Foundations for an effective performance measurement system for drug law enforcement

Companion document to NDLERF Monograph Series No. 34, 'Developing the capacity and skills for national implementation of a drug law enforcement performance measurement framework'

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Introduction

This guide outlines 12 major steps needed to develop and implement an effective performance measurement system for drug law enforcement. Information and suggestions provided draw upon the fieldwork experiences of Australian Institute of Criminology staff during Stages 1 and 2 of the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund (NDLERF)-funded project to improve performance measurement practices among drug law enforcement operatives[1]. They are also informed by suggestions outlined in a range of published guides designed to improve the measurement of police performance more generally, particularly Roberts (2006), O'Connell & Straub (2007) and the Home Office (2008).

For completeness the 12 steps outlined include advice on processes to develop a drug law enforcement performance measurement system 'from scratch'. As much of this work has already been undertaken in Stages 1 and 2 of the NDLERF project (see Attachment 1), it is intended that drug law enforcement personnel focus their efforts on Steps 7 to 12.

Material presented in this document is intended for all staff who have responsibility for drug law enforcement performance; from local-level, operational staff through to senior executives. As such, information provided here is deliberately high-level so that it can be adapted and applied from local through to national-level drug law enforcement (or indeed other law enforcement) settings.

Finally, the 12 steps presented provide the most effective means of developing and implementing a sustainable performance measurement system for Australian drug law enforcement. However, it should also be said that while the suggested steps are logical and appear straightforward, a move towards any new performance measurement system takes time and inevitably contends with a range of issues that may impede implementation – these impediments may include (for instance) certain organisational cultures, politics and technological limitations (see 'Key challenges to national implementation', in Willis, Homel & Anderson, 2010). Ultimately, successful implementation of any new system requires strong executive-level support that values and includes the input of all staff.

Typical performance measurement roadblocks
- organisational culture
- politics
- technical limitations

Moving towards any new measurement system takes time

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[1] For a full description of the NDLERF-funded drug law enforcement performance measurement project, see Willis, Homel & Anderson (2010).

What is performance measurement?

Performance measurement is central to modern program management, accountability and reporting. It is not an end in itself, but provides a basis for improving overall performance. It identifies:

- where a program is heading (in the right direction or otherwise);
- how it will get there; and
- whether resources are being used in the most cost-effective way.

Performance measurement can include a mix of quantitative and qualitative data (for example, the number of cannabis seizures in a given period and intelligence around these seizures, respectively). The exact type and mix of measurement data used to assess performance is largely determined by what is being monitored and the availability of data, and should be considered against the background of context, circumstances and the practical aspects of performance assessment. What is important, however, is that measurement of high-level goals should be based on an assessment of a suite of indicator data because no single data source is authoritative (Willis, Homel & Gray, 2006).

> **Performance measurement:**
> - can include quantitative and qualitative data
> - is not an end in itself, but a tool to help improve performance
> - should include a suite of indicators

What performance measurement *is not*

Performance measurement is not a panacea to performance problems. It can provide an insight into where there may be performance difficulties and the extent of those difficulties, but it does not tell you everything there is to know. For example, it cannot tell you how to solve performance problems. Sound drug market knowledge is essential to the effective interpretation and use of performance results.

Performance measurement is central to good program management … it helps to justify claims for expending and seeking resources

Why do it?

Performance measurement is important because it is central to effective program management and corporate governance. It:

- permits examination and assessment of business practices;
- assists managers to better manage their resources and to undertake short, medium and long-term strategic planning; and
- provides greater transparency around successes and failures through the systematic assessment of specified indicators of performance.

Managers can use this information to help describe a problem in their local area (without relying on anecdotal information) and so justify claims for expending and seeking resources. For senior management, this information can assist in the identification of local and/or organisational-level problems that require remedial action. Its use in high-level strategic planning is evident.

Who does it?

Performance measurement is the responsibility of all staff within an organisation and is not just the purview of 'specialists' like performance and data analysts. As part of an effective management system, performance measurement requires the executive through to operational staff to understand their own roles and particular contributions. Ideally, it should form a continuous thread that connects an organisational mission to its high-level outcomes, strategic objectives and local-level drug law enforcement activities.

