

Implementation Guide

for Prosecutorial Performance Indicators



Supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

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This document was created with support from the **John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation** as part of the Safety and Justice Challenge, which seeks to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the following contributors of this guide: Marlene Biener, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys; Tina Chiu, NYC Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice; Brian Johnson, University of Maryland; Miriam Krinsky, Fair and Just Prosecution; David LaBahn, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys; Greg Srolestar, Fair and Just Prosecution; Anthony Thompson, NYU Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law; Ronald Wright, Wake Forest University.

Introduction

Since you are reading this, you likely want to broaden the ways you define success in your office. You probably already use several indicators to gauge how well you are doing. Maybe you track your office’s acquittal rate for gun crimes or how often cases are dismissed after filing. You have a sense of what makes you successful in meeting these specific goals.

Now may be the right time to consider a more formal system of measuring progress over time—the **Prosecutorial Performance Indicators** (PPIs)—that taps into the goals of efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness.

Why Prosecutorial Performance Indicators

Prosecutorial performance has traditionally been measured by conviction rates and sentence length. Yet, public demand for greater accountability and impartiality also requires a focus on community well-being and fairness. PPIs help meet these demands by offering an array of metrics that can be tracked over time to inform decision making and policy development.

What Prosecutorial Performance Indicators Measure

PPIs measure inputs, outputs, activities, and impacts of prosecutorial offices. They include timeliness of decision making, case prioritization, diversity of prosecutors, violent recidivism, participation in community events, frequency of contact with victims, diversion success rates, racial disparities in plea offers, accuracy in charging, and conviction integrity reviews, among others.

What this Work is About

The PPIs are the result of a partnership between prosecutors and researchers to promote more effective, just, and transparent decision making in prosecution. We help prosecutors improve data and analytical capacity, develop and implement new performance indicators, and respond to the need to ameliorate racial and ethnic disparities in the justice system.

Prosecutorial Performance Indicators are:

Objective	PPIs are the result of an independent process for deciding what constitutes success. One should not decide how to measure their own success; otherwise everyone would be successful!
Data-informed	PPIs are based on data, not opinion. Data quality issues must be addressed before using the PPIs in your office, but your data are probably more useful than you think.
Impact-oriented	PPIs are used to have a real impact, not just to count numbers. They help prosecutors and communities flag problems, ask additional questions, develop solutions, and measure change over time.
Responsive to community needs	PPIs are reflective of community expectations. People need safety and protection from violence, but they also demand accountability and transparency. Plus, community members want their taxes to fund effective and fair prosecution.
Comprehensive	PPIs are focused on a multilayered range of organizational objectives and prosecutorial roles. While meaningful individually, PPIs are interdependent and especially helpful when trends are viewed together.

You might wonder about how to adopt and use the PPIs in your office. You might think your office is too small or too big to undertake this project. The implementation process will likely vary from site to site, but the PPIs will benefit your office regardless of size.

Here we provide general guidelines to help you adopt the PPIs in your jurisdiction. Our recommendations are grouped into three implementation phases—Planning, Testing, and Application. Each phase is broken down into three steps to help guide you through the process.

On the next pages, we present a bulleted list of the activities corresponding to each of the implementation phases and steps.

When reading the guide, please keep in mind the following considerations:

First, information about the content and structure of the PPIs is located in the [Brochure](#) and the [Technical Guide](#). There are three overarching PPI goals: Improve Capacity and Efficiency, Improve Community Safety and Well-being, and Improve Fairness and Justice. Each goal has three objectives, creating a total of nine objectives. Each objective provides measures for a different dimension of the prosecutorial function. You will need to align the three goals and nine objectives with your vision for your office.

Goals

- 1: Improve capacity & efficiency
- 2: Improve community safety & well-being
- 3: Improve fairness & justice

Objectives

- 1: Organizational & staff capacity
- 2: Time & resource prioritization
- 3: Timeliness of case processing
- 4: Addressing serious crime
- 5: Protecting & serving victims
- 6: Community outreach & engagement
- 7: Racial & ethnic differences
- 8: Minimizing unnecessary punitiveness
- 9: Prosecutorial ethics & integrity

Second, more and more offices are experimenting with performance indicators—you are not alone. The [PPIs website provides examples](#) of how PPIs work in other jurisdictions. It may make sense to have conversations with both executives and data/IT staff from these offices to understand how they have implemented the PPIs.

Third, consider reaching out to other local government agencies to inform them about your new initiative and to inquire about agency-level metrics they routinely track. There is no need to duplicate their efforts, but you can learn from and build upon their experience. The PPI framework is designed to cover a wide range of prosecutorial objectives, but other local agencies may remind you of matters not included in the PPI framework that you find important. If, for example, your Sheriff’s Office tracks data on gang-related crimes due to a persistent gang problem, your office may decide to tailor an existing PPI, such as 4.2 (Acquittal for violent crimes), to reflect a focus on gang violence. As another example, perhaps the health department administers an annual survey in your city. It may be possible to add questions about the community’s confidence in your office to that survey to enrich your measurement of community outreach and engagement.

Implementation Phases and Steps

PHASE	STEP	ACTIVITIES
PLANNING	1 Anticipating Challenges	<p>Prepare to address political, cultural, and logistical challenges to PPI implementation.</p> <p>Identify potential PPI allies and skeptics within and outside your office.</p> <p>Hold meetings with select staff and external partners for the explicit purpose of discussing PPIs and the potential impact of implementing the PPIs for their work.</p>
	2 Staff Capacity Assessment	<p>Examine current clerical/IT/analytical capacity for entering, extracting, linking, managing, and analyzing data.</p> <p>Explore research partnership opportunities with local universities.</p> <p>Assign a senior executive to be responsible for overseeing PPI implementation.</p> <p>Identify prosecutors who have an interest in using data, and prepare them to serve as data ambassadors.</p> <p>Understand how staff currently use data at each level of your office.</p>
	3 Data Assessment	<p>Identify all internal and external data sources.</p> <p>Assess data elements readily available from your case management system, human resources department, victim advocates, and other criminal justice agencies or specialized task forces.</p> <p>Evaluate which PPIs can be measured using data currently available to you.</p> <p>Understand what new data can be collected internally or requested externally to measure additional PPIs.</p>
TESTING	4 Office-wide Engagement	<p>Introduce and explain the PPI framework office-wide.</p> <p>With help from data ambassadors, foster an office culture of data use.</p> <p>Develop a roll-out strategy that is time-bound and explicit about staff roles and responsibilities during implementation.</p> <p>Manage your expectations about buy-in among staff but be persistent about garnering support for the initiative.</p>
	5 Piloting	<p>Gather baseline data for as many PPIs as is feasible.</p> <p>Assess how meaningful each indicator is to your office while considering your goals and priorities.</p> <p>Select a group of PPIs across the nine objectives to adopt based on the quality of data and the usefulness of the information.</p> <p>Determine formats for presenting PPIs to management versus external government and community stakeholders.</p> <p>Establish baseline data for each PPI from which change will be measured.</p>

