



# Local Jails Reporting Program: Feasibility Study

*Final Report*



**March 10, 2021**

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## About This Report

The following report provides the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) with the findings and recommendations from the Local Jails Reporting Program (LJRP) feasibility study. The project is funded as part of the BJS Statistical Support Program (SSP), awarded to Abt Associates as a cooperative agreement in 2019 (award number **2019-85-CX-K002**). The SSP serves to support BJS with a broad range of statistical and methodological research to further BJS's mission to "collect, analyze, publish, and disseminate information on crime, criminal offenders, victims of crime, and the operation of justice systems at all levels of government." BJS utilizes the SSP to focus on three overarching objectives: filling gaps in current BJS collections, restoring discontinued collections, and addressing emerging criminal justice issues.

The purpose of the feasibility study is to identify the issues and challenges involved in developing an individual-level, inmate administrative record collection from local jails across the country. The results of this study will be used to determine if it will be feasible for BJS to pursue a future pilot study to collect data from a limited number of jails in the coming years. The goal of the pilot study is to better understand the appropriate design and other challenges that would be encountered if BJS determines it is feasible and necessary to pursue a national collection.

The following report provides an introduction to the call for a feasibility study, the methodology, a snapshot of participating jails, the findings from the study, and a discussion of recommendations for next steps.

## Authors

Seri Irazola, Ph.D., conducted and authored the feasibility study; Dr. Irazola is a Principal Associate for Abt Associates. The SSP Project Director, Tom Rich, provided ongoing technical support throughout the project; Mr. Rich is also a Principal Associate for Abt Associates. The report was reviewed by the Project Quality Assurance (PQA) representative, Walter Campbell, Ph.D., a Senior Associate for Abt Associates. Dr. Irazola conducted all interviews, and she was supported in the interviews by: Katherine Armstrong, Meg Chapman, Tom Rich, and Elyse Yarmosky.

BJS staff also provided ongoing technical support and conducted all outreach activities.



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## ATTACHMENTS

<b>Attachment A.</b>	<b>OMB Package</b>
<b>Attachment B.</b>	<b>Instrument</b>
<b>Attachment C.</b>	<b>Sample MOU</b>

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

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The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is the primary statistical agency of the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). BJS collects, analyzes, publishes, and disseminates information on crime, criminal detainees, crime victims, and criminal justice operations. As part of the corrections agenda, BJS currently obtains data on the local jail population through establishment censuses and surveys, specifically the Census of Jails<sup>2</sup> and Annual Survey of Jails,<sup>3</sup> and personal interview surveys, specifically the Survey of Local Jail Inmates (SILJ)<sup>4</sup> and the National Inmate Survey.<sup>5</sup>

In 2020, BJS directed Abt Associates (Abt) to conduct a feasibility study to explore the collection of individual-level data based on jails' administrative records: Local Jails Reporting Program (LJRP). The LJRP Feasibility Study was contracted using the Statistical Support Program (SSP) – a cooperative agreement awarded to Abt Associates in 2019 to support BJS with specific statistical tasks. LJRP is modeled after BJS's National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP),<sup>6</sup> which collects prisoner-level administrative records from state departments of corrections. A jail administrative record collection would have several significant advantages over BJS's current jail collection vehicles. First, it would allow BJS to obtain data that are difficult to aggregate and therefore impractical to collect through jail establishment surveys, such as information on bail, offense/charge, and detailed detainee demographic and case characteristics. Second, it would allow BJS to collect data on the detained pretrial population, a group that Congress asked BJS to focus on in recent appropriations bill (below), but is difficult to sample through detainee self-report surveys due to short stays in jail. Third, it could provide individual identifiers to link jail detainees to other administrative records, such as the NCRP or records of arrest and prosecution (i.e., RAP sheets), for conducting recidivism studies among jail detainees.

In the spring of 2020, BJS was tasked with collecting information specifically on the pretrial jail population by the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies:

*The Committee directs the Bureau of Justice Statistics to collect information analyzing the population of individuals detained pretrial in local jails, State and Federal facilities, and private facilities under contract to Federal, State, and local authorities and report back to the Committee within 180 days of the date of enactment of this Act. The report should include the number of individuals detained pretrial; the median duration of the*

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<sup>1</sup> This section is largely based on the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) package submitted by BJS for the feasibility study. See **Attachment A** for the submitted OMB package.

<sup>2</sup> OMB Control # 1121-0100.

<sup>3</sup> OMB Control # 1121-0094.

<sup>4</sup> OMB Control # 1121-0098.

<sup>5</sup> OMB control # 1121-0311.

<sup>6</sup> OMB Control # 1121-0065.

