Core Competencies AND Jail Leadership

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What skills, knowledge, and abilities do you need in order to be a credible and successful jail leader? Beginning with the July/August 2015 issue of *American Jails*, we are exploring the 22 core competencies as identified by jail administrators across the country. Welcome to the eighth installment on core competencies and jail leadership.

In this issue of *American Jails*, we take a closer look at the core competency identified as "physical plant management" and recommend several valuable resources related to leadership.

The Physical Plant and Infrastructure: The Jail Leader's Responsibilities

Description: Assure that the physical plant is in proper condition to provide the safety of inmates, employees, and the public.

Rationale: As the overall facility administrator, the jail leader's responsibility is to:

- Assure that the physical plant is in proper operating condition.
- Determine when it is necessary to obtain assistance for repairs or preventive maintenance.
- Plan ahead for projected structural needs.
- Ensure that the physical plant will be viable for the anticipated life of the building.

Knowledge:

- Structural features of jail facilities (e.g., schematics, utility maps, life safety systems).
- Emergency/evacuation plans in response to a fire, riot, or natural disaster (e.g., hurricane, tornado, earthquake, flood, etc.).

Skills:

- Interpreting blueprints, maintenance plans, etc.
- Conducting physical plant inspections.
- Establishing preventive maintenance plans.
- Overseeing capital planning when new construction is needed.
- Assuring that necessary repairs are made in a timely manner.
- Assessing facility capabilities in relation to inmate needs.
- Holding staff accountable.
- Collaborating with supportive public safety partners.
- Assessing the adequacy of emergency plans and facility preparedness.
- Writing policies governing the jail's response to emergency conditions.

Abilities:

- Evaluate integrity and sustainability of the jail's physical features and infrastructure.
- Delegate as necessary to maintenance staff.
- Gather information from staff and inmates.
- Be proactive.
- Establish mutual aid partnerships.
- Analyze information.
- Be decisive.
- Establish an organizational culture where safety is the top priority.

Jail facilities operate 24-hours a day, 7-days a week. As such the jail's physical plant and equipment "age 3.5 years operationally for every chronological year" in

22 Core Competencies for Jail Leaders

- Anticipate, analyze, and resolve organizational challenges and conflicts.
- Assure organizational accountability.
- Build and maintain positive relationships with external stakeholders.
- Build and maintain teamwork; mentor and coach others.
- Communicate effectively, internally and externally.
- Comprehend, obtain, and manage fiscal resources.
- Develop and maintain a positive organizational culture that promotes respect for diverse staff.
- Develop and sustain organizational vision/mission.
- Engage in strategic planning.
- Enhance self-awareness; maintain proactive professional commitment.
- Establish organizational authority, roles, and responsibilities.
- Leverage the role of the jail in the criminal justice system.
- Make sound decisions.
- Manage change.
- Manage labor relations.
- Manage power and influence.
- Manage time.
- Obtain and manage human resources.
- Oversee inmate and facility management.
- **Oversee physical plant management.**
- Reduce jail-related liability risks.
- Understand and manage emerging technology.

service (Martin & Rosazza, 2004). The long-term viability of the jail building, equipment, and infrastructure will age even more rapidly if the jail lacks a funded preventive maintenance program and an aligned inspection process that accurately assesses the building and internal systems. Even jails built in the last decade are at risk for unanticipated, expensive, and unbudgeted repairs if the jail administrator is not on top of these issues.

Ask yourself these questions about your physical plant:

- If your jail's HVAC ceased to work today, do you have a plan and the money to repair it?
- If the security electronics crashed, what would you do?
- How much longer will the jail's roof last?
- If your jail was designed/built before 1992, how are you assuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?
- Does your jail have an internal inspection/auditing process that routinely documents accurate information about the building's condition?
- Do you have an inventory of all equipment in the jail, the serial numbers, date installed/purchased, warranties, and projected life span? What about the costs of replacement?
- Is your jail at risk for flooding, negative weather events, or the impact of an overturned 18-wheeler carrying explosive cargo on an adjacent road?