PHASE	STEP	ACTIVITIES
APPLICATION	6 Training	<p>Coach executive and mid-level management to understand PPI trends, notice red flags, ask questions, seek additional information, identify possible solutions, and improve data entry practices.</p> <p>Evaluate and meet training needs for your clerical, IT, and data staff.</p> <p>Recruit and train researchers and/or IT specialists to grow your office capacity for collecting and analyzing data.</p>
	7 Ongoing Data Collection	<p>Collect, clean, and analyze the PPI data on monthly, quarterly, and/or annual bases.</p> <p>Present this information in data dashboards, spreadsheets, or charts and graphs.</p> <p>Routinize and automatize the process of data extraction, analysis, and presentation.</p> <p>Establish data quality control mechanisms.</p> <p>Plan to collect new data not currently available to measure additional PPIs.</p>
	8 Diagnostics	<p>Hold monthly or quarterly meetings to digest PPI data based on analysis of time trends and comparison across office units.</p> <p>Request additional data from your IT/data staff to answer follow-up questions that arise from these meetings.</p> <p>Consult with your staff and external stakeholders to understand changes in trends.</p> <p>Link findings to specific policies, practices, and office structure.</p> <p>Highlight instances where the office is succeeding and acknowledge those who contributed to positive changes.</p>
	9 Policy Development	<p>Engage with policy and research experts to develop strategies to improve performance.</p> <p>Prioritize which issues to address based on the feasibility and impact of solutions.</p> <p>Delegate strategy implementation to a staff member or task force, and monitor execution.</p> <p>Communicate new policies internally.</p> <p>Discuss the benefits of this work with community groups.</p> <p>Monitor data trends to evaluate improvement over time.</p>

Anticipating Challenges

How do I deal with the cultural/political and logistical obstacles to redefining success in prosecution?

Measuring office performance is undoubtedly a worthwhile pursuit, but in our experience, it comes with its share of challenges. You might be thinking, “How am I going to get people on board with this when they are uncomfortable with data?”, “Do we have the right data for this?”, “Who is going to have the time and skills to pull this off?”, “How will this impact my reelection campaign?”, “Do I have to make our data public?”

It’s important to work through these questions and to set realistic expectations when implementing the PPIs. Different offices will encounter different issues, but such issues can broadly be categorized into two groups: cultural/political challenges and logistical challenges. Here are some of the challenges that we faced in our pilot jurisdictions, as well as solutions that were used to overcome them.

Cultural/political challenges:

Traditional mindset. Are staff open to new ways of looking at cases and data? Prosecutors in your office may adhere to a set of values that have gone unchallenged for decades. Some may think that because every case is unique, looking at data trends has limited usefulness. Others may believe that trials and convictions should be the primary way to measure success.

Resistance to change. How much change can your executive team, middle management, and line prosecutors stomach? For many people, change causes discomfort. This discomfort can be amplified when data gets involved.

External pushback. Some of the PPIs have implications for your criminal justice partners, including the police, the defense bar, the courts, and treatment providers. Are the PPIs likely to garner support or resistance from these groups? Some data for PPI measurement may come from other agencies, so your office’s relationship with those agencies may determine how many and which PPIs can be measured.

Possible solutions?

Some Electeds have accomplished a cultural change by promoting new priorities with frequent and consistent messaging, recruiting new team members who share their vision, and demonstrating the value of using data to improve office workflow and impact.

To deal with external pushback, consider engaging the chief judge, the police chief or sheriff, and public defender as you implement this work. They are more likely to be supportive if they feel informed and included and are prepared for public reactions. For example, PPIs focusing on trends in case filing and dismissal rates (e.g., PPIs 2.2 and 7.2) may raise questions about police arrest practices, something that you and your partners should be prepared to address together.

Logistical challenges:

Competing commitments. How many other initiatives are you currently involved in? Consider how implementing the PPIs will fit with your existing commitments and partnerships. If your jurisdiction is already involved with numerous external partners, undertaking PPIs right now may cause confusion and increase resistance.

Case management system capabilities. Is your case management system set up to pull out data for the analysis of office-wide trends? The type of case management system that you use, and how much control you have over it, will affect how easy it is to collect and extract data to measure PPIs.

Time availability. Who will dedicate the time needed to implement this new initiative within your office? Consider how much additional time may be required from your managers to use the PPIs on an ongoing basis, celebrate successes, identify problems, and seek solutions.

IT capacity. Does your office have an IT specialist or other analyst who can manage PPI data and prepare PPI reports? Data extracted from case management systems will require cleaning and organizing prior to analysis, so one or more staff members in the office must have the skills to carry out this work.

Possible solutions?

First, the good news: you probably have more data than you think. The question is how best to make use of it. If you do not have a data analyst, or at least data-savvy IT personnel, think about recruiting a researcher or partnering with a local university that can provide the technical assistance you need. Academics are thirsty for fresh data; you can strike a good deal by exchanging data for free labor.

To deal with competing commitments, think about combining data-focused projects or timing the PPI implementation in a way that prevents your partners from stepping on each other’s toes. Either way, prepare yourself to make financial and time investments to build sustainable data and analytic capacity.

