



United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

General Government Division

B-256868

May 10, 1994

The Honorable Gary A. Condit
Chairman, Information, Justice,
Transportation, and Agriculture Subcommittee
Committee on Government Operations
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter responds to your request for information on the Operation Weed and Seed program. As you know, Operation Weed and Seed is a community-based, multiagency approach that proposes to weed out crime from targeted neighborhoods, then seed the site with a variety of programs and resources to prevent crime from recurring. Program descriptions emphasize that Operation Weed and Seed is not another grant program but a strategy based on four core elements: (1) sites must have a law enforcement effort coordinated among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies; (2) law enforcement must work closely with residents in community policing efforts; (3) human services, such as prevention and treatment programs, educational opportunities, and recreational activities, must be concentrated in the targeted sites; and (4) economic revitalization must focus on revitalizing the targeted distressed neighborhoods through housing and economic development. Success is expected to be achieved by the coordinated effort of law enforcement agencies, community groups, social service agencies, multiple levels of government, and the private sector working together.

You asked us to describe (1) the measures taken by the Department of Justice to ensure community satisfaction, (2) efforts to evaluate the Weed and Seed program and the criteria used for monitoring funds from participating federal agencies for Weed and Seed activities, (3) the steps Justice has taken to ensure that U.S. Attorneys and Weed and Seed sites receive advice and funding for the seeding component of the program, and (4) the federal and local management structures of the program.

GAO/GGD-94-128R Weed and Seed: Program Objectives

RESULTS

According to the Operation Weed and Seed strategy, an important method for community satisfaction and long-term success is through citizen involvement. Our work at both the federal and local levels indicated that participants generally agreed that community involvement was an important part of Weed and Seed efforts. Further, community residents sat on steering committees at each local site we visited and were expected to help design and implement methods needed to achieve Weed and Seed objectives.

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has contracted for a national evaluation of Operation Weed and Seed as well as an evaluation of the Kansas City program. Although neither will be completed until later this year, researchers have reported some preliminary observations from the national evaluation. The interim report indicated that although there is considerable variation at the local level in the relative emphasis on weeding or seeding, community policing is a strong component of many of the programs. Weeding efforts seem to have resulted in the removal of criminals and increased interagency cooperation. Seeding activities, however, appeared to be more modestly funded than weeding activities. Officials we spoke with at local Weed and Seed sites said there was need for more funding from seed agencies. In addition to these two national evaluations, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, within the Department of Justice, established guidelines for monitoring funds from participating federal agencies, as part of its responsibility under the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988. These guidelines, found in Bureau of Justice Assistance monitoring guidelines and interagency agreements, outline review procedures for Weed and Seed programs to ensure compliance with policies and responsible use of funds.

The Department of Justice Executive Office for Weed and Seed recognizes that its expertise is in law enforcement and therefore seeks advice on seed programs from participating federal social service agencies through the Interagency Working Group. This group develops and coordinates federal efforts and is a forum for exchanging information among participating federal agencies. One of its efforts was to establish seed agency coordinators at each Weed and Seed site who would help coordinate funds and services from social service agencies.

Weed and Seed's management structure provides for federal, state, local, private agency, and citizen participation in the Weed and Seed program. Specifically, the Executive Office for Weed and Seed, within the Office of the U.S. Deputy Attorney General, is the policy and coordination unit that provides federal guidance and supports U.S. Attorneys, who are responsible for local development and implementation of the strategy. U.S. Attorneys

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work with a local steering committee which governs the Weed and Seed site.

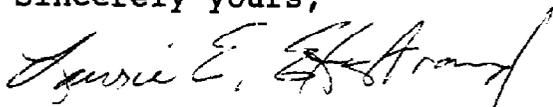
More information about Operation Weed and Seed is presented in enclosures I through III. Enclosure I provides more detailed information on the Weed and Seed program. Enclosure II presents a list of the Weed and Seed sites and funds received. Enclosure III documents the Department of Justice monitoring checklist used on Weed and Seed site visits.

APPROACH

To develop the information requested, we interviewed officials and reviewed quarterly Weed and Seed reports to Congress, resource allocation data from site summaries, and monitoring documents at the Department of Justice Executive Office for Weed and Seed, NIJ, and the Office of Justice Program's Bureau of Justice Assistance in Washington, D.C. We also attended meetings of the Interagency Working Group. We discussed the program with representatives of other participating federal agencies involved in Weed and Seed, including officials from the departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Education, and Agriculture. In addition, we met with U.S. Attorneys and other steering committee members from local Weed and Seed sites in Los Angeles, Santa Ana, and San Diego, CA, and Washington, D.C.

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If you need additional information, please contact me on (202) 512-8777.