If your answer was "no" or "not sure" to *any* of these questions, then you are a candidate to become an expert in your jail's physical plant, risk management, and capital budgeting. For the purposes of this article, the physical plant is defined as the bricks, mortar, roof, and mechanical systems (HVAC, electronics, plumbing, lighting, water, fire control) of the jail. Infrastructure includes the furniture, fixtures, and the equipment that are needed to operate the jail (desks, inmate beds, monitors, portable radios, x-ray machines, examination tables, hardware that drives the security systems, desktop computers). This also includes everything else that are consumable items/goods purchased by the jail and used by the staff and inmates. Capital budgeting is the identification of resources needed to replace generally expensive systems, buildings and renovations, i.e., setting aside funds each year in order to have the amount of funds necessary to pay repairs/replacement. In most local governments, this is at least a five-year look into the future.

Who Is Responsible for Budgeting for the Jail's Physical Plant?

It is critical for jail administrators to know if the costs and responsibilities to upkeep the jail's physical plant belong to them or are included in another entity's budget and job duties (for example, the jurisdiction's facility management department). If the costs and responsibilities rest with the jail, how is that information determined for budget purposes? If the responsibility rests with another agency, then the same question is asked, as well as whether or not that agency's requests match the jail's needs in terms of money and time frames. If another agency is responsible for the upkeep of the physical plant, jail leaders need to know how to interface with that department and assure that the jail's needs are met.

Whether the jail is brand new or not so new, the information gained from a physical plant assessment informs the annual and capital budget requests, the preventive maintenance program, and the jail's internal inspections policy. A physical plant assessment not only looks at how the building meets the needs of the jail (e.g., sufficient housing based on classification, crowding issues, etc.), it also documents the life-span and anticipated costs to replace items such as laundry, perimeter security, control center equipment, chemical distribution equipment, security hardware and software, emergency generators, fire detection systems, roofs, storage areas, kitchen and food preparation equipment, housing units (toilets, showers, beds), and windows.

Checklist for the Jail's Physical Plant

You need access to:

- √ As-built plans/blueprints of the facility—and of any jail renovations—stored outside the secure perimeter.
- √ Date of purchase/installation, warranties, and repair histories of major facility systems.
- √ Contracts for preventive maintenance and authorized vendors who repair major facility systems.
- √ Inspection reports as required by local or State law/regulations.
- √ Internal inspection/audit reports.
- √ Approved budget for physical plant additions, renovations, replacements, repairs.
- √ Capital budget (five years)
- √ Most current physical plant assessment.
- √ Memorandum of agreements (MOUs) with first responders for internal emergencies, weather emergencies, and externally threatening emergencies.
- √ Inventory of jail's equipment, furniture, fixtures, systems.
- √ Warranties.
- √ Policies and procedures governing maintenance, inspections, audits, inventorying.

The "Green" Jail

Learn more about how to adopt environmentally responsible building maintenance, purchasing, and renovations.

Green Prisons
www.greenprisons.org

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) (See U. S. Green Building Council.)
www.usgbc.org

Look around your facility and then ask yourself how long these items will last, based on current operations, and from where the money will come for the replacement. As part of your assessment, you need to include:

- Any warranties on recently purchased equipment and the conditions of those warranties (e.g. who has to repair and frequency of service).
- The insurance coverage available when equipment breaks, who holds the insurance, and how to access it.
- Any equipment that is covered by a preventive maintenance service agreement and when the last maintenance was completed (and documented) on these items.
- The economies that can be gained from collaborating with other local government agencies on preventive maintenance and/or repair budgets and/or sharing staff.
- Any deficiencies in the physical plant repairs that may impact compliance with mandatory local codes (e.g. fire codes) and inmate/staff safety.
- A complete and current inventory of all equipment in the jail, including an inventory tag (and an inventory control system/policy), the date purchased, new or replacement items, manufacturer's anticipated life span, and serial numbers, etc.—all for which must be accounted in the budgeting.
- The policies/procedures addressing inspections, maintenance, and audits are sufficient to proactively identify issues before they become a crisis.
- The qualified and trained individuals who can perform repairs, inspections, and audits.

