

Predictive policing becoming more popular and redefining the term "planning" in public safety

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For a large majority of public safety agencies, the term "planning" typically gets lumped into some sort of homeland security mitigation or response plan. Due to this, agencies have begun planning for how they will react to an event, as opposed to how they can proactively deter that event from happening. Across the country, public safety agencies are realizing the benefits of proactive planning as it relates to policing the streets. What is now known as predictive policing has become an effective way to not only curb crime, but cut agency policing costs.

One agency that has implemented predictive policing is the [Los Angeles Police Department \(LAPD\)](#). The LAPD utilizes a predictive policing method known as COMPSTAT, or computer statistics, which takes a set of crime data and maps it to determine hot spots or areas of concern. The philosophy behind this program emphasizes holding police managers directly accountable for combating crime in their designated area. In order to be effective, police managers and officers need to return to the idea of proactively fighting crime rather than just reacting to it.

Some components of predictive policing include:

- Hot spots and crime mapping
- Data mining
- Police deployment of manpower
- Statistical probability
- Geospatial prediction
- Social network analysis

The success of the program rests solely on agencies' current infrastructure for data capture. For example, if an agency does not have a robust records management system, or data is not entered with a high level of consistency or completeness, the capability to map that data might be compromised. The same goes for if an agency does not have an upgraded computer-aided dispatch system to capture a caller's information. Finally, if an agency does not have a scalable and detailed mapping or GIS system, it is nearly impossible to implement this program in a rapid and effective manner. The goal of predictive policing is to better utilize resources, which allows an agency to get more out of its expenditures.

GovWin's Take

Vendors will need to work with agencies to ensure all components of a predictive policing plan are in place. This means working with the agency to ensure it is fully upgraded in its current data collection environment and has completed the necessary training to ensure accurate data recording. Also, vendors will need to work with agencies in identifying additional funding to pursue this tactic. In FY 2010, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) had three [grant programs](#) aimed at improving policing efforts. It is unclear if these programs will be available for FY 2011. Chances are there will be more grant programs that focus on innovative policing measures that keep officers on the streets.