*pretrial detention period; the number of individuals detained pretrial who were offered financial release or not offered financial release; and the number of individuals who were offered financial release but remained detained because they could not pay the amount required. All data should be disaggregated by demographic and the level of the offense charged.*

The feasibility study was key to understanding how BJS can fulfill the Congressional reporting requirement on the pretrial population, including information on disposition on a criminal record, duration of the pretrial detention period, bail amount, charge types or codes, etc.

The feasibility study is an extension of prior BJS's efforts at exploring a jail administrative record collection. In 2017, as part of the SILJ redesign, BJS conducted a small pre-test, the SJAR, to determine whether BJS could obtain individual-level jail administrative records on detainees sampled for the SILJ survey. The goal was to potentially allow BJS to reduce total respondent burden and interview length, by obtaining the data more efficiently from jails if the detainee records were already part of the administrative records maintained by the jails. During the SJAR pre-test, BJS selected 40 local jails of various sizes to assess whether specific data elements were collected through their detainee management systems, and whether and how the facilities could provide data for the specific elements to BJS. Only 25 jails responded to the survey, and the percentage of jails that could provide individual-level administrative data to BJS ranged from 93% for individual demographic and current commitment characteristics, to 64% for sentencing information. Ultimately, BJS did not field the full SJAR due to the low response rate to the pre-test and a lack of resources to sample more jails.

Unlike the SJAR pre-test, which aimed to collect specific data elements to supplement the self-report data BJS is planning to collect through the SILJ in 2022, LJRP is broader in scope and the goals are different. This project will explore the feasibility of developing an individual-level jail administrative record collection in the long term, which if feasible, could eventually become a core BJS jail collection.

## 2. Methodology

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To conduct the feasibility study, BJS conducted outreach out to selected jails to solicit participation; once participation was obtained, BJS asked Abt to conduct telephone interviews with a jail representative selected by the jail administrator. Interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview drafted in partnership with BJS and Abt, and approved by BJS (see **Attachment B** for the interview instrument).

### 2.1 Sample Design

The design employed a convenience sample to select jail respondents from the approximately 3,000 jail facilities in the United States, which were enumerated in BJS's 2019 Census of Jails. The goal was to recruit 20-25 jails that varied in average daily detainee population (e.g., 1-49 detainees, 50-249, 250-999, and 1000+), geographic diversity (state and region), and community size (rural and urban). To account for nonresponse, fifty jails were contacted to yield up to 25 completed interviews.

Fourteen jurisdictions were recruited to participate in the Feasibility Study, with a mix of urban (64.3%) and rural (35.7%) jurisdictions. Nearly half (6, or 42.9%) were located in the West; four sites (28.6%) were located in the South, three sites (21.4%) were located in the Northeast, and one site (7.1%) was located in the Midwest. The mid-year population (based on BJS's 2019 Census of Jails) ranged from [REDACTED] detainees to [REDACTED], with an average of 1,354 detainees. Annual admissions for the interviewed jails ranged from [REDACTED] detainees to [REDACTED], with an average of 17,137 annual admissions. The total bed-count for the participating jails in 2019 ranged from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED], with an average of 2,000 beds.

### Schedule

In mid-October 2020, BJS submitted the clearance package to OMB, and in early November, BJS notified Abt that OMB approval had been granted. BJS then emailed the selected jails an invitation letter with a list of FAQs intended to provide: (a) further information on BJS and Abt; (b) topic areas of questions that will be asked during the interview; (c) how the information provided will be used by BJS; and (d) the confidentiality and security provisions that govern information collected by BJS. After the invitation letter was sent, BJS followed up with the jail administrators by email or phone as needed to encourage participation in the study. Once a jail agreed to participate, BJS connected the jail's contact person with Abt to schedule the interview. Interviews with transcribed notes began in November and continued through December. Data was entered, coded, and analyzed in January, and the draft report was submitted to BJS in mid-January. *Exhibit 1* depicts this schedule.



**Exhibit 1. Actual Study Schedule**

<b>Feasibility Study Schedule (Actual)</b>	
October, 2020	BJS submitted OMB package
November 2, 2020	Upon receiving OMB approval, BJS initiated outreach to jails to obtain participation
November – December, 2020	BJS continued to solicit participation from jails; Abt conducted interviews, transcribed responses, and coded key themes by group
January, 2021	Abt entered data, extracted and coded key themes by group; wrote draft report
January 22, 2021	Abt submitted draft deliverables to BJS for review
March, 2021	All deliverables finalized with BJS approval

**2.2 Snapshot of Jails**

Fourteen jurisdictions participated in the study. A snapshot of each is exhibited below.