Performance measurement is the responsibility of:
- the executive
- management
- operational staff

In other words, *everyone*

Roles and responsibilities

Agency executives are responsible for (among other things):

- ensuring that appropriate and rigorous accountability structures are in place;
- instilling the values and philosophy of modern performance management in staff;
- facilitating the collection of data, particularly data residing outside the organisation;
- providing appropriate resourcing support; and
- ensuring that staff are provided adequate and ongoing training opportunities.

Managers and operational staff are responsible for (among other things):

- developing appropriate ways of monitoring and assessing performance;
- ensuring that data are up to date and reflect what is or has occurred; and
- reporting the 'facts' and not attempting to distort results to either hide or exaggerate performance.

Foundations for an effective performance measurement system for drug law enforcement

Step 1: Review organisational mission

Step 2: Ensure accountability structures are in place

Step 3: Identify key goals specific to drug law enforcement

Step 4: Identify an appropriate set of performance measures and indicators

Step 5: Obtain feedback from stakeholders

Step 6: Revise measures and indicators

Step 7: Provide staff technical training appropriate to needs

Step 8: Collect and analyse indicator data

Step 9: Disseminate results to operational staff and obtain feedback

Step 10: Disseminate results to senior management

Step 11: Communicate results to key stakeholders

Step 12: Repeat steps 5 through 11

Step 1: Review organisational mission

- A clear, direct and understandable mission statement must be developed so that specific goals can be drawn from it and linked directly to an agency's overarching mission.
- Genuine input from all levels of staff in this process helps to ensure that a new performance measurement system is valid and has the support of all internal agency stakeholders.
- Operational staff and middle managers should never have to ask "Why are we doing this?" There should be no ambiguity as to why a new measurement system is being implemented and all staff must understand its importance.

Staff should never have to ask "Why are we doing this?"

Step 2: Ensure accountability structures are in place

- New performance measurement systems are more likely to succeed when they are integrated with existing accountability structures, such as formal review mechanisms.

Genuine input from all staff ensures validity in approach and long-term support

Step 3: Identify key goals specific to drug law enforcement

- Identify key goals specific to the drug law enforcement operating environment. As such, clarify core business practices and determine the associated high-level outcomes that drug law enforcement hopes to achieve.

- Genuine input from all levels of staff is critical for ensuring validity in approach and long-term support.

Step 4: Identify an appropriate set of performance measures and indicators

- There is no single definitive measure of drug law enforcement performance.

- Managers need to assess the 'big picture' rather than a single area of performance—that is where the true story lies. As such, it is important to assess the system as a whole through development of a range of appropriate measures and indicators of performance that clearly link back to each high-level goal identified in Step 3.

- Drug law enforcement performance measures and indicators fall into two broad types: 'essential' and 'important'. Essential measures and indicators relate to specific ongoing agency or unit operations (for example, the number of illicit drug seizures or arrests). Important measures and indicators provide managers with a deeper understanding of the broader context in which these operations take place (for example, the impacts on public health and amenity of illicit drug use).

Focus on the 'big picture'—that is where the true story lies

Step 5: Obtain feedback from stakeholders

- Engage operational staff and other key stakeholders to carefully consider and discuss each goal and associated measure and indicator. Important issues would (at a minimum) include:

  - the relevance of selected measures and indicators to goals identified in Step 3;

  - how well-defined the selected measures and indicators are. Measures and indicators should be easy to understand and use.

  - timeliness of indicator data. Data should be available with sufficient frequency to be useful in managing performance.

  - the reliability of indicator data. Data should be accurate for its intended use and show changes when they happen.

- comparability of indicator data. Data should be able to be compared over time legitimately ('apples with apples')
- understanding the limitations of indicator data. No data are perfect and each data source has inherent strengths and weaknesses.

Indicators should be:
- relevant
- well-defined
- timely
- reliable
- comparable

Step 6: Revise measures and indicators

- Revise measures and indicators according to feedback acquired in Step 5 and obtain agreement of all key stakeholders on final list of measures and indicators.
- Create and include new indicators as necessary.

