# National Law Enforcement Data Exchange (N-DEx)
## Issues for CJIS Working Groups
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## 1. Need to refine system definition and identify functions

N-DEx is currently described as a system to collect, process, and disseminate criminal and investigative data to be used for nationwide information sharing.

- The following incident based/case based information is planned for inclusion in N-DEx:
  1. methods of criminal operation identified by national contributors,
  2. arrestee/indictee information,
  3. victim information,
  4. suspect information, and
  5. other ongoing criminal and investigation information.

  This information will be based on the core data elements already collected within NIBRS reporting. However, N-DEx will also ask for the additional case data from local records management systems that describes each of the above items in a manner meaningful for investigative multi-jurisdictional comparisons and matches among cases that might otherwise appear to be unrelated. That is, personal identifiers and further descriptive attributes regarding the incident would be extracted from the description of the case within the reporting agency's records management system. Obviously, how the information is extracted, formatted, and reported must be fully investigated. Some of those issues are identified below.

  The goal of N-DEx is to improve public safety and homeland security by providing law enforcement agencies with an investigative tool for cross-jurisdictional, nationwide searches of police reports for relationships between and among victims, offenses, property, offenders, arrested persons, and case attributes. A by-product of N-DEx will be a fulfillment of the promise of NIBRS, detailed crime statistics publishing and analysis from all law enforcement; local, state, and federal.

  The emphasis of the present effort is to steer N-DEx away from becoming an "intelligence" system. To do this, the current discussion has been focused on limiting the system to documented case-based data for incidents occurring under the traditional UCR definition of "offenses reported to or known by the police".

- In addition to the above information being resident in N-DEx, the system is being designed to include pointers to more detailed, underlying indices and information that reside at the contributing law enforcement agencies.

- The CJIS N-DEx Program will also provide linkage between other CJIS System of Services to include:

  - National Crime Information Center (NCIC) System,
  - Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS), and
  - The National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Denial Decision Extract File
  - Other federal and regional intelligence databases

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That is, an inquiry into N-DEx will also search for related data in these traditional CJIS systems, to the extent that the inquiry includes appropriate identifiers.

- The functions that N-DEx will provide regarding the case data are only very broadly defined at present as matching on common elements, such as names, addresses, case characteristics, etc. The ability to map case attributes, such as offenses, times of offenses, drug involvement etc. on a cross jurisdictional map is also envisioned in the current discussions.

  The ability to store the person and case attributes in the system and run comparisons in the background among all the cases submitted by participating agencies is a core system function. The system will support single queries based on certain personal identifiers or case attributes, but an agency will only receive the full benefit of N-DEx by submitting their complete incident reports over a period of time so that that their data resides in the system and serves as source data for all other cases and inquiries to hit *against*. Only when an agency's extended data exists in the system will they get the true benefit of unanticipated linkages with unknown cases from other jurisdictions. An area of substantial discussion is the policies governing which agencies should be allowed to retrieve information from the system, with some sentiment expressed for only those agencies that <u>enter</u> data being permitted to <u>retrieve</u> data.

- Depending upon the policy direction taken regarding inclusion of intelligence data, a future possibility is that the N-DEx System have the capability to support linkage to the FBI National Information/Intelligence Sharing Database.

- N-DEx is being designed to receive direct electronic input from local, state, and federal agencies as well as to support interactive queries and responses, all in a mode consistent with current NCIC transactions, as well as via the WEB interface provided by LEO and /or RISS as well as traditional law enforcement communications provided by NLETS and/or CJIS.

*Feedback requested of the Working Groups regarding definition and functions:*

a.   *What are the working groups' comments on the overall system concept and general definition?*
b.   *Since N-DEx describes a service that is currently available to some police departments within their own jurisdictions, or on a more limited basis, within multi-jurisdictional regions, is expanding that service to a state and national level of significant enough value to merit pursing?*
c.   *Does the promise of an investigative return provide the incentive to participate that NIBRS is lacking?*
d.   *In light of the goal of the system, do the members perceive that there will be the same reluctance to share information nationally as there is with the Gang File? If so, how might this be structured or altered to avoid that?*
e.   *Do the working groups agree with the emphasis on steering away from an "intelligence" database?*
f.   *Beyond the intuitive inter-matching that can be envisioned for a repository of investigative case data, as suggested above, what functions do the working groups see as responsive to local and state agency needs for information sharing?*

g.  *How can the system serve homeland security responsibilities of law enforcement? Should consideration be given to expansion of the scope of the data collected in that regard? If so, what homeland security data sharing functions should be included?*

## 2. Relationship of N-DEx to UCR and NIBRS

After 9/11 the need for police agencies to share case based data became more apparent than ever. The current discussions regarding N-DEx recognize that NIBRS is an established standard that includes core case data at its principle component. The fact that NIBRS has not been widely implemented is probably attributable to the issues surrounding the required investment in resources for reporting measured against the return from that investment rather than to whether the NIBRS standard is good description of a criminal incident. It can be argued that the expansion of the NIBRS data to include personal descriptors of involved individuals and other meaningful case attributes provides an excellent standard for exchanging this data. This approach provides a significant head start since it works from a known standard and installed technology base. The use of NIBRS as a base also enhances present and potential funding opportunities.