**Exhibit 2.**

<i>Rural / Urban</i>	Urban
<i>Type of Vendor</i>	External vendor (heavily-modified off-the-shelf)
<i>Name of Vendor</i>	Police Central
<i>Name of System</i>	Jail Management System (JMS)
<i>Years with Current System</i>	More than 10 years
<i>Plans to Switch System</i>	Yes – one to two years

**Exhibit 3.**

<i>Rural / Urban</i>	Urban
<i>Type of Vendor</i>	External vendor
<i>Name of Vendor</i>	Tyler Technologies – <i>New World Corrections</i> module
<i>Name of System</i>	Jail Management System (JMS)
<i>Years with Current System</i>	5 to 10 years
<i>Plans to Switch System</i>	No plans to change system

**Exhibit 4.**

<i>Rural / Urban</i>	Urban
<i>Type of Vendor</i>	In-house
<i>Name of Vendor</i>	N/A
<i>Name of System</i>	Tag
<i>Years with Current System</i>	5 to 10 years
<i>Plans to Switch System</i>	Yes – one to two years

**Exhibit 5.**

<i>Rural / Urban</i>	Rural
<i>Type of Vendor</i>	External vendor
<i>Name of Vendor</i>	Sun Ridge
<i>Name of System</i>	RIMS
<i>Years with Current System</i>	5 to 10 years
<i>Plans to Switch System</i>	No plans to change system

**Exhibit 6.**

<i>Rural / Urban</i>	Urban
<i>Type of Vendor</i>	External vendor
<i>Name of Vendor</i>	Spillman
<i>Name of System</i>	Jail Management System (JMS)
<i>Years with Current System</i>	5 to 10 years
<i>Plans to Switch System</i>	No plans to change system



**Exhibit 7.**

<i>Rural / Urban</i>	Urban
<i>Type of Vendor</i>	In-house
<i>Name of Vendor</i>	N/A
<i>Name of System</i>	Offender Management System (OMS)
<i>Years with Current System</i>	2 to 5 years
<i>Plans to Switch System</i>	No plans to change system

**Exhibit 8.**

<i>Rural / Urban</i>	Urban
<i>Type of Vendor</i>	In-house
<i>Name of Vendor</i>	N/A
<i>Name of System</i>	Inmate Information System (IIS)
<i>Years with Current System</i>	More than 10 years
<i>Plans to Switch System</i>	Yes –two to five years

**Exhibit 9.**

<i>Rural / Urban</i>	Urban
<i>Type of Vendor</i>	External vendor
<i>Name of Vendor</i>	Inagraph / Hexagon
<i>Name of System</i>	Jail Management System (JMS)
<i>Years with Current System</i>	More than 10 years
<i>Plans to Switch System</i>	Yes – in process of changing

**Exhibit 10.**

<i>Rural / Urban</i>	Rural
<i>Type of Vendor</i>	External vendor
<i>Name of Vendor</i>	Global Telelink
<i>Name of System</i>	Jail Management System (JMS)
<i>Years with Current System</i>	More than 10 years
<i>Plans to Switch System</i>	No plans to change system

**Exhibit 11.**

<i>Rural / Urban</i>	Urban
<i>Type of Vendor</i>	In-house
<i>Name of Vendor</i>	N/A
<i>Name of System</i>	Jail Information Management System (JIMS)
<i>Years with Current System</i>	More than 10 years
<i>Plans to Switch System</i>	Yes – two to five years

**Exhibit 12.**

<i>Rural / Urban</i>	Rural
<i>Type of Vendor</i>	External vendor
<i>Name of Vendor</i>	Arconics
<i>Name of System</i>	X-Jail
<i>Years with Current System</i>	2 to 5 years
<i>Plans to Switch System</i>	No plans to change system

**Exhibit 13.**

<i>Rural / Urban</i>	Rural
<i>Type of Vendor</i>	In-house
<i>Name of Vendor</i>	N/A
<i>Name of System</i>	Jail Web
<i>Years with Current System</i>	More than 10 years
<i>Plans to Switch System</i>	Yes – one to two years

**Exhibit 14.**

<i>Rural / Urban</i>	Urban
<i>Type of Vendor</i>	External vendor
<i>Name of Vendor</i>	GTL (legacy-version released in 2004 – originally DSI)
<i>Name of System</i>	Offender Management System (OMS)
<i>Years with Current System</i>	More than 10 years
<i>Plans to Switch System</i>	Yes – in process of changing

**Exhibit 15.**

<i>Rural / Urban</i>	Rural
<i>Type of Vendor</i>	External vendor
<i>Name of Vendor</i>	E M Solutions
<i>Name of System</i>	Jail Management System (JMS)
<i>Years with Current System</i>	More than 10 years
<i>Plans to Switch System</i>	No plans to change system

### 3. Findings

The findings are outlined below; this includes data on detainees that are tracked and timestamped, system-tracked characteristics, detainee transfer and administration of data, length of time to extract data for one year, and length of time to extract data on all confined detainees for one point in time.