Obtain agreement from key stakeholders on final list of measures and indicators

Step 7: Provide staff technical training appropriate to needs

Learning is an ongoing opportunity, not a one-off intervention

- To ensure that staff understand the importance of performance measurement and how to do it, senior management must actively support the delivery of appropriate staff training and professional development opportunities. Learning is an ongoing opportunity, not a one-off intervention.
- Staff learning and professional development should form a key part of an organisation's performance management framework and is not solely the responsibility of individual managers or the agency's training department.
- While important, formal, structured training sessions are not the only training and professional development options. Individual learning preferences and skill levels are all factors to be taken into account when planning development. Consider one or more of the following options:
  - on the job training;
  - identification of staff with expert skills who can share their knowledge;
  - sharing 'better practice' or 'lessons learned' through in-house presentations; and
  - forums for specialists to share skills and experience.

- The training needs of staff vary according to level of skill and position within an organisation. Performance management training falls into four major groups: performance management staff, senior managers, team leaders and operational staff. Suggested training needs of these four groups are outlined in Attachment 2.
- Review training options to ensure that they are relevant and focus on areas that need addressing.

Step 8: Collect and analyse indicator data

It is critical that indicator data are embedded in existing accountability processes

- Design a process for the collection and analysis of data. An important consideration will be arrangements concerning the collection of internal and external data. Where data are obtained from external sources (for example, public health data), negotiate with relevant agency for access to these data; initial negotiations start at the executive level. Specific guidance points on data sharing with external agencies can be found at Appendix 3.
- Collect current and historical data (where available) and input it in a form that will be useful and easily accessible to stakeholders; it may be useful to use a data collection plan to ensure consistency in data collection approach (see Appendix 4 for an example of a data collection plan). In some cases this will mean developing and implementing new or revised information management systems; however, simple spreadsheet analysis may be sufficient. Whichever the case, it is critical that these data are fully embedded into existing accountability processes. If they are not they then become sidelined, not updated, irrelevant and un-used.
- Determine baselines from current performance and assess historical data for trends. This will aid long-term strategic planning.
- Compare findings with equivalent work units and identify significant differences in performance between units.
- Be aware that there may be time lags between program activities and certain observable impacts (for example, impacts on public health). This may be because impacts are not necessarily linear (that is, A leads to B, leads to C, and so on), but nonlinear (that is, there is a relationship between A and C but other external influences act on that relationship). Be prepared to discuss the implications of these as part of Step 10.
- In preparation for the first performance assessment meeting with senior management, summarise data and findings obtained. Where necessary, set reasonable and obtainable goals.

Program activities and desired impacts are not necessarily linear—impacts can take time to emerge

Step 9: Disseminate results to operational staff and obtain feedback

- Circulate results of initial analysis to operational staff (and other appropriate stakeholders) and obtain feedback from them. Their interpretation of the data and explanations for performance are essential.

Step 10: Disseminate results to senior management

Discussion of performance results should occur during an organisation's formal review mechanism

- Provide senior management with data summaries and findings and an interpretation of these within local and broader contexts. Ideally, dissemination and discussion of this information should occur during an organisation's formal review mechanism (for example, Operational Command Reviews or COMPSTAT-like review process).
- Make inferences from this information and discuss with senior management in terms of short, medium and long-term strategic planning. The flow of information must be two-way—all parties actively teach and learn.
- Ensure that senior management understands that data can be interpreted in a number of ways and that increases or reductions in indicator data should never be viewed as absolutes, but rather as the basis for intelligent enquiry and discussion.
- Use these discussions to determine the overall effectiveness of individual work units and (for senior management) the agency as a whole. These discussions should be able to answer the question "How are we doing?" They can also be used to identify significant performance concerns (and successes) and assist in the preparation of baselines for future comparisons, as well as action plans for further work.

> **Discussions during formal reviews should be able to answer the question "How are we doing?"**

Step 11: Communicate results to key stakeholders

- Communicate results of meeting with senior management to operational staff and other relevant stakeholders. In particular, outline any new strategies that will be employed to improve performance.

Step 12: Repeat steps 5 through 11

Take note!

*If performance data are not used for managing performance, then the
system becomes a costly exercise in elaborate reporting*

- An effective performance-based management system must be based on a *sincere* desire
to use timely and accurate data to improve performance. Where there is concern about
communicating unfavourable performance data ("We can't show them that, the numbers look
really bad!"), implementation of any performance management system will fail.