Coordinating Initiatives

You may be involved in other data and reform efforts as you consider adopting the PPIs. There are many other initiatives by the [Association of Prosecuting Attorneys](#), [Fair & Just Prosecution](#), BJA’s [Innovative Prosecution Solutions](#), [Institute for Innovation in Prosecution](#) at John Jay College, [Measures for Justice](#), [Prosecutor Impact](#), and [Reshaping Prosecution Program](#) at the Vera Institute of Justice, among others. While being involved in multiple initiatives with varied priorities might get complicated, we also find that such partnerships can be highly productive. For example, our team has been working with the State Attorney from Florida’s 4th Judicial Circuit on the implementation of the PPIs as well as a BJA Innovative Prosecution Solutions project. Both initiatives involve using data to establish baselines and track changes in prosecutors’ performance. By implementing the projects together and allowing them to inform each other, the office has generated more new ideas and saved resources. Coordination has been the key to making the concurrent initiatives mutually beneficial.

WINNING OVER PROSECUTORS TO DO THIS WORK WILL BE HARDER THAN WINNING THE ELECTION. AS A DISTRICT ATTORNEY, I NEED TO COME UP WITH A PLAN TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN



Staff Capacity Assessment

Who do I need to successfully implement and use the new measures of prosecutorial performance?

Your staff form the backbone of your office, and they will ultimately make this project successful. In planning to implement the PPIs, think about each of the key groups in your office who will contribute time, skills, and effort to the use of your data.

How consistently and reliably do our clerical staff enter data?

Clerical staff enter case information for case tracking purposes, not necessarily with an eye toward data analysis. Yet, the quality of data entry determines the quality of all subsequent uses of the data. The plan you create to analyze the data will dictate the format, frequency, and timing of data entry across the office. While your current data entry practices can ensure data is available to create a number of PPIs, some tweaking will likely be required to generate data for other important PPIs.

Which IT personnel will prepare the data needed for the PPIs?

Information from your case management system and other databases will need to be extracted and converted into a format suitable for analysis and looking at trends over time. Your IT staff might be accustomed to handling ad hoc requests for data in order to fulfill public records requests, annual reporting requirements, or the like. For the PPIs, though, they also will have to run database queries to extract data, link different datasets together, and even pull in data from different agencies. Even more, if you do not have a researcher in the office, you will need an IT person to explain the data to prosecutors.

Job Title: STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, 4TH CIRCUIT-DATA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY-21006488

The Office of the State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial Circuit of Florida (SAO) seeks a full-time data information technology specialist to assist in strategic planning and crime reduction efforts, by providing timely and relevant information on case processing and crime trends. The SAO is currently embarking on several exciting data-heavy initiatives, including the development of Prosecutorial Performance Indicators as well as internal and public data dashboards. The data information technology specialist will play an important role in shaping the implementation of these initiatives.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Working with administrators of the SAO case management system in suggesting and implementing modifications to correspond to data-driven initiatives

Extracting data from the SAO case management system

Manage the SAO internal and external dashboards

Working with the SAO crime data research analyst and external research and policy partners to build datasets for research and analytical purposes

Building and maintaining data pipelines with other government agencies

Creating appropriate data visualizations including maps, spreadsheets, tables, and graphs

Responding to ad-hoc requests for data from all levels of the office

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Bachelor's degree in information technology, data sciences, computer engineering, applied mathematics, or related field

Knowledge of SQL, Python and/or NoSQL databases (data modeling, data warehousing), preferred knowledge of Java/Scala

Experience with cloud platforms

Strong organizational skills and ability to work both independently and with a team

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

Familiarity with one or more statistical programs (Stata, R, SPSS, SAS, etc.)

Interest in learning about the structure and process of the criminal justice system

Do I have someone who can analyze, present, and interpret the PPI data?

Data analysts should be able to clean data and deal with missing or mislabeled information. After conducting statistical analyses, they will have to present data in dashboards, spreadsheets, or charts and graphs. They will also have to understand and interpret PPI findings, prepare reports and PowerPoint presentations, and engage with prosecutors and external stakeholders. This is a lot, and you may consider expanding your data team by recruiting a data analyst or a researcher. A strategic partnership with a local university could also get you additional research assistance.

What happened in Cook County

In 2018, the Cook County State's Attorney Office committed to unprecedented transparency by posting case-level data online. This required building additional data analytical capacity. The office recruited its first chief data officer, which led to the hiring and training of additional data analysts.

Job Title: STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, 4TH CIRCUIT- RESEARCH ANALYST- 21011545

RESEARCH ANALYST

The Office of the State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial Circuit of Florida (SAO) seeks a full-time research analyst to assist personnel in strategic planning and crime reduction efforts, by providing timely and relevant information on case processing and crime trends.

The position offers an opportunity to receive training from SAO partners at Florida International University in advanced data analysis and statistical report development.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Conduct statistical analysis of data to generate accurate and up-to-date monthly, quarterly, annual, and on-request reports

Clean and analyze data from the SAO case management system

Obtain data from non-SAO data sources and merge with SAO data for analytical purposes

Compose professional, accurate, and detailed statistical reports

Create appropriate data visualizations including maps, spreadsheets, tables, graphs and PowerPoint presentations

Help develop and update SAO internal and external dashboards

Contribute to the SAO's vision of effective, efficient, fair, and data-informed prosecution

Learn SAO policies, practices, and workflows

Implement a broad approach to problem identification and problem solving in the prosecutorial setting

Respond to requests for data and reports from all levels of the office

QUALIFICATIONS

Graduate degree in the social sciences (exceptions can be made for those with only Bachelor's degree if they have at least 5 years of experience with criminal justice research)

Proficiency in one or more statistical programs (Stata, R, SPSS, SAS, etc.)

Familiarity with structure and process of criminal justice system (experience working with criminal justice agency data preferred)

Excellent oral and written communication skills, with the ability to convey complex research findings to broader audiences and to develop clear, visually compelling reports

Strong organizational skills and ability to work both independently and with a team

Which of my executives can oversee the PPI implementation?

