Article

A Process Evaluation of San Francisco's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Program

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Abstract

In 2016, San Francisco (SF) implemented the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program, a harm reduction–based pre-booking diversion system for people who violate drug laws and/or are engaged in sex work. LEAD is set apart from existing diversion programs, as it uses police as point of entry. Prior LEAD studies indicate some success in reducing recidivism and improving life outcomes. However, less is known about program implementation, including barriers and facilitators. Relying on policy documents, interviews, and focus groups, this study describes the LEAD SF's development, operations, adaptations, and challenges. It also identifies the unique context of LEAD SF that led to implementation barriers and facilitators. Results show that SF experienced success in collaboration, relationship building, and client connections to services but experienced challenges in securing and maintaining police officer buy-in and keeping clear and open lines of communication regarding LEAD goals, objectives, policies, and procedures. This led to the termination of LEAD SF in 2020.

Keywords

drug offenders, process evaluation, realistic evaluation, street-level bureaucrats, pre-arrest diversion

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Introduction

Historically, effective policing was considered a craft, in which experience equated with success. More recently, however, a new framework—Evidence-Based Policing (EBP)—emerged that is shaping policing and shifting the understanding of effective policing. Under an EBP approach, "police officers and staff create, review and use the best available evidence to inform and challenge policies, practices and decisions" (Ratcliffe, 2018, p. 185). Strong empirical evidence helps departments persuade politicians to fund programs that work and avoid spending money on activities that are shown ineffective. But how do we assess the strength of evidence?

The Maryland Scale of Scientific Evidence or SMS is one tool used to evaluate the methodological robustness of outcome, impact, and cost–benefit evaluations (National Institute of Justice [NIJ], 1998). The SMS ranks evaluations on a scale from 1 to 5, with higher scores equaling stronger evidence support. Using the SMS, the NIJ denotes effective programs to be those with at least two Level 3 or higher-rated studies showing effectiveness (Justice Research and Statistics Association [JRSA], 2014; e.g., CrimeSolutions.gov).

Police departments tend to rely, then, on quantitative methods to assess if a program is evidence based. This has significant value but is limited. Most have weak external validity (JRSA, 2014; NIJ, 1998; Pawson & Tilley, 1997), which makes generalizing to other contexts difficult and poses replication challenges (Campbell et al., 2019; JRSA, 2014; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Outcome and impact evaluations also do not explain how or why a program worked or failed (Mears, 2010; Miller & Miller, 2015; Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

To overcome the shortcomings of experimental research and to best understand why programs are effective or ineffective, Pawson and Tilley (1997) put forth *realistic evaluation*. Realistic evaluation moves away from experimental approaches and instead seeks to understand the underlying mechanism and context that produced the results. The realistic evaluation approach is more than a description of what happened but rather how it happened. Simply stated, it seeks to identify how a program works (or does not) and under what conditions.

One underutilized evaluation method that can help understand mechanism–context relationships is the process evaluation (Mears, 2010; Miller & Miller, 2015). Process evaluations provide detailed information about a program's underlying theory, model design, goals, objectives, operations, service delivery, quality of services, and implementation barriers and facilitators (Krisberg, 1980; Mears, 2010). They also contextualize impact and outcome findings by describing how and why an intervention experienced certain results, which is helpful for replication purposes. This article provides a process evaluation to understand program implementation for the now widely implemented Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) in San Francisco (SF), California.

LEAD is one of the first U.S. pre-booking diversion programs that redirects individuals from criminal justice system involvement into community-based social, health, and behavioral health services (LEAD National Support Bureau, n.d.-b). To

date, two peer-reviewed LEAD outcome studies (Clifasefi et al., 2017; Collins et al., 2017) and one peer-reviewed cost–benefit analysis (Collins et al., 2019) show that LEAD is an effective diversion mechanism for low-level drug offenders and sex workers—positioning LEAD as a promising program, albeit with limited evidence. LEAD has now rapidly spread to 55 U.S. jurisdictions, with an additional seven in the process of launching LEAD (LEAD National Support Bureau, n.d.-a). Yet, no peer-reviewed study discusses the conditions necessary for successful LEAD implementation or outcomes. In fact, criminal justice process evaluations are lacking as compared to outcome/impact evaluations.