- Since the goal of the system envisioned at present includes the gathering of NIBRS data as the core data elements for the N-DEx case description, N-DEx will fulfill a complete NIBRS reporting function for those agencies who participate.

- There is also some sentiment, however, that N-DEx should take whatever case based (incident based) data that an agency can supply in an automated fashion, independent of the current NIBRS requirements. Depending upon how that is implemented, it could lead into resurfacing of questions regarding NIBRS data for crime reporting. For example, an agency that reports less-than-full-NIBRS data to N-DEx from their RMS might still have to report summary UCR data to meet UCR guidelines. Alternately, the less-than-full-NIBRS N-DEx reports might possibly have adequate information for the summary UCR data to be extracted.

- In addition, the future of NIBRS must be addressed from the point of view of all the agencies who have made the investment to develop that capability. We must support the move to N-DEx as the fulfillment of NIBRS but not lose the value of NIBRS reporting from those agencies who remain compliant to just the present day NIBRS standards. In addition, the current summary UCR reporting agencies must be addressed.

- An additional consideration that must be addressed is that the very name NIBRS raises negative connotations in the minds of many law enforcement practitioners and executives. Although N-DEx uses NIBRS data elements as its core data set, the scope and vision of N-DEx far exceed that of UCR and NIBRS. As such, we must find a way to express the vision of N-DEx that clearly overcomes any negative association with NIBRS that may exist.

*Feedback requested of the Working Groups regarding N-DEx's relationship to UCR and NIBRS:*

a.  *What are the working groups' general comments regarding the role of NIBRS in N-DEx?*

b. *Should the system concept allow for less-than-full-NIBRS reporting to N-DEX that might provide investigative value? Should that function be built to include at least the data elements necessary to extract summary UCR data?*

c. *Can the positive benefits of N-DEx be expressed without suffering unduly from the fact that NIBRS is a part of the core data being collected?*

d. *Is the following a reasonable point of view for N-DEx development? If not, please modify it so that it is a point of view that the Working Groups could support.*

    i. *N-DEx should be viewed as an investigative tool that happens to use NIBRS for some of its standards*

    ii. *Any agency not participating in N-DEx will continue reporting NIBRS or summary UCR data, just as they are at present*

    iii. *If any agency chooses to fully participate in N-DEx, then their UCR reporting will be accomplished within the NIBRS component of their N-DEx participation.*

    iv. *If a less-than-full-NIBRS reporting process is developed for N-DEx, it should require at least enough data to allow summary UCR data to be extracted.*

    v. If much less than full NIBRS reporting is offered to N-DEx, will a full N-DEx, will a full N-DEx return be provided to queries from those agencies?

## 3. N-DEx as a member of the CJIS System of Services

The current discussion regarding N-DEx has surfaced all the issues with N-DEx that have traditionally be associated with the other CJIS systems, for example, data quality, security, auditing, training, validation, data ownership, etc.

***Feedback requested of the Working Groups regarding N-DEx as a member of the CJIS System of Services:***

*Working Groups are asked to consider in what instances N-DEx policies might not fit into the models created for NCIC, Sex Offender, III, and the other CJIS systems, specifically regarding the following elements. It is recognized that the working groups are answering these questions based upon a very preliminary definition and concept of operations for N-DEx. The purpose of these questions is just to get a view into the Working Groups general response at this point in time.*

    a. *Training/Auditing*

        i. *Should N-DEx be subject to training/auditing requirements similar to the other CJIS systems?*

        ii. *If yes, can N-DEx training/auditing be incorporated into the current CJIS systems training and auditing requirement, or should separate training/auditing requirements be established for N-DEx?*

        iii. *Are there any special considerations for N-DEx training/auditing as it is currently envisioned?*

    b. *Validation*
        *What should be the role of validation in N-DEx, as it is currently envisioned?*

    c. **Security**
        i. *Can N-DEx effectively come under the CJIS Security Policy?*
        ii. *Are there any special considerations that distinguish N-DEx from the other CJIS Systems when it comes to security?*
    d. **Resources**
        *Can resource requirement be estimated for providing these services?*

## 4. The role of the States

If the traditional CJIS model is followed for N-DEx, the reports of incident data would come through state-level N-DEx programs that would then feed to the nationwide processor at FBI in West Virginia. The FBI is developing a proof-of-concept pilot system that will be in place during 2004. Clearly, the FBI will be ahead of the states in the development cycle.