Delegate oversight of the implementation of the PPIs to an executive team member. In the capacity of a project manager, this person will establish priorities, identify activities, assign roles and responsibilities, set internal deadlines, ensure the quality of data and presentations of PPIs, and deal with logistical matters (e.g., inter-agency coordination, funding and workload redistribution). This PPI manager will also generate buy-in among managers and line prosecutors, and will help develop an external communications strategy for the public release of PPI findings. This person must believe in the value of the effort, and evaluation of their performance should be tied to the implementation of the initiative.

What qualities should I look for in a data ambassador responsible for promoting the use of the PPIs?

Depending on the size of your office, you need to identify one or more prosecutors who will back your efforts to implement the PPIs and help sell their importance to others in the office. These 'data ambassadors' should have a forward-thinking mindset, data skills, and a good reputation. They already see value in measuring prosecutorial performance beyond conviction rates and trial experience, and are committed to community engagement and racial justice. They are comfortable with numbers and research and can decipher and explain data trends. They are willing to take on new responsibilities and are widely respected among colleagues for their work ethic and judgment.

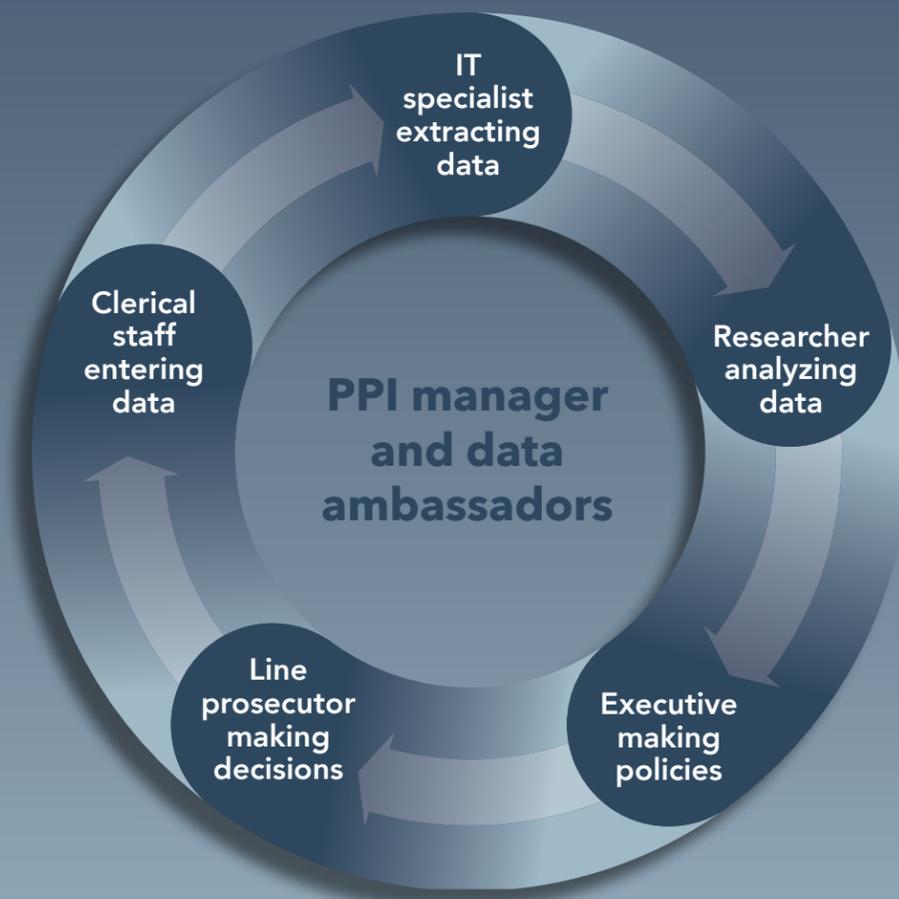
Who in my office already uses data, and for what purposes?

It is common for prosecutors to use anecdotal information from past cases to argue for changes to existing policies or practices. It is far less common for them to rely on trend data to justify these changes. Yet, good policy requires a solid understanding of both unique cases and larger patterns of case processing. Have you ever asked prosecutors in your office how they use data? Try it out! It will help you learn how often, if ever, prosecutors interact with data and data analysts. Asking about data usage will also single out a few data-savvy prosecutors who probably keep track of their decisions in a spreadsheet and would ultimately be good data ambassadors within the office. Lastly, it will illustrate your managers' and line prosecutors' current attitudes toward data, which is useful information to have when preparing to implement the PPIs.

NOW I WISH I HAD PAID MORE ATTENTION IN MY UNDERGRAD STATS CLASS



It is helpful to think about how different functions come together to produce useful data and effective policies. Clerical staff, IT specialists, data analysts, managers, and line prosecutors should all have the right capacity to produce data, develop policies in response to the research findings, and implement those policies in practice. The PPI manager and data ambassadors should find themselves in the center of this sequence, working directly with all five functions.



Data Assessment

What data do we have for the PPIs?

Data are essential for performance measurement. Evaluating your office's data capacity is a pivotal step in preparing to implement the PPI framework. This process will help you understand the amount and quality of data that you have at your disposal.

During the data assessment you should determine:

Which PPIs can be measured using data readily available from your case management system (CMS)

Many of the PPIs are based on case information that you use on a daily basis, such as charge severity or defendants' prior records. But there are also other data points not legally relevant to your decision making that may be captured in your CMS, such as defendants' race or defense counsel type. Some indicators rely on these other data points. The amount of information recorded for each case in your CMS will determine whether you can measure many of the PPIs.

Which PPIs can be measured using data from outside your CMS but within your office

Some PPIs are based on staff characteristics and activities in your office, such as staff diversity and community engagement events. Specific departments in your office, such as human resources and community prosecution units, may keep records that will enable you to measure these PPIs. This information may not be currently held in a spreadsheet format, but with some effort, you can transform it into a useful dataset.