As LEAD expands into other jurisdictions, knowing best practices in implementation, identifying what works, and understanding how it may work in different contexts are critical. This article fills that gap. Using the LEAD SF site, this process evaluation demonstrates the importance of understanding how mechanism and context impact implementation. In particular, LEAD SF, which launched in the fall of 2017, faced many context-specific challenges that resulted in a program with the LEAD name but not LEAD in practice. As a result, before the end of 2020, LEAD SF dissolved. Herein, we provide the LEAD SF process evaluation, highlighting its successes and challenges.

Components of Successful Program Implementation

Process evaluations highlight those components of successful and unsuccessful program implementations. Successful implementation requires fidelity, otherwise stated as program integrity (Durlak, 1998; Miller & Miller, 2015). Fidelity assessments measure if, how, and how much a program deviated from the original design and whether program outcomes are attributable to the program's theory and model or to changes and adaptations made during implementation (Durlak, 1998; Miller & Miller, 2015). Programs implemented with high fidelity are more likely to be successful (Duwe & Clark, 2015; Esbensen et al., 2011).

At the forefront of successful program implementation are committed stakeholders (Keiser, 2010; Lipsky, 1980; Rengifo et al., 2017, U.S. Department of Justice, 2004). Early recruitment and commitment from key stakeholders and staff implementers (also called street-level bureaucrats [SLBs]) are especially crucial when a program deviates from traditional practices and ideologies (Keiser, 2010; Lipsky, 1980). To secure stakeholder commitment, a few components must be avoided and some steps should be taken. For example, ambiguity regarding a program's goals, policies, and processes should be avoided (Lipsky, 1980; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1979; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975), and buy-in from high-commanding and well-respected law enforcement officers (LEOs), or program champions, who ensure commitment from other LEOs in the department should be secured (Lipsky, 1980).

Once stakeholders are committed, stakeholder autonomy, or stakeholder discretion and program ownership, must be secured (Lipsky, 1980; Tummers & Bekkers, 2014; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). Discretion is an inevitable and sometimes necessary component of many SLB roles, such as police officers (Lipsky, 1980). LEOs

typically have autonomy in executing their duties, which can be restricted with the implementation of a new program. When LEO autonomy is threatened, they are less likely to buy-in, commit, and implement the program (Lipsky, 1980; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1979).

Clear communication on a program's goals, objectives, processes, and policies can also ensure implementation integrity (Hobson et al., 2018; Rengifo et al., 2017; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). Ambiguity in program goals and objectives affects how well SLBs can execute the program as intended (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). When communication comes from various sources or is inconsistent, procedural ambiguity and policy misinterpretation ensues, leading to implementation challenges (Lipsky, 1980).

SLBs and other staff must be properly trained on program theory, goals, and procedures, and possess relevant skills and experience (Gibbs et al., 2015; Lipsky, 1980; Rengifo et al., 2017, U.S. Department of Justice, 2004). Training and technical assistance throughout implementation are crucial to ensuring that staff are knowledgeable about how to implement a program (U.S. Department of Justice, 2004). And, criminal justice intervention evaluations echo those findings (e.g., Esbensen et al., 2011; Gibbs et al., 2015).

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD)

About LEAD

LEAD is a multiagency collaboration that moves away from traditionally aggressive drug war and zero-tolerance policing policies that have led to mass incarceration and racial disparities in the criminal justice system. It is one of the first U.S. pre-booking diversion programs specifically aimed at people who violate drug laws and/or are engaged in sex work (Beckett, 2014). The program originated in Seattle, Washington (WA), one of the Washington's largest cities, and was officially piloted in two high-crime neighborhoods in King County—Belltown and Skyway (Beckett, 2014).

LEAD has four core principles: diversion, harm reduction, housing first, and intensive case management, and was designed with six specific goals: (a) remodel typical responses to crime, public safety, public order, and health-related problems; (b) improve public safety and health by utilizing evidence-based practices, such as harm reduction; (c) reduce the number of low-level offenders who enter the criminal justice system; (d) undo racial disparities caused by the system; (e) sustain LEAD funding through system cost-savings; and (f) strengthen police–community relations (LEAD National Support Bureau, n.d.-b).

At the point of contact, LEAD officers exercise discretion in deciding whether to divert an eligible individual to community-based social, health, and behavioral health services or to process them through the criminal justice system (LEAD National Support Bureau, n.d.-b). LEAD is also steeped in harm reduction, broadly defined as "a pragmatic yet compassionate set of principles and procedures designed to reduce the harmful consequences of addictive behavior" (Marlatt, 1996, p. 779). LEAD seeks

to reduce the harms associated with drug use and sex work by providing individualized intervention plans based on immediate needs.