#### Tracked Detainees and Timestamps

To understand what jail populations were “tracked” by the jail management systems (JMS), specific questions were asked around whether *pretrial* detainees, detainees *held for other jurisdictions*, and *sentenced* detainees were followed in the management systems.

Exhibit 16. Tracked Detainees and Timestamps

Detainees for Other Jurisdictions	
Yes	92.9%
No	7.1%
Other/Unknown	

Pretrial Detainees	
Yes	78.6%
No	21.4%
Other/Unknown	

Sentenced Detainees	
Yes	92.9%
No	7.1%
Other/Unknown	

Other Detainees Tracked	
Yes	50%
No	50%
Other/Unknown	

From the collected data, nearly all sites tracked detainees of interest to BJS for the LJRP, and half of the sites tracked information on other categories of detainees. Therefore, it may be that the majority of the nation’s 3,000 jails’ systems will have the capacity to support the LJRP.

Of all sites queried, 78.6% of the systems were able to immediately *differentiate between statuses/categories of detainees*. The remaining sites were able to identify the statuses/categories of detainees, but only after clicking through several screens.

All of the fourteen jail management systems were able to *differentiate between temporary and non-temporary releases*.

Nearly all of the participants’ *admissions and releases were timestamped*; only one site was unsure of both. However, only nine of the fourteen sites management systems tracked *date/timestamped arrests*. For the remaining four sites, arrest information was located in the law enforcement data management system, but not the jail system

All but one site had the ability to *track detainees over time to identify repeat detainees*. The site that was unable to track repeat detainees because no unique identifier was assigned to detainees.



## System-Tracked Characteristics

The purpose of Section II of the interview instrument is to capture the different data components of interest to BJS within each of the jurisdictions jail management system (JMS).<sup>7</sup> Each data point collected is reported below.

**Exhibit 17. System-Tracked Characteristics**

Variable	Yes (%)	No (%)	Other/Unknown (%)
<i>Full name</i>	14 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Date of birth</i>	14 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Race &amp; ethnicity</i>	14 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Citizenship*</i>	7 (50%)	5 (35.7%)	2 (14.3%)
<i>Education*</i>	10 (71.4%)	2 (14.3%)	2 (14.3%)
<i>Occupation*</i>	12 (85.7%)	2 (14.3%)	0 (0%)
<i>Fingerprint-backed ID</i>	11 (78.6%)	1 (7.1%)	2 (14.3%)
<i>FBI number</i>	10 (71.4%)	2 (14.3%)	2 (14.3%)
<i>Full SSN*</i>	13 (92.9%)	0 (0%)	1 (7.1%)
<i>Partial SSN*</i>	13 (92.9%)	0 (0%)	1 (7.1%)
<i>Criminal history</i>	6 (42.9%)	3 (21.4%)	6 (42.9%)
<i>Initial arrest date</i>	11 (78.6%)	2 (14.3%)	1 (7.1%)
<i>Arrest charge(s)</i>	12 (85.7%)	2 (14.3%)	0 (0%)
<i>Court docket number</i>	12 (85.7%)	0 (0%)	2 (14.3%)
<i>Arraignment date</i>	12 (85.7%)	2 (14.3%)	0 (0%)
<i>Filed charges</i>	13 (92.9%)	0 (0%)	1 (7.1%)
<b>For PRETRIAL detainees only</b>			
Variable	Yes (%)	No (%)	Other/Unknown (%)
<i>Timestamp of admissions</i>	12 (85.7%)	1 (7.1%)	1 (7.1%)
<i>Whether bail was ordered?</i>	12 (87.7%)	2 (14.3%)	0 (0%)
<i>Bail payment amount</i>	12 (87.7%)	2 (14.3%)	0 (0%)
<i>Released on bail/bond?</i>	12 (87.7%)	2 (14.3%)	0 (0%)
<i>Released on pretrial?</i>	10 (71.4%)	3 (21.4%)	1 (7.1%)
<i>Whether/when detainee had provocation</i>	6 (42.9%)	5 (35.7%)	2 (14.3%)
<i>Adjudication charges</i>	10 (71.4%)	3 (21.4%)	1 (7.1%)
<i>Holding-agency's name</i>	14 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Holding-agency detainee start-date</i>	11 (78.6%)	2 (14.3%)	1 (7.1%)
<i>Holding-agency detainee release</i>	11 (78.6%)	2 (14.3%)	1 (7.1%)

<sup>7</sup> Across the sites, the JMS's had different labels, such as detainee management systems (OMSs) or other variations including detainee information systems (IMs). For consistency across this report, we refer to all detainee management systems as "JMS."