Which PPIs can be measured using data provided by other local criminal justice agencies

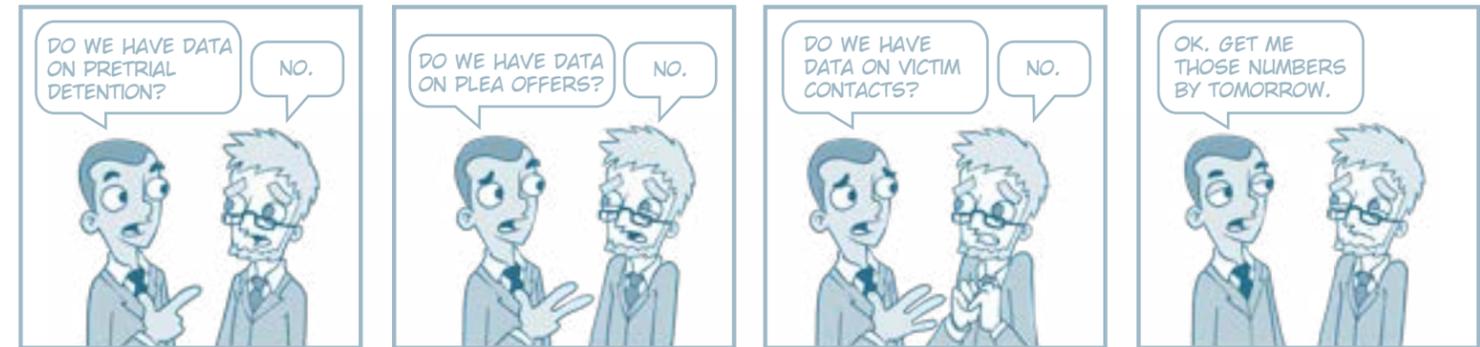
Some PPIs require data that are tracked by other local agencies. For example, your CMS may not contain information about pretrial detention and bond setting for each case, but you may be able to obtain this information from law enforcement partners or from the Clerk of the Court. Look beyond criminal justice agencies too: useful information (e.g. opioid deaths or community-level income data) may be available from other government and community partners.

Which PPIs can be measured in the future by making alterations to your CMS

In instances where data are not available from your office or other local agencies, it is worth considering collecting new information moving forward. You may want to make changes to your CMS that will allow for additional PPIs to be measured. For example, while your office may not currently record reasons for case dismissals or plea offers rejected by defendants, your staff can start collecting this information for future use. Bear in mind that some changes can be made quickly, while others will require more planning.

The quality of the data you currently have

There may be PPIs you can measure based on data you currently collect, but the data may not be recorded reliably or in a way that provides useful information. For example, many of the PPIs require showing outcomes by defendants' and victims' race/ethnicity, so think about how race and ethnicity are determined and how systematically they are captured in your database.



Office-wide Engagement

How can I get my staff on board with the PPIs project?

Introducing the PPIs framework office-wide will be an exciting conversation for many of your prosecutors who share your dedication to data transparency and data-informed prosecution. We have seen firsthand how enthusiastic many prosecutors are when talking about new ways to define success. As part of your efforts, consider surveying your staff. [Surveys and interviews](#) we carried out in our partner jurisdictions provided valuable knowledge to the executive teams on where staff stood on various issues of community engagement, racial disparities, measuring success, and improving performance. These conversations also made line prosecutors feel included in the process.

Still, you may encounter pushback. This pushback may manifest itself in several different forms: "We don't have data," "Data can be manipulated," "I don't want to be affected by data, because every case is unique," "We don't have time for this," "I don't see how this is useful."

We've heard these things before, and you are likely to hear them too as you implement this work. As you can imagine, there is no one solution to address everyone's concerns, but here are some recommendations:

Emphasize the goals: transparency will lead the prosecutorial field toward greater capacity & efficiency, community safety & well-being, and fairness & justice.

Create a sense of pride: prosecutors who use data and commit to greater transparency are leaders in the prosecutorial field.

Convey urgency: communities demand greater openness now, and the PPIs enable prosecutors to meet this demand.

Empower prosecutors at all levels: emphasize that prosecutors across the office have an opportunity to identify problems and help shape solutions instead of simply processing cases.

Appeal to funding needs: describe how PPIs will help attract funding and provide more ammunition to write competitive grant applications.

Ask questions: ask prosecutors simple questions to assess common knowledge about office performance and case decision-making trends. In our experience, most have no idea what their office trends look like when it comes to many of the PPIs.

Reference data in other fields: good medical doctors arrive at diagnoses for each patient based on professional judgment plus their knowledge of broad health trends. Prosecutors should be no different.

Elevate successes on an ongoing basis: Engagement does not end with the launch of the project. Continually celebrate positive changes in trends in the PPIs, acknowledge teams that might have contributed to the changes, and reward staff for their efforts.

Some line prosecutors will immediately be on board with the project once the PPIs have been explained. Others will have reservations, but they can be convinced with consistent and persistent messaging. A third group will never fully embrace the new framework, but this is okay. The key is to get a critical mass of support that will sufficiently propel the work forward.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT PERCENT OF CASES WE DIVERTED LAST YEAR?



Rollout Strategy

In our experience, it is best to introduce the PPIs framework office-wide at an in-person meeting. Make sure that all executives are present, as this helps show unified support for the PPIs initiative.

At this meeting, you can present the PPIs framework, connect the PPIs to existing goals and priorities, show [sample data](#) from other jurisdictions, describe how the new project will affect individual workloads, and explain how PPIs are useful for examining trends over time.

Most importantly, don't forget to emphasize why you decided to adopt the PPIs framework. Emphasize the need to rethink what constitutes success in prosecution and to collect data for measuring progress. The PPIs are a valuable extra tool in your toolbox!

YES, IT'S BETWEEN 5% AND 50%!



Piloting

How do I select PPIs for my office?

The piloting phase is your first opportunity to take the PPIs out for a test run. During this phase, you will learn how your office can gather different kinds of data and how well that data translates into useful performance indicators. In some instances, you can also establish a baseline for PPI trends.

Expect to spend several months in the piloting phase—it takes time to gather and extract data, convert it into a usable format, create graphs that show how each indicator has changed over time, and then assess how meaningful is each indicator. Your investment in this initial piloting phase will pay off in the long term, as subsequent data collection will get easier.

1. Gather 12-24 months of data for as many PPIs as possible.

Identify and gather information for all cases handled within the last 12-24 months. The farther back you can collect data, the more clearly you will be able to see trends over time and judge the usefulness of each indicator.