LEAD also uses a housing first model whereby clients can secure housing without conditional requirements to enroll in drug or mental health treatment (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2016). By providing housing, especially permanent housing, clients' lives will be more stable, allowing them to address problems underlying criminal involvement (LEAD National Support Bureau, n.d.-b). Finally, LEAD utilizes intensive case management (ICM; frequent case manager-client contact) by servicing high acuity clients with the goal of improving their quality of life (de Vet et al., 2013).

Keys to a Successful LEAD Implementation

While no peer-reviewed LEAD process evaluations have been published, Seattle, WA (Beckett, 2014), and Santa Fe, New Mexico (New Mexico Sentencing Commission [NMSC], 2018), both published reports. Two other studies assessed LEO perceptions of LEAD (Rouhani et al., 2019; Worden & McLean, 2018). As a whole, these show that committed stakeholders are needed to facilitate successful collaboration and implementation (Beckett, 2014; NMSC, 2018), but police officer buy-in is especially critical but often challenging to secure (Beckett, 2014; NMSC, 2018; Rouhani et al., 2019; Worden & McLean, 2018). Furthermore, specific contexts are highlighted as necessary for successful implementation: a collaborative environment, clearly defined protocols, continuous training in harm reduction, and transparent avenues of communication (Beckett, 2014; NMSC, 2018). Keeping these contexts in mind, the rest of this article assesses the implementation of LEAD SF to identify the mechanisms and contexts that led to the end of LEAD in that city.

Method

LEAD San Francisco

In 2016, California state passed Senate Bill 843, which authorized the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) to administer a 2-year pilot program of LEAD in Los Angeles County and San Francisco. The city and county of San Francisco is one of the fourth largest and costliest cities in the state of California, with the cost of living exceeding national averages by 59% (SFDPH, 2016). Unsurprisingly, San Francisco has witnessed increases in their unhoused population over the years. In 2019, 8,035 individuals were living on the street or shelter. Of these individuals, 18% cited alcohol or drug use as the primary cause for losing housing and 8% cited mental health issues (Applied Survey Research [ASR], 2019). The city observed similar trends in prior years, 2015–2017 (ASR, 2019). This along with growing prescription opioid abuse and overdoses, illicit drug use, mental health illness, high incarceration rates, and racial disparities served as an impetus for the implementation of LEAD SF (San Francisco Department of Public Health [SFDPH], 2016).

LEAD SF officially launched on October 26, 2017, in two of the city's most affected districts—the Tenderloin and Mission Districts—both of which have high concentrations of individuals experiencing homelessness and, mental health and substance use problems (SFDPH, 2016). The LEAD SF model seeks to reduce low-level drug offender recidivism, strengthen city and community partnership collaboration, and improve the health and housing status of LEAD participants (Board of State and Community Corrections California [BSCC], n.d.). To reach these goals, LEAD SF serves to expand the nexus of existing harm reduction, health, and social services to LEAD participants who might have otherwise been processed through the criminal justice system. LEAD SF is a multiagency collaboration effort, funded to operate for a full 2 years, with a minimum of 250 individuals: 200 pre-booking and 50 social contacts.

Consistent with process evaluation research methods (Mears, 2010), this study uses semi-structured focus groups/interviews and content analyses of LEAD SF and LEAD Seattle policy documentation. These data are triangulated to fully examine implementation and identify the conditions under which LEAD implementation is successful. To that end, it addresses the following questions: (a) Is LEAD SF consistent with LEAD Seattle? What are the similarities and differences? (b) Was LEAD SF implemented as intended? What changes and adaptations occurred? (c) What were the implementation barriers/facilitators? How were they overcome/supported? (d) What were LEAD SF successes and challenges?

Sampling

Focus group participants were recruited using purposive sampling through the LEAD SF project. Researchers had access to LEAD SF partners via the site's Project Management Staff. A recruitment script was emailed to LEAD SF Project Management to be disseminated, via email, to interested LEAD SF partners. Project Management then organized the scheduling of the focus groups with each of the partners and sent the email to the LEAD SF partners. Those interested in participating simply arrived to the focus group location at that date and time. On some occasions, all invitees attended, and on others, one or even none showed. When one person attended, the focus group then morphed into an interview. Researchers never had control over who was invited, the number of people who attended, or the recruitment efforts used to increase participation. In addition, no incentives were offered for participation.