- For a performance management system to truly succeed, measurement must take place for
the purpose of supporting management decisions and not just counting for counting's sake. If
performance data are not used for managing performance, then the system merely becomes a
costly exercise in elaborate reporting.

- The primary purpose of performance measurement is to act as a tool that managers and staff
develop and use to assist them to manage and improve work unit and overall organisational
performance—it should not be used as an instrument of control. It is the responsibility of
senior management and the system's designers and implementers that the proper philosophy
is understood by all staff.

References

Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) 2003. *Public sector data sharing—a guide to data sharing protocols*. http://www.foi.gov.uk/sharing/toolkit/infosharing.htm.

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Roberts, D. J. 2006. *Law enforcement tech guide for creating performance measures that work: a guide for executives and managers.* Washington DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. http://www.search.org/files/pdf/PMTECHGUIDE.pdf.

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Attachment 1: Model performance measurement framework for drug law enforcement

Performance measures	Performance indicators	Available data sources
High level outcome: Reduced drug crime and drug-related crime		
Trends in illicit drug detections/seizures	Number of illicit drug detections/seizures by drug type	Law enforcement databases
Trends in weight of illicit drug detections	Weight of illicit drug detections/seizures by drug type	Law enforcement databases
Trends in illicit drug arrests	Number of illicit drug traffic/supply arrests by drug type	Law enforcement databases
	Number of illicit drug possession/use arrests by drug type	
Trends in illicit drug street prices	Median street price of illicit drugs by drug type	Law enforcement databases
		Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS)
Purity of illicit drugs	Median purity of illicit drugs by drug type and/or	Law enforcement databases
	Number/proportion of people who perceive the purity of illicit drugs to be 'high' by drug type	IDRS
Perceived availability of illicit drugs	Number/proportion of people who perceive the availability of illicit drugs to be very easy/easy by drug type	IDRS

| Changes in where users obtain their drugs | Number/proportion of users who sourced their illicit drugs the last time from:

 • a house/flat
 • a public building
 • home delivery
 • on the street/outdoors.

 Number/proportion of users who contacted their drug supplier the last time by:

 • calling them on a mobile
 • calling them on the telephone
 • visiting a house/flat
 • approaching them in public
 • obtaining drugs through a third party
 • being with them already.

 Number/proportion of users who got their drugs the last time from:

 • a regular source
 • an occasional source
 • a new source.

 Number/proportion of users who got their drugs the last time from a location different to the arrest location | Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) |
| Changes in trafficking modes | Number and weight of illicit drug detections/seizures (by drug type) that were trafficked via:

 • air cargo
 • sea cargo
 • air passengers/crew
 • sea passengers/crew
 • postal services. | Customs' 'Druglan' database |

Trends in robberies	Number of people arrested for armed/unarmed robbery	Law enforcement databases
High level outcome: Reduced organised crime		
Trends in weight of illicit drug detections	Weight of illicit drug detections/seizures by drug type	Law enforcement databases
Changes in trafficking modes	Number and weight of illicit drug detections/seizures (by drug type) that were trafficked via: • air cargo • sea cargo • air passengers/crew • sea passengers/crew • postal services.	Customs' 'Druglan' database
High level outcome: Improved public health		
Trends in the frequency of illicit drugs consumed by drug type	Number/proportion of people who used illicit drugs in the past month by drug type Number/proportion of people who consumed illicit drugs more than three times a week by drug type	DUMA IDRS
Trends in drug-related deaths	Number/proportion of drug-related deaths by drug type	Jurisdictional health agencies Australian Institute of Health & Welfare (AIHW)
Trends in drug-related emergency department presentations or hospital separations	Number/proportion of drug-related emergency department presentations (or hospital separations) by drug type	Jurisdictional health agencies AIHW
Trends in ambulance attendances at overdose	Number/proportion of ambulance attendances at overdose by drug type	Jurisdictional health agencies

Attachment 1: Model performance measurement framework for drug law enforcement

Trends in clients participating in drug treatment	Number/proportion of clients in drug treatment by drug type	Jurisdictional health agencies AIHW