\* Some or all of reported data is self-reported and therefore not considered reliable.

<b>For SENTENCED detainees only</b>			
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Yes (%)</b>	<b>No (%)</b>	<b>Other/Unknown (%)</b>
<i>Sentence length</i>	13 (92.9%)	1 (7.1%)	0 (0%)
<i>Charges</i>	13 (92.9%)	1 (7.1%)	0 (0%)
<i>Fines imposed as part of sentence</i>	5 (35.7%)	7 (35.7%)	2 (14.3%)
<i>Date of admission following sentencing</i>	10 (71.4%)	2 (14.3%)	2 (14.3%)
<i>Whether detainee released temp-release</i>	10 (71.4%)	2 (14.3%)	2 (14.3%)
<i>Date/timestamp of release</i>	11 (78.6%)	1 (7.1%)	2 (14.3%)
<i>Type of release</i>	13 (92.9%)	0 (0%)	1 (7.1%)
<i>Date re-admissions following conditional release</i>	12 (85.7%)	2 (14.3%)	0 (0%)

### **Transfer and Administration of Data**

To successfully share data with BJS, Section III of the instrument asked questions related to the mechanisms that would be used to implement a data-sharing agreement (DSA), memorandum of understanding (MOU), or data-use agreement (DUA), as well as the challenges to implementing a partnership, and potential challenges and remedies. The following sub-section outlines the findings.

#### **MOU, DSA, and/or DUA**

Just over half of the fourteen sites (8) reportedly had an existing MOU for some current or former partner or agency, while three (3) had never entered into any formal data-sharing agreement, and the remaining three (3) were unsure if they'd ever entered into any formal agreement to share data. It was clear the sites had nuanced differences in their use and execution of MOUs. Specific examples include:

- One site had a DSA in use with other counties within the state, but that instrument would not apply to other Federal agencies including BJS.
- One site used an MOU for permanent data transfers; however they do not share data outside of law enforcement.
- At least four sites have “standard language” or “existing templates,” however they would want the receiving agency (BJS) to present their own template to request data.
- More than five sites also reported a desire for a standardized data sharing agreement to securely share data.
- At least two sites have existing data agreements to facilitate grants issued from DOJ with universities and research organizations, and therefore would be glad to use those instruments.



- One site participated with DOJ’s National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to jointly draft an MOU (please see **Attachment C** for a sample MOU).
- Only one site (with the average daily population under 70 detainees) reported that such a data agreement would be difficult or impossible to do because the “formality of signing something would freak out many in the county.”

### ***Legality of Providing Data***

Three questions were asked pertaining to whether BJS may have any major **legal challenges** to providing individual-level data from the fourteen sites to BJS: (1) Could BJS legally access data with no personally identifying information (PII)? (2) Could BJS legally access data with PII? And (3) Could BJS legally access data with **unique** PII? PII and unique PII were specifically distinguished from each other to determine whether it was possible to obtain data beyond name and data of birth (traditional PII) to include sensitive data on fingerprint-backed identifiers and social security numbers (unique PII).

**Data without PII.** Nearly all sites – thirteen of fourteen (92.9%) – reported there would be no known legal challenge to providing BJS with data on detainees without PII. The remaining site was unsure whether or not they could legally provide this data to BJS.

**Data with PII.** Just over half of the sites – eight of fourteen (64.3%) – reported that they could legally provide BJS data with PII. One site reported they could not legally provide BJS with PII-data, and five sites (35.7%) were unsure if they could provide BJS with data with PII.

**Data with Unique PII.** Only five (35.7%) of the sites reported that they could legally provide BJS with data that included unique PII. Two sites (14.3%) reported that they could not legally provide BJS with data that included PII, and half of the sites (50%) were unsure.

**Remarks on Legality of Accessing Data.** Many of the sites interviewed provided clarification on their “unknown” answers. Nearly all of the sites that answered “unknown” for providing data with PII and data with unique PII reported that ***they had to consult with their legal counsel*** to understand what could be provided. These same sites indicated that ***they had not shared data with external agencies in the past***, and certain data elements (e.g., arrest data that were not included in their databases, etc.) may be harder to legally share than other data elements. Most importantly, these sites stated that ***with a strong MOU, they believed they would be able to share both data with PII and unique PII.***

### ***Technical Challenges to Providing Data***

To understand technical challenges, we asked whether or not the sites could identify or anticipate any major challenges to providing the data to BJS. Nearly half (6 sites, 42.9%) reported that they did not foresee any major technical challenges. Half of sites (50%) reported they would have major technical challenges, and one site (7.1%) reported they were unsure.