In light of recent developments regarding the NCIC files, there may be some question as to whether states will develop state level N-DEx systems. However, if the N-DEx data is going to include the NIBRS data, then the state would have a need to receive that data for inclusion in its state-level UCR program. In addition, if the system allows for less-than-full-NIBRS submissions to N-DEx, the extraction of the summary data—if it occurs—would be important to the state UCR programs. If the local agency submits the N-DEx data via LEO/RISS, the state would also be by-passed, unless the data were somehow also routed to the state. It is very early to consider the technical implications of these issues, but it is important to consider the policy implications.

    *Feedback requested of the Working Groups regarding the role of the states.*

    a. *Should local agencies be allowed to submit N-DEx data directly to the FBI?*
    b. *If yes, what are the considerations for the state UCR programs?*
    c. *If yes to a., should direct submission be done only with the concurrence of the states?*
    d. *If yes to a., should FBI investigate a means of communicating appropriate UCR data (NIBRS or summary) back to the state from the reports submitted directly?*
    e. *Is is possible that NDE-x can be the defacto records management system (non-text) for local agencies that have no system in place?*

## 5. Education/Outreach/User Feedback and Buy-In

Much of the discussion to date has focused on the importance of heeding the lessons learned from NIBRS. The challenge for N-DEx is to design the system so that it provides an unequivocal information sharing value regarding the local law enforcement agencies' criminal justice (and homeland security) duties; to describe the system clearly; and, communicate the value to those agencies in a manner that it speaks for itself. To do that, the potential contributing agencies must have an early voice in identifying the functions to be included in N-DEx. FBI has obtained a significant amount of local agency user input to create the preliminary design now being discussed. In addition to direct discussions with local and state agencies, IACP, Major City Chiefs, National Sheriff's Association, and other local agency associations are included in the discussions.

    *Feedback requested of the Working Groups regarding Education/Outreach/User Feedback and Buy-in.*

    a. *How do we assure local agency buy-in nationwide?*

b. *Is the current process, combined with APB feedback and approval, adequate or do we need to make other outreach efforts to local agencies for input and buy-in?*

c. *If additional outreach is necessary, what process would the Working Groups like to see to obtain local agency feedback and buy-in?*

d. *How can the concepts of N-DEx most effectively be communicated to law enforcement agencies?*

## 6. Technical Issues

It is too early to discuss technical issues in detail; however, it is important to identify any over-arching technical concerns that the Working Groups may have. The current vision is for the system to only take automated submissions from local agencies. XML interfaces—in addition to those based on the existing NIBRS interfaces—will be developed for both the incoming transactions and the outgoing responses. This baseline use of XML will enable local agencies to bring the responses into their own systems for value-added use. The use of XML will hopefully also help with the extraction of the information from local records management systems. The FBI is investigating the use of XML tools to aid in that process, but it is recognized that ultimately the extraction of that data will be a local agency task, with associated resource requirements.

The ultimate data flow and security decisions will also affect the technical issues. The goal is to reach the greatest added value, while using as many technologies as possible that are already in place or being planned at local law enforcement agencies and state repositories.

*Feedback requested of the Working Groups regarding Technical Issues.*

a. *The Working Groups are asked to make any general comments regarding technical issues that can be envisioned regarding the described N-DEx concept.*

b. *Are there any special technical constraints that should be kept in mind during further discussion and development?*

c. *Can N-DEx be viewed in the same manner as other CJIS systems as far as access being accomplished via the CJIS WAN. Does access via LEO/RISS create any special considerations for your agency or your state?*

## 7. Legal and Privacy Issues

The legal and privacy implications of the system are especially important to the ultimate concept of operations. FBI is investigating the implications of creating a national iN-DEx of identifiable descriptions of local law enforcement incidents. Of special concern is clearly describing the appropriate uses of the system and then implementing effective controls to ensure that users adhere to those uses. It must be determined whether there are state-specific limiters regarding the use by local jurisdictions in one state of the case-based data of jurisdictions in another state. The introduction of intelligence data would add an increased layer of complexity to the privacy concerns, and would drive specific system constraints.

*Feedback requested of the Working Groups regarding Technical Issues.*

a. *Recognizing that there is only a broad system concept in place at present, the Working Groups are asked to make any general comments regarding legal and privacy issues.*

b. *What issues do the Working Groups see regarding privacy that are different for N-DEx than the other CJIS systems?*

c. *Are there privacy considerations that might limit your agency's or your state's participation in N-DEx?*

d. *If yes, please describe what they are and whether they require legislation to overcome.*