Your IT/data staff should document all the decisions made and all the steps taken to create the trend data for each PPI. This includes keeping track of codes used to extract, merge, and clean the data, as well as all definitions used to select relevant cases for each PPI (e.g., What qualifies as a “diversion completion”? Does time served count as an “incarceration sentence”?). This way, the procedures established during the pilot phase can be replicated and routinized during later, ongoing data collection.

Other local agencies may be able to provide you with data that can help you measure additional PPIs. Establish a data sharing procedure with them (this may involve a memorandum of understanding or agreement), obtain the data for the same 12-24 month timeframe, and make a plan for receiving new data on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis thereafter.

If your office has fewer than 20 prosecutors, most PPIs will be measured annually. If your office has 20 to 100 prosecutors, most PPIs will be measured quarterly, and some monthly or annually. If your office has over 100 prosecutors, most PPIs can be measured monthly or even weekly. Your caseload and anticipated changes in trends should ultimately guide your decision about the frequency of data collection.

Frequency of PPI measurement, by office size:	
SMALL OFFICES	
<20 prosecutors	→ annually
MIDSIZE OFFICES	
20-100 prosecutors	→ quarterly
LARGE OFFICES	
>100 prosecutors	→ monthly or weekly

IT TAKES US 32 DAYS TO FILE A MISDEMEANOR? SO, THIS SHOULD REALLY BE ONE OF OUR INDICATORS



2. Create a data visualization for each PPI

Once you have gathered data for all of the PPIs you can measure, it is time to decide on a presentation format. Data visualizations (graphs) will help your office see changes in the indicators over time and identify potential data quality issues. To visualize the data, you may use simple line or bar charts constructed in a spreadsheet program (e.g., Excel), or through a data visualization tool (e.g., Tableau or Power BI). For ease of interpretation, we recommend that all data visualizations be accompanied by a short description of the graph, explaining what the PPI is and how its trend line has changed over time. See other jurisdictions’ data on the PPIs [website](#) as an example.

3. Assess the usefulness of each PPI

Though you should initially pilot as many PPIs as possible, not all of the indicators will work for your office. Show the pilot data to the executive team. You can also consult with select mid-level and junior prosecutors, including your data ambassadors. You may find that some PPIs you thought would be measurable during the data assessment phase are no longer feasible. Perhaps some data are too incomplete or unreliable. Maybe you expected to get some data from another agency, but the agency was unable or unwilling to fulfill your request.

Evaluate which of the PPIs you did measure are meaningful to your office. Some indicators may not be relevant to your current priorities. Others may not teach you anything about your office performance. You may decide to drop these indicators, or to alter them to make them a better fit for your office.

You may also discover that there are important priorities not currently covered by the PPIs. Consider using the format of existing PPIs to come up with additional measures of office performance if you find this is the case.

4. Select a group of PPIs to adopt

Commit to tracking at least two PPIs from each of the nine objectives, as these represent a range of distinct and important prosecutorial priorities. If you find that you are unable to track at least two PPIs for one or more objectives, this is an indication that you need to begin collecting additional data internally or continue trying to obtain data from other local agencies. It is your office’s goals and priorities, not data availability, that should drive which PPIs you adopt.

5. Establish PPI baselines from which change will be measured

Whether you adopt PPIs as they are, revise them, or come up with your own new indicators, you need to establish a baseline for each PPI to measure change moving forward. Baselines may simply start at the time you begin collecting PPI data. But they can also coincide with significant events, such as the election of a new prosecutor, the introduction of a new case management system, a change in office policy, or even a global pandemic.

Regardless, an ideal baseline involves one year of data. Consider averaging rates or numbers from 12 months of data if you want to have a single baseline point, but do not use one random month to start. Relying on only one month as a baseline can make the baseline atypical (e.g., December tends to be affected by holiday schedules, and summer months tend to have higher crime rates).

Training

How do I teach my staff to produce and use the PPIs?

Management Training

Once you have selected your PPIs and established a data infrastructure to create the indicators, it is time to train your executive and mid-level management to use this information on an ongoing basis. [Videos](#) we have created provide examples of how prosecutors can understand and use the PPIs.

Think about training as an ongoing process—no single training session will make prosecutors data-savvy. To build sustainable data-use capacity, additional funding may be needed. When finding internal dollars becomes impossible, seek support from your local legislature, philanthropic organizations, or federal funding agencies. Other prosecutors have successfully done this. So can you! At times, other offices have relied on partnerships with researchers to secure funding.

What happened in Jacksonville

In 2019, our team helped the State Attorney's Office in Jacksonville, FL, develop a successful Bureau of Justice Assistance proposal to support data-driven prosecutorial practices. This enabled the office to hire its first research associate and data specialist.

Training is a necessary time investment. There is no single training protocol that will work in all prosecutorial offices, so your PPI manager should lead the development of a training curriculum that works for you. There are a number of organizations, such as Fair & Just Prosecution, the Institute for Innovation in Prosecution, and the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, that can help you strategize about building data application capacity. There are also more and more academic institutions committed to prosecutorial reform, so explore potential university partnerships as well.

Approach your training rollout like a growing snowball. First, identify 3-7 managers to undergo the initial training. Managers who are data ambassadors should be included in this group. This group can then provide suggestions about how to improve the curriculum and help you conduct the trainings in subsequent rounds with additional prosecutors.

Training should help managers:

- Read and understand trends in how cases are processed across the office
- Identify red flags in PPI trend
- Link changes in PPI trend to particular events, policies, or practices
- Request additional data to confirm problem
- Solicit insights from colleagues and external partners to better understand problem
- Find solutions to problem
- Present problem and solutions to executive team
- Establish realistic yet ambitious benchmarks, and strategies for meeting them
- Monitor changes in PPI trend after solutions are implemented

Line Prosecutor Training

As part of building data capacity in the office, you may decide to change the data you collect in your case management system, which would require re-training prosecutors in data entry. Effective oversight of data entry is another component of the training process. Unit heads will want to ensure that line prosecutors enter data in a timely and consistent manner.