To minimize any risks to participants' privacy, and because of the political nature of the program, all identifiable data were redacted and no demographic data were collected. Participants were identified as their title and number (e.g., case manager #1) to provide context of the role from which they were speaking. No record of who attended was maintained.

Semi-Structured Focus Groups and Interviews

A total of 20 semi-structured focus groups and six interviews were conducted between July 2017 and December 2020 with LEAD SF partners. We conducted three focus

groups (3–4 participants) and two interviews with project management, four focus groups (3–4 participants) with case management administrators, four focus groups (4–7 participants) with case managers, three focus groups (4–6 participants) with legal staff, three focus groups (2–5 participants) and two interviews with senior commanding officers, and three focus groups (4–10 participants) and two interviews with front-line officers (see Perrone et al., in press, for detailed tables). Data collection was terminated after this point because the LEAD SF pilot was in its final stage and the frequency of focus groups/interviews was contracted. Interviews lasted approximately 30 min and focus groups lasted no more than 2 hr. To facilitate free-flowing discussion among participants, focus groups were homogeneous based on participants' roles (i.e., all case managers, all front-line officers, etc.) in LEAD SF. To the researchers' knowledge, participants either had existing working relationships prior to or after their involvement in LEAD SF, given the multiagency nature of the program, and researchers only knew participants through the program evaluation. The researchers had no reason to believe that participants' familiarity with other participants would inhibit the discussion, especially given the candidness of their responses.

The purpose of these interviews/focus groups was to understand (a) roles, (b) procedures, (c) impacts on community and partner relations, (d) obstacles and facilitators to development, (e) successes and challenges to implementation, and (f) best practices in development and implementation. The interview/focus group protocol specifically captured the mechanisms, contexts, challenges, and facilitators of LEAD SF implementation. All participants were asked the same guiding questions. For example, participants were asked questions like, "What procedures did you need to create for LEAD?" "What have been the obstacles to implementation?" and "What changes or adaptations have been implemented to address these obstacles?" Because of the semi-structured nature of the questions, participants were also allowed to speak freely, and probing questions were asked when necessary.

LEAD SF Document Data

A multitude of LEAD SF documents were collected for this study (see Table 1). They include the LEAD SF grant proposal, memoranda of understanding (MOUs), Core Principles and Roles, Key Stakeholder Policy Committee (KSPC) meeting minutes and PowerPoints, Operational Work Group (OW) meeting minutes and PowerPoints, and Quarterly Reports. LEAD SF staff training data were also collected. Documents were also collected from LEAD Seattle to compare the sites and assess LEAD SF's fidelity to the original model. Seattle documents include Core Principles and Roles, MOUs, and referral and diversion protocols.

Data Analysis

Several analytical techniques were used. Thematic analysis, a flexible qualitative method used for "identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6), was used to analyze interview/focus group data. All

Table 1. Data Documents.

LEAD site	Document type	Count
LEAD SF	KSPC Meeting Minutes	9
LEAD SF	KSPC Meeting PowerPoints	9
LEAD SF	OW Meeting Minutes	10
LEAD SF	OW Meeting PowerPoints	10
LEAD SF	LEAD SF Policies	12
LEAD SF	Procedures/Protocol	34
LEAD SF	Policy: Goals and Principles	53
LEAD SF	LEAD SF Grant Proposal (SFDPH, 2016)	1
LEAD Seattle	Phone Communication: Researchers & LEAD Seattle	1
LEAD Seattle	Procedures (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, 2015)	1

Note. LEAD SF = Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion in San Francisco; KSPC = Key Stakeholder Policy Committee; OW = Operational Work Group.

focus group and interview data audio recordings were manually transcribed and organized using NVivo, a software that facilitates thematic coding (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). No handwritten notes or responses were taken. An inductive approach was used to allow topics to emerge from the data. The intent of this analysis was to understand the LEAD SF process in practice, and although the focus was not to reach saturation, the themes that emerged throughout the duration of the data collection were recurring and consistent. Comparison reports and content analyses were also utilized to track changes among the various iterations of the LEAD SF policy and procedures documents and to identify developments and challenges within the Policy Committee and OW, throughout implementation.

