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Chapter Title: Introduction

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Book Author(s): Eyal Aharoni, Lila Rabinovich, Joshua Mallett and Andrew R. Morral

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## Chapter One. Introduction

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The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) seeks to improve community safety by supporting the dissemination of effective criminal justice strategies. One way it pursues its mission is to fund innovative criminal justice programs. Thus, each year, BJA makes hundreds of awards to state, local, tribal, and nonprofit criminal justice programs to help them develop or expand their services. In many cases, these investments are seed funds designed to help establish a new service that will continue to provide benefits for years to come, and long after the BJA funds have been spent. For these programs, BJA shares the interest of many grant-making organizations across multiple disciplines to fund programs likely to continue to provide benefits beyond the period of BJA support.

BJA and comparable grant makers in public health, education, social services, and other fields seek to carefully vet potential grantees in order to identify those most likely to not just meet their initial service goals but also procure additional funding sources and become self-sustaining. Of course, sustainability is not a primary concern in all grant making. Some programs may be designed to meet a time-limited need or to provide a one-time infusion of resources. However, BJA provides many organizations with seed money designed to launch programs that will thrive over time. To achieve its mission, BJA needs to understand the characteristics of programs likely to be sustained, as well as their larger organizational and environmental contexts.

Grant makers providing seed funding face two key questions: What factors contribute to a program's long-term sustainability, and how can grant-making organizations best support funded programs to encourage their longevity and success? Although the literature on program sustainability is growing in the fields of public health and international development, few studies have examined program sustainability in the criminal justice field.

In this report, we describe a study of program sustainability examining the sustainment status of 231 BJA grantee programs from BJA's drug court (DC), human trafficking (HT), and mental health (MH) areas. To ground this task in a theoretical context, we started with a literature review outlining definitions of sustainment and the factors associated with sustained programs. These themes were further explored in primary data collection from interviews with seven key informants in the criminal justice field. Specifically, we asked about program characteristics and other factors associated with program sustainment beyond cessation of BJA funding. We then reviewed archival records on each program, including information contained within their grant applications, progress reports, BJA assessments, and other documents to select relevant characteristics and examined their association with program sustainment beyond seed funding. To assess

program sustainment, we report results of a survey of 136 of the 231 funded grantees followed by an analysis of factors predictive of program sustainment.

The present study did not focus on program effectiveness—that is, the extent to which programs accomplish their goals and objectives (for instance, a reduction in recidivism or abstinence from substance abuse)—or on whether programs succeed in replicating in new sites or expanding to new beneficiaries. Although such variables are likely to be important correlates of sustainability, they were not evaluated in the present study.

In Chapter Two, we discuss the factors theorized in the literature to predict program sustainability. To expand on these themes, Chapter Three summarizes the results of primary interviews with seven executive directors of organizations with track records of launching criminal justice programs that have become self-sustaining. Their insights and the empirical literature on program sustainability are used to inform our analysis of the 231 BJA programs, which we present in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, we summarize key findings from this work and recommend strategies that BJA or other grant makers might consider when attempting to identify grantees whose programs will likely continue to be implemented beyond initial grant funding.