What happened in Tampa

In 2020, our team helped the State Attorney's Office in Tampa, FL, to significantly revise its disposition codes. Not only did this require updates to the case management system, it also created the need for ongoing training of line prosecutors on using the new and revised codes.

Non-Attorney Training

Data extraction and analysis are very technical, and training in these areas will likely require external support. For example, data extraction functions can be taught by the provider of your case management system. For dashboard management, your staff may benefit from additional training in data visualization. Your data analysts may need to acquire new statistical or data management skills, and your local university can become a valuable resource for making that happen.

You will also have to train your clerical staff and paralegals to ensure consistency and timeliness of data entry in the case management system. Make quality control in data entry someone's responsibility. This may be your PPI manager, research director, or head of IT.

Available Training Resources

[The Center for Government Excellence at Johns Hopkins](#)

[Data Coalition](#)

[National Institute of Justice - On Translating Research into Policy and Practice](#)

WHAT DID YOU
LEARN FROM THIS
TRAINING?



HOW TO IDENTIFY A
RED FLAG!



Ongoing Data Collection

How do I routinize data collection for the PPIs?

By this point you will have already done the hardest parts of this work, from getting people on board, to training staff, to collecting baseline data. Now you just need to keep collecting data. As part of this task, your team will:

1. Streamline the extraction and cleaning of data from your CMS, human resources department, and outside agencies

Most of the analyses can be routinized and automated. Hopefully, during the piloting phase your IT and data analysts were able to determine how this will take place. For example, your staff may have decided it is most efficient to compile your data in a program (e.g., Excel or Tableau) in which tables and graphs are automatically updated as new data are imported. Still, remain alert, as automation can produce inaccurate results if data entry or coding practices change.

Without some minimum level of automation, your data staff may become overburdened by manually updating PPI tables and graphs

Although you used the piloting and training phases to improve the quality of your data, your team should revisit quality control steps periodically. This can be done by manually extracting and examining sample data, verifying findings with prosecutors who handle relevant cases, and investigating unusual spikes in trends.

What happened in Milwaukee County
In 2019, our team helped the Milwaukee District Attorney's Office create a mechanism for automating data extraction, cleaning, and recoding. This process pulls data monthly from the statewide court case management system and weekly from the district attorney's internal case management system.

2. Finalize how the PPI reports will be formatted and presented

Now that you have baseline data for all the PPIs you are adopting, the structure of reports may change. You may decide to split your results by office units, focus some indicators on particular offense types, or disaggregate your findings by geographic area. Make sure that you receive feedback about the presentation format from prosecutors at all levels of your office.

Consider creating a PPI dashboard as a transparency and community engagement tool

Many jurisdictions are making their data available to the public. Whether you are able to post data daily or only publish annual dashboards, this form of transparency will produce long term benefits for your office by increasing public trust. These dashboards do not have to be complicated or expensive to be effective. In fact, you can probably add an additional page to your office's existing website that shows trends for a few key indicators. Eventually, as you build your data and analytic capacity, you may choose to automate your dashboards. For examples, see dashboards used in Milwaukee, WI, Chicago, IL, and Philadelphia, PA.

3. Decide the frequency of data collection and reporting for each indicator

Will each PPI be measured monthly, quarterly, or annually? There is a clear benefit to collecting data and examining it as frequently as possible: the more data points you have, the sooner and more likely you are to notice potential problems and to identify successes. For example, if your indicator is collected on an annual basis, you may miss a problem or discover it only after damage has been done. Alternatively, you may not be able to collect data on a monthly basis for some PPIs because there are not enough changes or cases for meaningful analysis. For each PPI, we provide a suggested frequency for data collection but, as we noted when talking about piloting, you should consider your office's size and capacity for collecting data when making the final decision.

DASHBOARDS ARE A LOT OF WORK. THANK GOODNESS WE'RE AUTOMATING THIS NEXT MONTH



Diagnostics

How do I use PPI results to determine where we are doing well and where we need to improve?

It's time to put the PPIs to use - to connect them back to the goals of capacity & efficiency, community safety & well-being, and fairness & justice. It can be easy to lose sight of the bigger picture when you see individual PPI trends.

The aim is to create a feedback loop where you examine trends in your data, ask questions about what you see, consult with staff, and then revisit the data with an eye toward linking trends to existing office policies and practices, as well as overall goals.

Consider these steps:

1. Hold monthly or quarterly meetings to digest PPI data where you examine trends over time and make comparisons across office units

Regular PPI meetings will allow your office to stay on top of emerging trends, address potential problems, and identify successes. Monthly diagnostic meetings can go several different ways. Your mid-level managers may have the first opportunity to review their own units' data. They may be the ones who first identify concerning trends in the data and bring them up to the executive team. Alternatively, your executive team may see the data first, start thinking about possible causes and solutions, and then engage mid-level managers. Or you may come up with another approach that works better for your office.

To measure change in PPIs, compare the current month of data to:

1. 12-month baseline
2. Months immediately preceding
3. Same month in the previous year
4. Benchmarks you have set for the PPI
5. Data from other units within the office

Anticipate anxiety about the first few meetings among mid-level managers, especially if you have unit-level PPIs. Some anxiety is okay; it is important that mid-level managers take the performance measurement process seriously. Again, stress that the PPIs are not used to hold any individual prosecutor accountable, but rather to identify ways to improve office-wide performance. As a group, set PPI benchmarks that, when met, will mean your office has made meaningful progress toward achieving its goals.

2. Request additional data from your IT/data staff to answer follow-up questions that arise from these meetings

After your initial assessment of the trends data, you and your managers will likely have additional questions about the results. For example, you may want to break a particular PPI down by offense category or defendants' prior records. Request additional data from your IT/data staff to address your questions. A close collaboration between managers and IT/data staff can help ensure that the right questions are identified and the managers receive the follow-up data they need. The results may also encourage you to start thinking about additional data collection necessary to fully understand the trends.