High level outcome: Improved public amenity

Trends in level of safety felt by the community	Number/proportion of people who feel safe/very safe walking/ jogging locally after dark	National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing (NSCSP)
Trends in community concern about the 'drug problem'	Number/proportion of people who think that illegal drugs are a major problem/somewhat of a problem in their neighbourhood	NSCSP

Note: 'illicit drugs' includes precursor chemicals, as appropriate

Attachment 2: Potential training needs

Group	Potential staff training needs
Performance management staff	Statistical analysis techniques, data manipulation, mapping techniques, software specific training, data collection and management, report writing
Senior managers	Understanding of the 'whole system' impact of performance measurement and assessment, data interpretation and basic understanding of statistical principles, developing and using performance measures effectively, identifying areas for improvement
Team leaders	Measuring and monitoring performance, identifying opportunities for improvement
Operational staff	Depends on role and level of exposure. Training offered to team leaders may be useful.

Source: Home Office (UK) 2008. *Improving performance: a practical guide to police performance management*. London: Home Office.

Attachment 3: Guidance points on sharing data

Data sharing protocols (or memoranda of understanding) are formal agreements between agencies that plan to share data. These documents explain why data are being shared and set out the principles and commitments agencies adopt when they collect, store and disclose data. They also explain when information can be shared; without formal agreements, agencies may not meet common standards, such as privacy and confidentiality standards (DCA 2003).

The following points provide guidance on key elements that agencies should consider including within a data sharing protocol; this is based largely on material contained in the document *Public sector data sharing—a guide to data sharing protocols* (DCA 2003). It is sometimes useful for agencies to develop a high-level document that outlines the overall reasons for, and principles of, the data sharing arrangement, in addition to more detailed documents spelling out how the agencies involved will operate it. High-level protocols do not need to be longer than six or so pages and should be concise and clearly articulated (DCA 2003).

Not all guidance points described here may be relevant to all drug law enforcement agency environments; however, they do cover key elements of data sharing best practice. Agencies will need to determine which specific items accord with their own circumstances and work towards generating protocols around these.

The purpose of data sharing

- Data sharing assists agencies to gain better insights into the patterns of service use by groups of clients (for example, drug treatment services or hospital stays), as well as helping to make full use of the sometimes extensive data collections often held by such agencies. Data sharing arrangements can also help to minimise duplication of effort and agency expenditure.
- Protocols should outline the reasons for sharing information and state whether partners are obliged, or simply enabled, to share data.
- The purpose of the data sharing arrangement must be approved, understood and formally agreed to by those entering into a data sharing agreement.

Roles and responsibilities of partner agencies

- The protocol should establish who will collect, store and disclose personal information. It is essential to involve senior management, particularly those from information management areas, from each partner agency in this process and so it may be useful to establish a steering/advisory group to provide leads on what these individuals' responsibilities will be.
- The protocol should demonstrate that all partner agencies are committed to maintaining standards on handling information by including a list of senior signatories in the protocol.
- If necessary, the protocol should define the responsibilities of sub-contractors within the protocol as they will need to abide by the agreed standards too.

Legislation

- Agencies will need to establish that any data sharing arrangements agreed to are lawful. This will need to be demonstrated in the protocol by referring to relevant legislation and its implied powers. Agencies must give an assurance that they will not breach this legislation.

Consent

- A common approach to consent should be decided. If consent is required to enable the collection or disclosure of information, it has to be informed, specific and fair. Where relevant and necessary, all partners will need to agree on procedures for obtaining consent within the law.

- The protocol should mention that, when obtaining consent, the data subject must be informed of the purpose for which the information is being collected, how it will be used and with whom it will be shared. It should also state that, if consent is sought and refused, objections must be recorded appropriately and that agencies must abide by the refusal.

- If statutory powers are to be applied to allow data sharing without consent, this should be done in accordance with any relevant legislation. It is good practice to explain in the protocol why these powers may be applied.

Data sharing

- Elements of the procedures for data sharing need to be covered briefly within the protocol, although each partner agency should also describe them in detail within their own codes of practice and management guidance.

Requests between partner agencies for personal information

- Partner agencies will need to maintain accurate records and develop information systems to record given or refused consent, data transfers (including faxes, email exchanges and conversations) and deletion and/or amendment to data. The protocol should provide brief details.

