

Establishing RTCC Standard Operating Procedures

Developing a standard operating procedures (SOP) document is an important fundamental step for establishing an effective RTCC. A carefully developed SOP should, at minimum:

- 1) Establish the primary purpose and authority of the RTCC.
- 2) Clarify the RTCC chain of command (including differentiating it from the crime analysis division/unit, functions of crime analysts, and the crime analysis chain of command, if applicable) and communicate the roles and expectations of the RTCC and its employees.
- 3) Clarify operational procedures, including active crime scene response protocols.
- 4) Identify all technology used by RTCC operators.
- 5) Clarify follow-up and proactive investigative roles for RTCC operators.
- 6) Establish procedures for documenting operator workload.
- 7) Clarify procedures for electronic and video evidence storage, retrieval, and retention for agencies with advanced systems such as video cameras or license plate readers (LPR). Because of the potentially sensitive nature of capturing live video feeds and perhaps storing individual license plates, identity protection and privacy policies should be established proactively. As an example, some departments archive their license plate data for some period of time (e.g., three or six months) before it is permanently deleted. Many agencies also proactively work with community and citizen protection groups (e.g., the American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU]) prior to the installation of RTCC cameras in the city. Partnering with the ACLU may help the agency decide on appropriate locations for the new cameras and reach consensus on how long the department should archive captured video data.

Developing Measures of Effectiveness for a RTCC

Given the fast-paced nature of the work that occurs in an RTCC and by RTCC personnel, it can be difficult to keep track of productivity and to document the effort and effectiveness of the unit or its personnel. Proactively establishing methods for collecting and organizing data and documenting the work being accomplished by RTCC personnel serves a variety of purposes. Those purposes include providing work-performance feedback to RTCC staff and personnel, tracking and reporting accomplishments to executives/leaders and external constituencies, and building the case for additional resources as the range of responsibilities grows, as new technologies emerge, and as work demands rise.

There are several possible methods for tracking and documenting work productivity. For example, developing an in-house database can allow RTCC personnel to document their daily activities and work associated with each priority 1 call/BOLO (e.g., what cameras checked, electronic monitoring activity, officer support provided). The database also can allow personnel and

supervisors to check their daily, weekly, or monthly statistics and identify any trends in workloads or response effectiveness.

Also, it may make sense to keep track of the outcomes that RTCC activities and operations have on high-profile crimes or to systematically document cases in which a suspect was captured, or the case was solved, “in real time.” These kinds of organizational successes also might be considered for public dissemination (as appropriate and remaining mindful of privacy rights, status of active cases within the criminal justice system, and other factors) via a public information office (or officer). In an era of law enforcement transparency, sharing real-time crime response successes may help to ease community tensions, establish or enhance organizational legitimacy and trust, and help the community realize that its law enforcement agency is “on top of the crime problem.”

Departments also should consider assessing the impact of RTCC activities in addressing and disrupting crime patterns, impacting reductions in the amount of time between reporting a crime and suspect arrest, and measuring the additional resources that RTCC personnel provide to officers who are deployed and on-scene. Each of these different measures of productivity and effectiveness could also be used within a cost-benefit analysis, which may help demonstrate the impact of an RTCC on the overall effectiveness of a law enforcement agency and provide support during requests for additional resources. Here are some examples of measures of effectiveness, and samples of work/productivity products, which may be useful for agencies that plan to establish RTCCs:

Monthly activity reports—Monthly activity reports can capture a wide range of metrics that can help document the work within an RTCC. For example, agencies might capture information on asset-type successes (videos located/saved, license plate reader system uses and hits, electronic monitoring hits, etc.), cases cleared with help from an RTCC, and calls-for-service cases that involved RTCC assistance). Departments also can gather weekly or monthly reports on BOLO successes (stolen plates, stolen vehicles, NCIC alerts, missing persons, or internal hot-list hits).

Documenting RTCC impact on visible or high-profile cases or assisting with solving crimes or disrupting crime patterns—This kind of product would likely take the form of a qualitative assessment of how an RTCC contributed to a particular case. Anecdotally, a number of such examples are always known within an agency, but systematically capturing this kind of information may be useful for those agencies that are interested in growing their capabilities. Further, an agency may want to track the impact of captured video on conviction rates (or plea bargaining). This is likely an area in which an RTCC may indirectly impact the broader criminal justice system.

Time measures between crime reporting and resolution/arrest—Real-time response suggests that an agency is responding to crimes in progress. As such, the time frame encompassing a report to the police and an arrest, an apprehension, a traffic stop, or other forms of resolution might be captured and recorded as an indicator of RTCC and organizational efficiency. These data are likely available within the agency data infrastructure, but proactive steps to capture and measure the time frame between initial report and resolution (in varying forms) can certainly be useful.

Cost-benefits analysis—Past studies are available that focus on cost-benefit analyses for introducing crime analysis functions into a law enforcement organization. Such examples, such as this [one from the Vera Institute](#), could be used as a template for conducting a cost-benefit analysis for establishing a real time crime center. However, costs of technologies, and the broad range [law enforcement technology](#), are rather extensive, so agencies would likely need to conduct their own internal needs assessments. Assistance for conducting a [technology needs assessment](#) is also available.