3. Consult with your staff and external stakeholders to understand the causes of problems, trends over time, and comparisons across office units

Based on your review of the data, you will find that some results are easier to explain than others. Even if it is easy to understand issues identified by the PPIs, make sure you have considered all possible causes of the outcomes before deciding how to address them. Other findings will be more complicated. Finding solutions to those problems may require seeking feedback internally: have discussions with your line staff who handle cases on a daily basis and have a more nuanced understanding of what is happening on the ground. Engage with one or more external partners: some issues you will find are likely to require specialized knowledge from outside the criminal justice system.

Possible external partners:

- Local or national policy experts
- Government agencies, such as health, education, and law enforcement departments
- Community groups, faith leaders, victim advocates, or treatment centers
- Universities, think tanks, or research not-for-profits

4. Link findings to specific policies, practices, and office structure

The most important part of the Application Phase is connecting the dots between PPI trends and their causes. A noticeable trend can be due to any number of factors, such as formal and informal guidelines, daily decision-making practices, staff development, your relationship with the communities you serve, or office structure. For example, you may link community engagement participation with individual prosecutors' or units' caseloads. Upon realizing that prosecutors with higher caseloads are less likely to devote time to community engagement activities, you may want to revisit caseload distribution or devise ways to provide time for prosecutors to participate.

OUR REJECTION RATE IS LOWER THAN OUR DISMISSAL RATE.

ARE WE NOT SCREENING CASES WELL ENOUGH?

HOW DOES THIS DIFFER BY RACE?

OR POLICE DEPARTMENT?

OR OFFENSE TYPE?

OR PHASES OF THE MOON?...



Policy Development

How do I translate PPI results into meaningful policy change?

The PPIs you have chosen to measure reflect aspects of your office's performance that you think are critical. As you move from measuring performance to managing performance, use the PPIs to help you understand, monitor, and improve (or maintain) your office's success in those key areas.

By this point, you will have a lot of findings. Instead of trying to tackle them all at once, choose which areas you want to focus on first. Do not select only low-hanging fruit or only hard-to-implement reform areas. By focusing only on the easy stuff, you risk spending your resources on less impactful changes. By focusing only on difficult problems, you may not see any results in the near future, weakening the momentum you have built for this work.

It is also important to focus on things that are improving. Figure out what practices or policies are necessary to support and maintain good performance. Establish incentives for good office performance and stress the importance of continuing to monitor your PPI data, because past performance is not a guarantee of future success.

Know what a successful policy change should be. Imagine this: if you are considering plastic surgery for a broken nose, don't you want to know what your nose is supposed to look like following the surgery?

Consult community and advocacy groups as you identify local priorities and develop policy solutions, particularly around community engagement, racial disparities, substance use, and mental health diversion. Not only will such groups provide useful perspectives on how to deal with these problems, but these partnerships will also strengthen community buy-in and trust as you implement new policies. Consider establishing a community advisory board to regularly discuss trends in PPIs.

Some changes will happen in partnership with other government agencies. For example, if you have less control over pretrial detention decisions in your jurisdiction, addressing detention challenges will entail working with the public defender's office and the judiciary. Likewise, your success in case filing outcomes is often dependent on police arrest practices, so handling problematic case filing rates will require coordination with your local police departments.

Identify staff responsible for the implementation of policy changes. The PPI manager will serve as their support system during the implementation process. The PPI manager can create a timetable, allocate resources, monitor deadlines, facilitate access to additional data, and report to the executive team about the progress of implementation.

Build time into your regular diagnostic session to review changes in relevant PPIs after making policy changes. Track whether changes in practice have occurred as intended, by assessing monthly PPI data before, during, and after policy implementation. Don't forget to look at trends in other PPIs, because each change in policy may have unintended consequences. It is common for staff to prioritize areas in which performance is closely monitored, neglecting other important areas. Do not stop monitoring the PPI after one month of improved performance. Whether changes in PPI trends are positive or negative, continue collecting and assessing the underlying data.

Policy Development Steps:

1. Determine the issue to address
2. Identify the policy change to address it
3. Decide what specific outcome will signify success
4. Create the policy change protocol
5. Communicate the policy change to your staff and external stakeholders
6. Develop a timeline with internal deadlines for each policy implementation task
7. Assign roles and responsibilities for each task
8. Implement the policy change
9. Monitor policy implementation and revise tasks as needed
10. Use subsequent PPI trends to evaluate the impact of the policy change



Prosecutorial Performance Indicators were developed to help people like you become more data-savvy, impact-oriented, and accountable to the communities you serve. PPIs will help you whenever things are going well: they can show improvements in trends which you should celebrate. But they are especially useful when you face new or even unprecedented challenges. For example, the COVID-19 crisis has fundamentally changed the functioning of the criminal justice system, including your work. Offices that have a good data infrastructure and clear criteria for measuring success are better equipped to gauge changes post-pandemic and respond in a timely manner. The crisis may have had the effect of prolonging case disposition times (PPI 3.1), increasing the victimization of children (PPI 5.4), exacerbating racial disparities in filing (PPI 7.1), or shrinking the use of pretrial detention (PPI 8.3). PPIs can clearly show changes for these and other relevant indicators, better preparing you to tackle logistical and safety challenges that the pandemic has caused.

This Guide offers a lot to think about. But remember, you do not have to do everything at once: while we encourage you to adopt at least two PPIs per each of the nine objectives, if your current capacity is limited, you may also start with just a few and slowly build infrastructure. Also, you should not do this work without help. There are people and organizations that can assist, including:

Other prosecutorial offices that have done or are considering doing similar work;

Other criminal justice offices in your jurisdiction that may already be using a set of indicators and might be willing to help with data infrastructure and even share an analyst;

Local universities and research and policy groups, many of whom can provide free assistance in exchange for data;

National think tanks, many of which specialize in prosecutorial data (e.g., Fair & Just Prosecution, Association of Prosecution Attorneys, John Jay's Institute for Innovation in Prosecution, Measures for Justice, Vera Institute of Justice, Center for Court Innovation, and Urban Institute);

And, of course, us.

Our team is available to help you plan implementation, connect you with researchers who can provide assistance, and introduce you to funding sources. We can also help recruit policy and research staff, as we have successfully done so in current partner offices. In other words, there are a variety of ways through which we can help you successfully implement the PPIs.