Sincerely yours,



Laurie E. Ekstrand
Associate Director, Administration
of Justice Issues

OBSERVATIONS ON PROGRAM OBJECTIVESMEASURES TO HELP ENSURE COMMUNITY SATISFACTION

The Weed and Seed strategy identifies citizen involvement as a principal way to ensure long-term success and community satisfaction. The Executive Office for Weed and Seed encourages local residents to serve as members of the local steering committees and help define drug-related and violent crime problems and to identify solutions and necessary resources needed to improve community life. Community-oriented policing (e.g., citizen neighborhood watches, community relations activities, and officer foot patrols), a core requirement of the Weed and Seed strategy, is one way the level of citizen involvement is raised. According to the strategy, these types of activities tend to increase police visibility and may help develop cooperative relationships between police and citizenry.

Local steering committee members we met with saw community involvement as an important part of the Weed and Seed strategy. For example, a city councilman told us that local involvement makes the program more credible among the residents. A U.S. Attorney agreed that local discretion should determine allocation of funds, with the community directing its own program. Another steering committee member believed that a Weed and Seed program needs to have strong leadership from the community to be a part of program development.

Locals Want More Support for Seed Activities

Officials we spoke with at local Weed and Seed sites said there was need for more involvement from the seed agencies. For example, the executive assistant to the U.S. Attorney at one site commented that federal seed agencies are not held accountable for involvement in the program and often do not volunteer assistance. A coordinator at another site saw little cooperation from the social service agencies and believed they viewed the Weed and Seed program as a "stepchild" to their other programs. An interim report from an on-going NIJ evaluation¹ tentatively concluded that seeding components are modestly funded and may require more involvement by federal seeding agencies as well as other players such as the private sector and local agencies. In its 1994 funding announcement, Justice placed greater emphasis on seeding activities by specifying that Weed and Seed sites must

¹National Evaluation of Operation Weed and Seed: Interim Status Report, submitted to the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, November 1993.

pledge more than half of the \$750,000 received from Justice to seeding activities.

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE OVERSEES EVALUATIONS

NIJ has contracted for a national evaluation of Operation Weed and Seed and an evaluation of the Kansas City site program. The national evaluation is designed to document and compare the unique characteristics of program activities at each Weed and Seed site. The evaluation of the Kansas City site will attempt to measure program outcomes from law enforcement efforts. Both are to be completed later this year.

In November 1993, NIJ received an interim status report on the national evaluation that included four observations. First, local programs demonstrated considerable variation in their relative emphasis on weeding or seeding components. Second, community policing appeared to be a strong component of many programs and seemed to bridge weed and seed functions. In fact, the researchers noted that weed, seed, and community policing activities could not be divided into mutually exclusive categories. Third, weeding strategies had resulted in the removal of violent offenders and drug traffickers and had increased levels of interagency cooperation and coordination. Finally, seeding components were modestly funded and appeared to be a poor stepsister to weeding components. The report emphasized that these observations were tentative in that all site visits and data gathering had not yet been completed.

Information from the four sites we visited generally supported these observations. Each site had implemented a different range of activities in the weed and seed components. Each site had a community policing component as required by the Weed and Seed strategy and we heard generally positive comments about the impact of this effort on public safety and community relations. Finally, as noted earlier, we did hear some concern that not enough support had been forthcoming for seeding activities.

THE OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS MONITORS WEED AND SEED ACTIVITIES

As outlined in a fiscal year 1993 agreement between the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) and the Executive Office for Weed and Seed, OJP conducts monitoring activities, serves as principal contact on financial management matters, and conducts on-site reviews at Weed and Seed locations. In addition, OJP provides training and technical assistance. Monitoring is required by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 and performed by OJP's Bureau of Justice Assistance. Funds appropriated to the Executive Office for Weed and Seed are administered and monitored through OJP and

the Bureau of Justice Assistance. In addition, Justice has formalized monitoring procedures in its interagency agreements with participating federal agencies outlining activities for monitoring Weed and Seed programs. For example, a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Education says monitoring and oversight of the Safe Haven grant will be done in consultation between Justice and Education, and will include quarterly reporting, site visits, and review of draft products developed by grantees.

Monitoring consists of on-site visits and telephone calls to program participants. Justice officials reported that each site is visited twice a year. A checklist has been developed for use during the on-site visits and covers such areas as general administration of the program (adherence to budget, records maintained); program details (progress toward meeting goals and objectives, steering committee representation, frequency of meetings); and personnel (number of staff and training received). (See encl. III for a copy of the checklist.) In addition, the monitor is asked to describe the progress made toward achieving project goals and objectives and any significant concerns.