- Where information is exchanged on a case by case basis, ensure that requests for information are specific and recorded.

- The roles of senior and operational staff must be clearly defined and understood by staff involved in the data sharing. It is useful to state in the protocol that partner agencies will maintain an up-to-date list of authorising officers and their contact details. This is particularly useful where changes in agency personnel are frequent.

- Indicate in the protocol that, if there is any doubt about whether information should be stored, disclosed, or collected, operational staff should speak to a senior member of staff.

- Any inaccuracies or issues of interpretation in data should be reported to the relevant partner agency as these will need to be taken into consideration and managed.

Electronic data sharing and databases

- Where agencies develop a database to share pooled data, it is necessary to establish in the protocol which agency will act as the data custodian. They alone will have responsibility for disclosing information on a need to know basis.

- The data custodian will be responsible for storing the information safely by limiting access. Reduce the risk of information being seen by unauthorised staff by establishing levels of access within the data system.

- When disclosing data to a third party, the database is still subject to rules of confidentiality. Databases must contain relevant information only and the way that information is used should not exceed the protocol's original purpose.

Security

- Information must be kept safely and securely. Each partner agency will need to be able to describe and apply its own security measures to protect, store and transmit the information it processes. They will also need to agree to procedures for deleting personal information when it is no longer required.

- Agencies should agree on a position as to subject access rights to the information being shared and be clear on any limits on people's access to their own personal information. This should be outlined in the protocol too.

Complaints procedures

- It is a good idea to include in the protocol a brief statement of commitment on establishing a system to deal with complaints about the way that partner agencies handle information, taking into consideration possible differences between agencies' usual approaches. The steering/advisory group could help to establish consistency and standards.

Building awareness through training

- The success of the protocol depends on visible, high level support from senior managers within partner agencies. State that there is a commitment to raising awareness of the protocol through training. Each agency should then ensure that appropriate staff are sufficiently trained to make lawful decisions about data sharing—this could be undertaken through joint training, which may also build co-operation between partners.

Monitoring and review

- The protocol should be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it maintains its relevance. The steering/advisory group could undertake this task annually or on some other agreed timescale.

Reference

Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) 2003. *Public sector data sharing—a guide to data sharing protocols.* http://www.foi.gov.uk/sharing/toolkit/infosharing.htm.

Attachment 4: Example of a data collection template

Strategic goal	Reduce drug crime and drug-related crime
Performance measure(s)	Trends in illicit drug detections/seizures Trends in illicit drug arrests Trends in weight of illicit drugs Trends in armed/unarmed robberies
Data collection	Hypothetical Police Operating Data System (HPODS)
Data custodian(s)	Hypothetical Police Service
Contact details	Joe Bloggs Analyst, Statistical Unit Hypothetical Police Service Ph: (01) 12345678 Email: joe.bloggs@hps.gov.au
Data format	(for example) Unit of measurement = criminal incident; unit of time = date of reporting/detection; offences classified according to the Australian Standard Offence Classification – Second Edition (ASOC – Second Edition) issued by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2008, Cat. No. 1234.0)
Smallest geographic level	(for example) State, Postcode (statistical divisions & subdivisions of Hypothetical Jurisdiction as defined by ABS), Street/Building
Years referenced	(for example) HPODS introduced in 1998; previous system dates back to 1985
Data collection frequency	(for example) Data are entered daily by police officers for each criminal incident reported to, or detected by, Hypothetical Police Service
Reporting processes/ frequency	(for example) Data are saved daily at the Police Data Warehouse. Data feeds into the Recorded Crime Database maintained by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Intelligence Database maintained by the Australian Crime Commission.
Access/security issues	(for example) Requests for recorded crime statistics should be made through Statistical Unit, Hypothetical Police Service. Statistical Unit can extract specific information according to the request made. Standard requests for data are available at the level of postcode. Standard requests have a timeframe of 10 days to process but usually take just a couple of days
Cost	(for example) There are no costs for requests made by staff within the Hypothetical Police Service. A fee of $100 per hour is charged for external data requests
Data reliability/limitations	(for example) 'Drug related' field not consistently filled in by police officers. Drug weights are an estimate only. Building/ Street level data can be unreliable because it is entered as text and subject to variability in the spelling of street names