentation of the approval in the system, while previously an approval was obtained verbally/informally.

The work done in the 'neutral zone' helps the team prepare for the 'new beginning' stage. In this stage, managers and staff perceive the new way to be a better fit for existing structures, procedures, and values. In order for implementation to be successful, it is important that the team members who will be most affected by the change are included in the implementation process. Another group of individuals critical to inclusion on the implementation team are subject matter experts who ideally have experience with both the existing and new ways of how work is performed. When everyone has a voice in the change, the new way is less difficult to implement or learn, and its outcomes are visible and measurable. Specific examples of outcomes might include a reduced average case processing time, team satisfaction with the new change, or acceptance and use of the new system, all of which could be measured using administrative data, a brief survey, or an informal interview.

Strategy in Focus: Cumberland County Prosecutor's Office

When implementing new case management systems, staff may need to consider changing how data is currently being collected and entered in the office records management system, how information is being shared with partners, or how victims are being notified when a case against the accused is declined. When the Cumberland County Prosecutor's Office in Bridgeton, New Jersey implemented a new case management system module for its Juvenile/Domestic Violence Unit, its goal was to decrease the time it takes to adjudicate a case. The office examined its current work processes, embraced the new technology, revised their policies and procedures, and collaborated with the court to measure the effectiveness of the new module. As a result of this comprehensive approach, the office decreased average juvenile case processing time by 100 days.

Obstacles and Incentives to Change

Obstacles to change are expected, and they vary based on the office and jurisdiction. Potential obstacles include fear of the unknown, risk aversion, resentment, frustration, cynicism, or perceptions that change is too fast or too slow.

Importantly, these obstacles can be mitigated by: (1) collectively acknowledging losses; (2) connecting with all team members about the change; (3) ensuring a steady flow of communication; and (4) building professional competence around the new way. Leadership support and engagement is essential to address potential obstacles. While office leaders may be the ones who decide that a change is needed, they must communicate the Why, When, and How of a given change to the entire office. To assist all employees through the neutral zone, it is important for the chief/elected prosecutor to acknowledge fears and losses openly and sympathetically, treat former practices with respect, and emphasize that all staff are still valuable. Leadership can develop and convey incentives for change, such as the increased availability of remote work, verbal recognition, and training in different skill areas that may increase promotional opportunities. Similarly, when leadership engages personally with the implementation team and makes timely decisions, change occurs more smoothly.

Conclusion

Prosecutors' offices must constantly evolve and adapt to meet a variety of challenges — from the global pandemic, to changes in technology, to becoming more transparent with data they are collecting. The recommendations provided in this brief can help offices and agencies successfully transition a practice or policy while maintaining the support from impacted leaders and staff alike. The extent to which these recommendations can be followed will depend on many factors, particularly the time, budget, and other resources available for the effort. However, regardless of the scope of a change, careful planning and an awareness of common challenges are critical to ensuring that the transition is as efficient and pain-free as possible to office staff.

Change Management Checklist

Let’s Begin	
☐	Identify what process/policy needs to change and why (e.g., workplace culture, processes, relationships)
☐	Widely discuss the problem and the reason for the change
	➢ What is the big picture?
	➢ Engage leadership to “sell” the change to the organization
☐	Engage with the entire team on the new process/policy
	➢ What is in it for everyone? ➢ Who stands to lose something under the new process/policy? ○ Use this information to identify potential points of resistance ○ Acknowledge fears and losses openly and sympathetically ➢ Emphasize that all staff are still valuable ○ Incentivize new skills to encourage adaptation ➢ Treat former practices with respect
☐	Demonstrate leadership’s support and engagement in person on a regular basis and through multiple channels — *e.g.,* memos, emails, video messages, and small and large group meetings
Implementation	
☐	Establish and empower an implementation team representing every unit/job category affected by the change
	➢ Appoint a change manager who leads the implementation and reports directly to the agency’s leader
☐	Hold regular meetings, with Q&A, to keep the organization up to date on progress and delays
	➢ Define what work is no longer being performed and what work remains the same — be specific ➢ Identify gaps and strategize on how to compensate
☐	Have a test team to work with the new policy/technology to identify issues and make changes before full implementation
☐	Provide mandatory interactive training close in time to full implementation
☐	Hold a launch event led by leadership to reinforce why the change is being made, celebrate the implementation team, and announce that feedback is welcomed
Continuous Improvement	
☐	Establish a mechanism for feedback
	➢ Act on feedback to the greatest extent possible and communicate changes
☐	Provide meaningful, interactive training to all new employees
☐	On a quarterly basis, discuss the impact of the change and make adjustments as necessary

References

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