JUSTICE SEEKS ADVICE ON SEED ACTIVITIES

The Executive Office for Weed and Seed seeks advice on seed programs and activities through interaction with participating federal social service agencies. In February 1992, Justice held its first meeting of the Interagency Working Group to develop and coordinate federal efforts among participating seed agencies. Representatives from Justice and eight other primarily seed agencies--Agriculture, Education, Labor, HHS, HUD, Small Business Administration, Transportation, and Treasury--generally meet twice a month to provide updates on resources available to Weed and Seed sites. Information exchanged at the meetings is conveyed to U.S. Attorneys and other participants through the Executive Office for Weed and Seed's monthly newsletter.

The Interagency Working Group established a seed agency coordinator to work with the local steering committee at each Weed and Seed site. The coordinator is to act as the U.S. Attorney's counterpart on seeding matters and help obtain and coordinate funds and services from social service agencies.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE PROVIDES FOR MULTILEVEL PARTICIPATION

The Department of Justice created the Executive Office for Weed and Seed, within the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, to develop national policy and guide the design and implementation of the multiagency Operation Weed and Seed. Specifically, the

Executive Office is responsible for developing long-range efforts and maintaining day-to-day communication with U.S. Attorneys and site representatives. The Executive Office supports U.S. Attorneys in establishing and coordinating activities at the local level. However, U.S. Attorneys are responsible for developing and implementing programs at local Weed and Seed sites.

Justice also coordinates federal interagency efforts to support the seeding component of the Weed and Seed sites. For example, the Safe Haven program--jointly funded by Justice, Education, and HUD--operates before-, during-, and after-school programs in prevention, education, recreation and other activities for young people and their families. The Step-Up program--jointly sponsored by Justice, HUD, and Labor--provides employment, job training, and career opportunities to such groups as public housing residents and other low-income persons. In addition, Justice and HUD fund the Community Policing in Public Housing program, which provides training and technical assistance to mobilize public housing residents, staff, and police departments to eliminate drugs and crime in their neighborhoods.

LOCAL SITES ORGANIZED THROUGH STEERING COMMITTEES

Although each Weed and Seed site is governed by a steering committee, usually chaired by the U.S. Attorney, the composition of these committees is left to local discretion to maximize program flexibility and effectiveness. For example, participants could include state and local law enforcement representatives (state police, local chief of police); representatives from state and local departments such as social services, housing, and employment; corporate sponsors; representatives from federal law enforcement agencies; and representatives from federal seed agencies (HUD and Labor).

At the four sites we visited the composition of the steering committees varied and ranged in size from 9 to 72 members. For example, at one site a 22-member committee consisted of six federal representatives, three county, nine city, and four members from private industry or nonprofit corporations. At another site, only nine members sat on the steering committee. However, the committee had additional representation of multiple levels of government through individual working groups formed to focus on major themes (e.g., housing, recreation, and education). Despite the differences in size and composition, steering committees generally include a cross section of government and private sector representatives.

WEED AND SEED SITES AND FUNDS RECEIVED

Site	FY 1991	FY 1992	FY 1993	Total
Los Angeles, CA	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000
San Diego, CA	0	613,000	487,000	1,100,000
Santa Ana, CA	0	613,000	487,000	1,100,000
Denver, CO	0	613,000	487,000	1,100,000
Wilmington, DE	0	613,000	487,000	1,100,000
Atlanta, GA	0	613,000	687,000	1,300,000
Chicago, IL	0	613,000	487,000	1,100,000
Chelsea, MA	0	613,000	487,000	1,100,000
Kansas City, MO	200,000	207,500	600,000	1,007,500
Omaha, NE	25,000	750,000	250,000	1,025,000
Trenton, NJ	284,000	1,223,975	1,220,000	2,727,975
Philadelphia, PA	0	613,000	487,000	1,100,000
Pittsburgh, PA	0	613,000	487,000	1,100,000
Charleston, SC	0	613,000	487,000	1,100,000
N. Charleston, SC	0	0	1,000,000	1,000,000
Fort Worth, TX	0	612,217	487,000	1,099,217
San Antonio, TX	0	612,984	487,000	1,099,984
Richmond, VA	0	612,491	487,000	1,099,491
Seattle, WA	0	613,000	487,000	1,100,000
Madison, WI	0	613,000	487,000	1,100,000
Washington, DC	0	613,000	487,000	1,100,000

Note: Each of these 21 sites, as well as approximately 10 new sites, may receive as much as \$750,000 for fiscal year 1994 activities. More than half of the \$750,000 must be pledged to seeding activities.

Source: Justice Department.