**Themes from Technical Challenges.** The technical challenges that were identified centered on **four key themes:**

**(1) How the data would be provided and/or accessed:** some sites expressed trepidation regarding whether BJS would expect a “data dump” or whether BJS would want to access their data directly. Both had challenges that may need to be overcome; for example, if the former, the site was concerned how the data dump would be provided (i.e., zip-drive, CD, and/or how it was secured when being transferred).<sup>8</sup> Whereas the latter had to do with outsiders wanting access to their internal system and data, and the reservation they had with how that would be done and how data would be protected.

**(2) The size and what data would be provided:** a key theme among almost all sites that expressed they would have major technical challenges was around how many variables (volume) would be included, how often they would be asked to pull the data (frequency), and how difficult it may be to produce code to answer questions they do not already report on.

**(3) The burden on resources:** several sites expressed concern regarding the small size of their staff, a lack of staff to pull the data, and the lack of resources to provide data. At least two sites indicated that because they used a 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendor, they would have to pay the vendor to pull the data, and that would be an added cost that was not accounted for in their budget.

**(4) Hard to access/provide data:** at least two sites stated that their system was “older,” “difficult,” and even had “paper files that would need to be entered into a system.” One rural site expressed that they did not have broadband, so internet would be a challenge if BJS expected them to email the data.

### ***Management Challenges to Providing Data***

To understand technical challenges, we asked whether or not the sites could identify or anticipate any major management challenges to providing the data to BJS. Eleven sites (78.6%) reported that they did not foresee any major management challenges. Only three sites (21.4%) reported they would have major management challenges, and no sites reported they were unsure

**Themes from Management Challenges.** The management challenges that were identified centered on **staffing and resources**. One site expressed concern in getting “buy-in” from overburdened staff. Another site discussed the issue of oversight; because they had a large jail population they had a lot of data coming in and out of their JMS, and therefore needed manpower. The third site expressed that staffing was a concern and “the request would need to be filled during down-time,” which meant it may be de-prioritized.

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<sup>8</sup> Abt Associates has a private file transfer site that is used to securely protect data. Should BJS choose to move forward on the LJRP, this information would be provided in a DUA-template to assuage any concerns from participating jails.

### ***Reducing Challenges to Providing Data***

To understand how to reduce challenges, we asked whether BJS may be able to provide assistance to reduce any identified legal, technical, and/or management issues. Only two sites (14.3%) said they would require nothing from BJS to reduce any stated challenges; one other site (7.1%) reported they were unsure. Nearly all (11 sites 78.6%) reported that BJS could assist in reducing the challenges.

**Themes from Reducing Challenges.** To reduce challenges with the assistance of BJS, the key themes that were identified centered on **resources**. Over half of the sites that identified BJS could assist in reducing challenges stated that funding would be critical – either to provide the staff to easily extract the data, and/or to provide funding for their vendor to modify their JMS to provide the capability to provide the data. Other necessary resources may include: BJS providing their DUA template to jails that clearly states the purpose of why BJS wants the data and how it would be used; ensuring they had a BJS point of contact who was “responsive and patient;” and BJS providing “a clear set of requirements from BJS.” One site that had not provided data outside their jurisdiction before and had expressed concerns with “what the feds would do with their data” had two specific asks: “We’d need a letter from Barr [Attorney General at time of interview] that grants indemnification that says if something happened to the data, we wouldn’t be held responsible. And we’d want to know what’s in it for us.”

### ***Length of Time to Extract Data for One Year.***

To gauge the length of time to extract data for all detainees for the period of one year, respondents were asked: *How long would it take you to create an individual-level data extract that contains your jail’s booking records for a period of one year? You may use 100 fields per record for estimating purpose.*

Nearly 80% of sites answered they would be able to provide the data under one month. However, it is critical to understand that many sites expressed that the front-end development would be the time-consuming part (e.g., writing the code to pull the reports), and that once their code had been generated, it would be under a week to pull the extraction; these instances are denoted with an asterisk (\*). Answers by timeframe are below.

#### **Under one week: 8 sites (57.1%)**

- “A couple days, mostly for formatting. We could export into Excel or Google Sheets to create a flat-file. It’d be very easy if we don’t have anyone accessing our network – we have a CSV extraction tool we can use.”
- “Approximately a week.”
- “A couple hours to a couple of days.”
- “Depends on the variables. We could provide at least 25 fields now that we have already programmed.”\*
- “Fairly quickly unless we have to pull from multiple apps and other data sources.”\*

- “I could run a report now. It depends on the number of records in a year booked – I can do about 1,000 records at a time. It wouldn’t take more than a week, especially since we are booking less detainees since Covid.”\*
- “No longer than a day.”
- “To generate reports, it takes about a day; more if we don’t have the direct field you request.”