To increase the validity of the emergent themes in the interview and focus group data, findings were triangulated with official LEAD SF policy and procedures documents. For example, thematic analysis findings were cross-referenced with content-analysis findings to identify connections with staff reported implementation barriers and facilitators. In addition, results were shared with the LEAD SF project manager to ensure that the researchers' interpretation of the data and LEAD SF policy/procedures documentation were accurate. Finally, the relevant literature was interrogated to compare the findings with the broader literature on process evaluations and policy implementation. These analyses yielded several key findings, which are broken down into the successes and challenges presented in the next section.

Findings

LEAD Seattle Versus LEAD SF

LEAD SF and LEAD Seattle documents were analyzed to assess whether the SF model adheres to or deviates from LEAD Seattle's model, including its goals, core principles, eligibility and exclusionary criteria, and processes. Figure 1 illustrates the
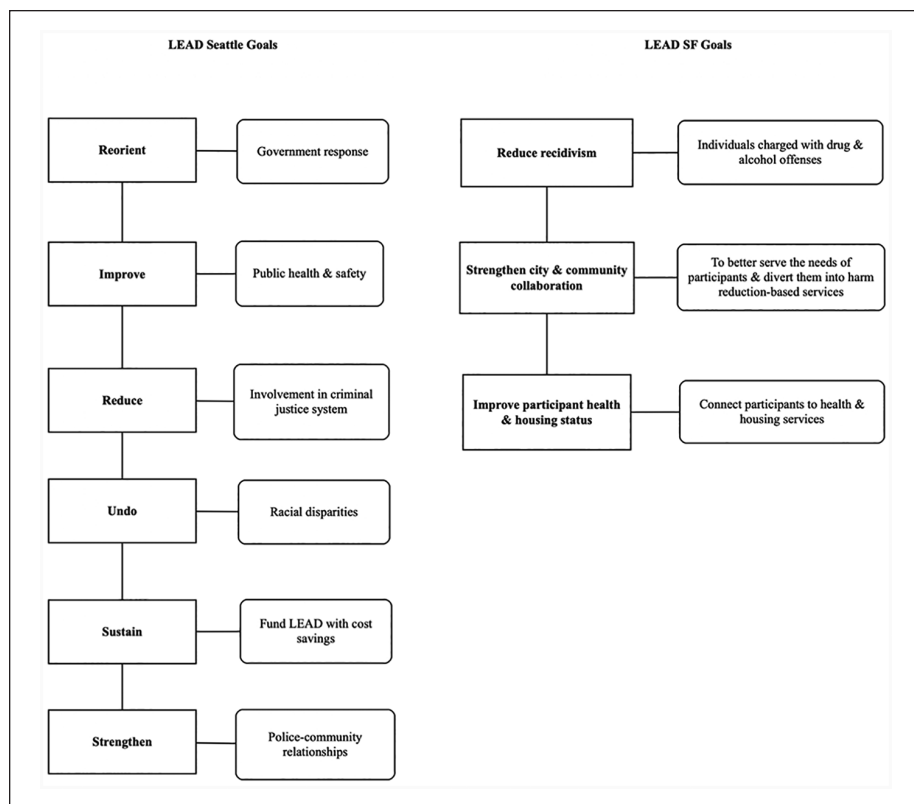
Figure 1. Goals comparison.
Note. LEAD SF = Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion in San Francisco.

goals comparison. SF seeks to improve public health, safety, and order. SF's goals are based on the prevalence of those who violate drug laws in the Mission and Tenderloin, the racial disparities in the city's jail systems (SFDPH, 2016), and the size of the city's jail population (Policy Committee Meeting June 12, 2017). Using LEAD, the city seeks to expand existing harm reduction–based services to individuals typically processed through the criminal justice system and improve police–community relationships. LEAD SF's goals are consistent with Seattle.