Those who wait for equipment to breakdown and then go looking for the money are courting disaster. This practice jeopardizes the safety of the staff and inmates and forces administrators to find the political capital and additional money for "emergency" repairs. However, by developing a preventive maintenance program (Martin & Katsampes, 2007), administrators can:

- "Maximize the useful life of all building systems in the jail.
- Help the jail operate at peak efficiency.
- Prevent breakdowns of critical building systems.
- Maintain a safe and healthy environment for staff and inmates.
- Avoid costly repairs resulting from neglect or deferral maintenance."

These initiatives may involve the costs of contracting outside professionals to set up and develop your jail's plan. However, another option is for administrators to develop a plan internally with trained personnel. In addition, collaboration with other local government agencies will save costs and deliver a better return on investments.

The Jail's Internal Inspection Program

The jail's internal inspection program, along with the results of a physical plant assessment, is vital to the budgeting process for several reasons. First, it provides integrity and credibility to the budget and its process of acquiring the necessary funding essential to operations. Second, it assures that the physical plant continues to provide Constitutional care to the inmates. At a minimum, the jail needs an inspection process that routinely identifies the deficiencies and emerging issues of the physical plant. This is more than just asking a staff member to examine the internal and external conditions of the jail and then check-off boxes. Instead, the process requires the use of benchmarks to document the conditions. For example, the toilet flushes (check that box); but is there space to document when water is leaking around the mechanisms? Does someone monitor the temperatures in all housing units on a schedule that can potentially identify air-handling issues, or repairs that might be imminent? Are locking mechanisms routinely checked? Are leaks in the roof traced back to pipes, structure, or flashing; or is placement of buckets to catch the drips sufficient? Beware of a physical plant

inspection process that results only in forms with "yes," "no," and "NA" check boxes with little or no narrative.

In terms of the link between facility sanitation and the life-span of the building and components, clear direction is needed on what constitutes "clean and sanitary"—not just leaving those determinations to each shift and its supervisor. To that end, some jails take pictures in all parts of the facility (inmate cells, dormitories, bathrooms, dayrooms, hallways, staff control centers, kitchens, etc.) of what are acceptable conditions. This minimizes the chance that one person's or one shift's bias will not derail the facility's standards. By clearly defining what is acceptable, the inspector can determine what meets these standards and what does not, and identify potentially costly conditions as they emerge, not after the system crashes. This process also allows the jail's leadership to assess if inmate behavior is being appropriately managed to prevent damage to the physical plant and/or infrastructure and if staff are using resources appropriately.

With thorough training, the jail leader can "calibrate" the eyes of those responsible for the physical plant inspections so that these individuals "see" the same deficiencies, possible problems, and know how to accurately report and document their findings. The local community can also help your staff to assess the physical plant accurately and consisting. For example, administrators can enlist the help of the local health department and fire and emergency services to develop objective and measurable standards. These departments can also ensure that all those who are performing the inspections observe the physical plant approximately the same way. Determine what other facilities in your immediate area are also subject to inspections, then ask to examine their forms, directives, and processes for further ideas.

As part of examining the jail's existing policies and procedures, the administrator needs to determine the link between the on-going security reviews of the facility and physical plant assessments. Generally, if the physical plant maintenance is sliding, the security operations are sliding as well. The *procedures* for how the staff reports maintenance issues and how rapidly the repairs are made can impact operations (if the staff even bother to report issues), which in turn also impacts the facility's security. For example, one shift thinks the other shift reported camera or lighting deficiencies. The speed with which priority repairs are made to the physical plant must be a concern for the jail's leadership. Whether these repairs are made by trained internal maintenance staff or by outside vendors, it is critical to know if the issues are promptly fixed. If the staff doesn't trust the process to fix the physical plant (including security-related repairs), then there is a significant internal culture issue that needs to be addressed.

Examining operations should also be part of the physical plant assessment. The inspectors need to look at

gender-responsive design, safety, and security for special populations and housing. For example, inspectors may need to provide information about how well the physical plant and infrastructure supports the jail's inmate population on the mental health caseload.