#### **Two weeks to one month: 3 sites (21.4%)**

- “Probably two to three weeks.”
- “Probably two to three weeks. With our current system, it depends on how we structure the dataset. Within a booking, you can have ‘immediate releases’<sup>9</sup> that get messy and hard to identify. If you don’t need the immediate releases, it could take two weeks. If BJS wants to include the immediate releases, I haven’t been able to do this reliably. All our data is entered manually and transcribed from paper documents, so that becomes an issue too. Our jail is extremely sensitive to releasing large amounts of data in fear of being sued.”\*
- “Unsure, but I think 30-days.”\*

#### **Up to six-months: 3 sites (21.4%)**

- “80 to 120 hours over a six-month period.”
- “This is a long-term task that would require pulling in others to extract information. If the field search was very basic, it could be done in-house and could take approximately two-weeks. It may require the County’s Information Services Division (ISD) to write code, and that could take an additional two to four weeks. Once that code is written, it’d be easy to dump the information as needed.”\*
- “Up to six-months.”

#### ***Length of Time to Extract Data on All Confined Detainees for One Point in Time.***

To gauge the length of time to extract data for a single point in time, respondents were asked: *How long would it take you to create a data extract that contains individual-level data on all confined detainees at a specific time and day? You may use 100 fields per record for estimating purpose.*

Nearly 80% of sites answered this task would be much easier than the first scenario. Like the last scenario, the sites expressed that the front-end development would be the time-consuming part (e.g., writing the code to pull the reports), and that once their code had been generated, it would be under a week to pull the extraction; these instances are denoted with an asterisk (\*). Answers by timeframe are below.

#### **Within a day: 8 sites (57.1%)**

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<sup>9</sup> Interview respondent was referring to “temporary” releases, which would not necessarily be a hindrance to the LJRP collection.

**Two days to one week: 2 sites (14.2%)**

**One week to one month: 2 sites (14.2%)**

**Other: 2 sites (21.4%)**

- “The issues isn’t the data and time – it’s in generating the first reports. Once we have all the fields identified, one date or one time doesn’t matter. But it does depend on which data fields are requested.”\*
- “Like before: this is a long-term task that could be done in-house and could take about two to four weeks. Once that code is written, it’d be easy to dump the information as needed.”\*

## 4. Discussion

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The overall enthusiasm for collecting administrative data from jails was high; it was clear that nearly all interviewees and sites wanted to figure out how to overcome their challenges in order to participate in such a collection. This was especially true in the larger jails that were interviewed. Nearly all understood the importance of the data to their own jail management and how their jail would use the data, which was driving their desire to participate. However, there were clear issues that stood out to hinder the process of participating in the LJRP data collection, which can easily be overcome with assistance and guidance. Aside from the challenges that sites would need to overcome, there were several key themes that arose from the seven sites (50%) that anticipated changing their system or vendor in the next few years. These issues, along with recommendations for next steps, are discussed below.

### 4.1 Challenges to Overcome

Upon analyzing the data, several key themes of challenges were made apparent. First and foremost – nearly all sites expressed concern with **the front-end setup of the data**. These sites acknowledged that they had the ability to provide data, however before that could happen, they needed to modify or add code to be able to produce the data as-asked. Sites expressing this concern said that once the code is written and the report has been produced, subsequent data requests could be promptly pulled and provided to BJS. In some sites, the concern was around resources to write the code – whether it be staffing or funding. It is important to note that no routine data collections exist without a startup effort and/or cost to participating sites. Once those costs are met and the jail system is prepared to accommodate future data requests, the succeeding burden is typically minimal.

Secondly, and similar to the first challenge, issues arose with **whether the jail management system was in-house or outsourced with an external vendor**. When asked questions about technical challenges, those sites with in-house systems had more confidence that they would be able to provide the data or build in additional data elements as needed to support a BJS data collection effort. However, those with external vendors expressed concern that they were limited in what could be added or changed; the external systems were either too cost-prohibitive to modify, or too rigid. This scenario is similar to BJS's collection for the NCRP, whereby a small number of Department of Corrections (DOCs) had to be paid to produce the NCRP files.

Thirdly, the smaller and more rural jurisdictions that were interviewed were more likely to have challenges with their management system's **infrastructure**. For example, these sites had issues such as having paper-files rather than electronic files, limited broadband and internet, and were ill-equipped and/or understaffed to produce the data. That said, the larger sites indicated there would be minimal infrastructure challenges.