JUSTICE CHECKLIST USED FOR ON-SITE MONITORING VISITS

ON-SITE CHECKLIST

MONITORING

Project/Program Title:

Grantee:

Grant No.:

Date of Monitoring Visit:

Monitor:

PRE-VISIT REVIEW

1. General Conditions Yes/No

Is compliance indicated?

COMMENT:

2. Special Conditions Yes/No

a. Have substantive requirements been met?

b. Have dated requirements been met?

COMMENT:

3. Grant Adjustments Yes/No

a. Are there problems that need resolution via grant adjustments?

b. Have requests for change been processed?

COMMENT:

4. Correspondence Yes/No

a. Has correspondence been pursued and have all requests received responses?

b. Have contact reports been posted reflecting telephone transactions?

COMMENT:

5. Reports Yes/No

a. Narrative reports
 (1) Required and in file?
 (2) Problems indicated?

COMMENT:

b. Financial Reports
 (1) Are reports on time?
 (2) Any discrepancies?
 (3) Have corrections been made?

COMMENT:

ON-SITE CHECKLIST		
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION		
1.	Date grant awarded to project:	
2.	Date project became operation:	
	COMMENT:	
3.	Budget	
a.	Is the budget being adhered to?	Yes/No
b.	Have there been any program or budget modifications that are not reflected in the file?	Yes/No
	COMMENT:	
4.	Do project records indicate appropriate response from BJA or others to project concerns?	Yes/No
	COMMENT:	
5.	Is the project experiencing delay in the receipt or expenditure of grant funds?	Yes/No
	COMMENT:	
6.	Are appropriate grant records being maintained? (Time and attendance, procurement, equipment, travel, matching share, evaluation records, confidential fund expenditures, etc.)	Yes/No
	COMMENT:	

PROGRAM	
1.	Describe the nature and extent of the progress made implementing the goals and objectives of the project. Include an assessment in terms of the applicant's implementation plan and the likelihood of attainment of goals and objectives during the grant period.
2.	Steering Committee - How often does it meet? Does it have all the appropriate members?, etc. Do subcommittees exist? How is policy made and provided to the component parts?
3.	Law Enforcement Component
4.	Community Policing Component
5.	Prevention/Intervention Component
6.	Revitalization
7.	Status of the activities for each of the components in relation to the implementation plan? What is actually happening?
8.	What problems are they encountering?
9.	What help is needed?
10.	Has the application provided sufficient budget, personnel and resources to achieve the objectives?
COMMENT:	
11.	Describe the current project evaluation plan.
a.	What data (measure of effectiveness) will be collected?
b.	Who and what methods will be utilized to collect data?
c.	When will data be collected and analyzed?
d.	Who will analyze the data and prepare the project evaluation report?
e.	Is the evaluation plan in writing?
12.	What is the nature and extent of relationship between this project and other activities of this agency?
13.	Describe the level of cooperation, if any, between this program and other activities of this agency?
14.	Are any major substantive program changes anticipated which will require BJA prior approval? If so, identify and describe.

PERSONNEL		
1.	Number of employees (total) as of this date:	
2.	Number of employees required to complete project staff:	
3.	Identify reasons for any vacancies:	
4.	Describe hiring policies for:	
	Professional staff:	
	Clerical staff:	
5.	Do personnel employed meet standards as required in the grant application?	Yes/No
6.	If not, do personnel meet standards as generally accepted in the State for these positions?	Yes/No
7.	Was specific training detailed in the grant application?	Yes/No
8.	If yes, has it taken place?	Yes/No
9.	Have other training needs been identified and addressed?	Yes/No
10.	Are all personnel receiving salaries in accordance with approved budget and grant applications?	Yes/No
11.	Have individual consultants been employed on this grant?	Yes/No
	If yes, list by individual the fee paid, service performed and method of selection.	
12.	Are the agency and/or project hiring policies guided by an affirmative action plan?	Yes/No
	If yes, what agency?	
13.	Is there any indication that the grantee is not in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act?	Yes/No
	If yes, please comment.	

CONCLUSIONS		
1.	Describe the minimal and significant areas of achievement of project goals and objectives and any significant concerns.	
2.	Is the project being administered in accordance with the description contained in the grant application?	Yes/No
EXPLAIN		
3.	Have any modifications been made in the project without seeking prior BJA approval?	Yes/No
EXPLAIN		
4.	Are there any plans being made for the assumption of the project by the State of locality at the conclusion of the grant period?	Yes/No
EXPLAIN		
5.	Overall opinion of the nature, type, and scope of any technical assistance provide to support the project:	
6.	Describe the extent to which this project should become a permanent program or service with a given agency:	
7.	Explain whether the project shows particular promise for eventual replications.	
8.	Describe follow-up actions to be taken by BJA, if any, to assist project in achieving its goals and objectives.	

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