Administrators also need an accurate tabulation of the current costs of facility maintenance as well. Specifically, they need information on what dollars in the approved budget are devoted to the jail's physical plant repairs, replacement of equipment, and to fund emergencies. Is this funding in the jail's budget or in another local government agency's budget?

A timeline of the last 5 or 10 years of these expenses can be a projection of future costs. Reviewing current contracts for vendors to perform repairs is also appropriate, including how those contracts were initiated, their expiration date, and what costs should be included in this fiscal assessment. Does the jail maintain a supply of parts that can be used in repairs, or does the vendor provide those at an increased per unit price? Perhaps the sharing of repair contracts with other local agencies could be another cost-effective approach?

Disaster Preparation

The jail leader is the one who manages the risk associated with disasters. She or he will be collaborating with local emergency managers to assess the impact of weather and man-made disasters on the jail's physical plan. She or he will also be required to develop a plan to address each plausible contingency that is essential to the public's safety, as well as to inmate and staff safety. Disaster preparedness drills, table-top exercises, and working alongside other public safety agencies are necessary to the jail's function in an emergency. It is more than just assuring that the emergency generator is regularly tested; it is about what happens after the first 24-hours of no power or access to the jail's physical site. It is also determining how the physical plant is repaired and/or inmates are relocated in serious incidents (Schwartz & Barry, 2009).

Getting Buy-In from the Funding Authority

As mentioned previously, the jail's physical plant repairs, upgrades, and renovations are often the first items to be eliminated from a jail's proposed budget during strategic negotiations or in tough fiscal times. Although it feels expeditious for the funding authority to delay what is not urgent, this type of budgeting "resolution," especially when it occurs for 5 or 10 years, brings the jail's physical plant into a crisis. Failing to make repairs often costs more in the future, and if the conditions of confinement consistently fail to meet Constitutional standards, the costs become more than just the repairs.

Article Sources for Your Leadership Library

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- **2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design**
  U.S. Dept. of Justice (September 15, 2010)
  www.ada.gov/regs2010/2010ADA Standards/2010ADAStandards_prt.pdf
- **The Americans with Disabilities Act: Title II Technical Assistance Manual Covering State and Local Government Programs and Services, II-6.3300 6) Jails and Prisons**
  www.ada.gov/taman2.html
- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities**
  (See "12. Detention and Correctional Facilities" on page 82.)
  www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-ada-standards/background/adaag

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A Guide to Preparing for and Responding to Jail Emergencies: Self-Audit Checklists, Resource Materials, Case Studies
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http://static.nicic.gov/Library/023494.pdf

While local citizens might not be concerned about inmates living for a few days/weeks without air conditioning because of a system failure, they don't realize that staff are also working in those conditions. Even if the funding authority has a "contingency" fund for unbudgeted jail repairs, the process of working to make repairs under emergency (and stressful) circumstances is often not the best scenario in which to produce a repair that is long-term in effect and cost effective.

As noted above, the jail's budget requests related to the physical plant need to be based on facts in order to maintain its integrity and credibility. The jail administrator must brief the funding authority about the current and anticipated needs of the physical plant and the equipment infrastructure, including:

- Documentation regarding life span of required equipment.
- Replacement costs.
- Repair histories.
- Impact on security operations.

Finding allies in other local agencies who also must keep the physical plant functioning can help to present a larger view of the issues. If the responsibility for the jail's physical plant and infrastructure rest with a department outside the jail, the administrator needs to maintain a strong relationship and provide education about the needs of the jail and the conditions required for inmates. Reference to professional standards, case law, and current litigation regarding conditions of confinement are also helpful strategies. For example, if there is an issue with the reliability of the internal camera system, briefings about the PREA standards may enlighten those who are providing the funds.

Conclusion

Ultimately the jail's physical plant is the jail leader's responsibility. This is true whether or not the funding authority is providing adequate funds for repairs, or if the funds for these essential jobs are part of the jail's budget. The jail leader must develop the data to document the needs (both long- and short-term), be prepared to collaborate with other local agencies, and to anticipate how physical plant crises will be addressed. Being successful at this core competency is essential to public safety. ■

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