The fourth theme that arose was on the **management of the jail and its relationship with the function of law enforcement**. Jails with sheriffs that also had a law enforcement role tended to



have arrest data and other relevant data elements related to the individual – such as criminal history, SSN, and other information that would be in an arrest record. With sites that had jails and sheriffs for confinement purposes only, the police departments tended to have the detainee’s information and that information was held in a separate database that would need extra permissions to obtain. (Note: jails still had data on detainee name, date of birth, and typically SSN.) To obtain data from these separated entities would take coordination with both the jail and the police, which may prove to be difficult. Moreover, the quality and accuracy of the data may depend on who, where, and when the data is entered. Having multiple datasets that do not “talk to each other” may prove to be an ongoing challenge.

To a lesser extent, challenges related to the **Coronavirus (COVID-19)** were discussed. For example, several sites discussed general challenges with the accuracy of data due to the significant fluctuation in their population due to COVID-19, and the thought that the population may not “stabilize” for a long period of time. COVID-19 also had an impact on staffing in at least one jail, which caused challenges around the manpower for the jail to provide the data. And finally, one site expressed concern with providing the data to any entity – but especially the Federal government – due to distrust of how the data would be used. While this is not a direct challenge, it may be a theme that arises as more jails are approached to participate in the LJRP.

#### **4.2 Themes from Transitioning Systems**

As stated previously, half of the sites interviewed were either in the process of transitioning their JMS (2 sites), or anticipating a change in the next few years (5 sites). **Contributing factors** to whether the site intended to change their system ranged; these factors included transitioning to a cloud-based storage system; selecting a more user-friendly system; finding a more robust system that had large data storage and functionality for reporting; and creating a system that had the ability to “speak to” other databases of interest – such as police- and court-data. The sites that were in the midst of transition or planning to transition expressed **interest in assisting BJS** – whether it be by piloting the effort or obtaining the data elements BJS is interested in collecting and ensuring they are included in their new system.

#### **4.3 Recommendations**

To move forward, we have provided three key recommendations that BJS may want to consider as next steps, prior to further exploring the feasibility of a national data collection in local jails.

**BJS to Issue Formal Data Request.** The first recommendation that is based on the telephone interviews is that BJS should issue formal data requests to a subset of the interviewed sites. This would enable BJS to determine: (1) the level of effort required to obtain and process the data, and (2) demonstrate value of the effort. The first point is critical for determining the feasibility of a national collection, while the second is important to get more jails to participate. As part of this request, BJS should also contact two to three of the 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendors who maintain control of the sites’ data to determine the level of effort and the cost associated with making changes to the variables collected and/or code needed to produce reports that meet the needs of the LJRP.

**Conduct Scan of Practice.** It was clear that the sites had varying policies guiding their practices, varying statutes by jurisdiction, and different data elements that were required by a higher entity (typically to the state). A scan of practice or environmental scan would provide a snapshot at the range of these practices in the local jails to understand what they collect, for who, and why (i.e., how the data is used). For example – one site interviewed shared that “we should get the data from the state because of the Data Transparency Act across the state.” The Act requires all jails to report up to the state on standardized data, thus streamlining the collection for BJS. A scan of practice would also identify core measures that could be easily collected by local jails (e.g., variables that are already collected), and ensure that the variables have the same definitions. In addition, the scan of practice should contain site visits so that the data systems and reporting tools are as-reported. It will also further reveal the local jails that are changing or transferring their management systems, so that they are more user-friendly to provide BJS with ongoing data.

**Reducing Burden on Local Jails.** As stated previously, the jails in the study were enthusiastic about participating in the collection, however several faced impediments that BJS can help to address. First, BJS may want to consider providing funding (or asking their sister agency the Bureau of Justice Assistance to provide funding) to assist jails in the first collection. The front-end work seemed to be the largest obstacle for the sites, and funding was identified by nearly all participants as a way BJS could reduce burden. The funding could assist in additional manpower to write and/or change code to ensure the data that is being reported to BJS is what BJS wants. The funding may also provide local jails with external vendors the ability to make the changes without taking money from the jurisdictions’ budgets.

Another way to reduce burdens for the local jails is to create a standardized and comprehensive MOU/DUA for each jail to utilize. Most jails either had no MOUs or had “pieces” based on other MOUs for different projects. And because many sites were concerned their legal counsel would be a challenge, providing a template that has adequately addressed how the data will be used, the protections on the data, and why the collection is important, would be helpful to reduce burden.

BJS may also want to consider implementing something similar to their probation and parole efforts, which have both short- and long-forms; for those facilities that are overly burdened, the short form would be sufficient and focus only on the “core measures” that would be identified in a scan of practice.

The jails want to participate in the LJRP. Overall, if BJS can assist with better understanding the lay-of-the-land, and reducing burden on the jails to increase participation, both BJS and the jails would be better equipped to ensure a high response rate for a successful collection. We recommend BJS build on the feasibility study with formal data requests to be issued to the participating sites, so as to further understand the challenges and solutions.