Data were analyzed to assess whether SF adhered to the core principles of the Seattle model (see Figure 2). LEAD is advertised as an adaptable model, though specific core principles are essential. These include having committed stakeholders, a harm reduction and housing first framework, intensive case management, and meaningful police relationships (LEAD National Bureau, n.d.-b). The core principles identified in LEAD SF are consistent with Seattle and were created and branded for SF by the LEAD National Support Bureau. Data from the focus groups indicate that LEAD SF adhered to most of the core principles. LEAD SF partners experienced success with
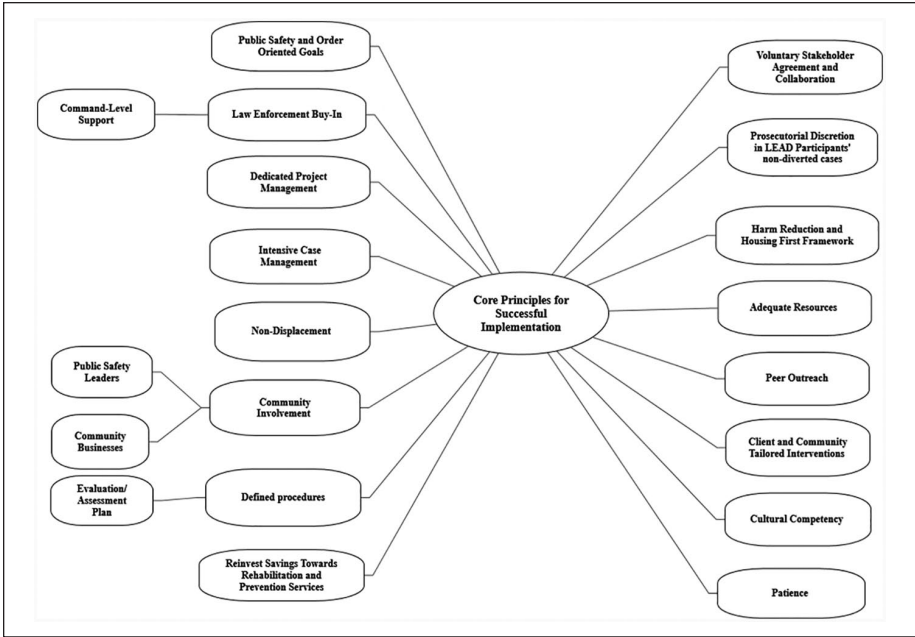
Figure 2. LEAD Seattle core principles.
Note. LEAD = Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion.

collaboration across agencies and providers. However, LEAD SF struggled with meaningful police relationships and maintaining a housing first framework.

Initially, both LEAD Seattle and LEAD SF struggled to establish eligibility criteria. In Seattle, LEAD partners originally intended to divert low-level drug offenders in the Belltown neighborhood, where illicit drug markets are prevalent (Beckett, 2014). However, partners were concerned that this would primarily bring in male clients, and partners expanded the criteria to include sex workers to bring in female participants struggling with drugs and poverty (Beckett, 2014). Since implementation, LEAD Seattle partners continued to refine pre-booking and social contact criteria (Beckett, 2014). Similarly, LEAD SF partners were concerned that their criteria, as outlined in the grant proposal, would fail to target those overrepresented in the jail systems (Policy Committee Minutes, June 12, 2017). And, early on, their concerns were realized. Because of the unique contexts and differences between felony and misdemeanor penal codes between both cities (SF and Seattle) and states (California and Washington), several drug charges in SF are misdemeanors and not routinely pursued through the SF's criminal justice system. As a result, LEAD SF deviated from the typical LEAD model to expand its eligible charges to include specific, nonviolent vandalism, theft, and vehicle-related felony charges. This expansion led to some differences between the LEAD SF and LEAD Seattle models.[1]

Notable key differences are evident in the exclusion criteria for pre-booking referrals. Seattle's drug offense charges are capped at seven grams, while LEAD SF's are maxed at five. The ineligible past criminal convictions are similar in both sites, with two exceptions. Seattle has 10-year limitations on certain convictions (e.g., domestic violence) and automatic ineligibility regardless of time when convicted for other crimes (e.g., Murder 1). In contrast, LEAD SF has 8-year limitations on certain criminal convictions but none that warrant automatic ineligibility. Both sites grant the LEAD District Attorney's discretion to waive any of the exclusions, permitting the individual to enter LEAD.

In LEAD Seattle, the referral process operates as follows (LEAD, 2015). First, an LEO determines whether an individual is eligible for diversion into LEAD, based on a set of site-established eligibility and exclusionary criteria. Second, the LEAD LEO utilizes his or her discretion to decide to arrest or refer the individual to LEAD. Third, once an individual completes the intake assessment within the allotted period, the LEAD case management group works with the client to develop an individualized intervention plan (IIP). The LEAD SF referral process is essentially the same, with one significant difference. In SF, LEOs are required to *first* refer individuals to the Department of Public Health (DPH) *before* they can be referred to case management, an additional layer not present in the Seattle model.

DPH is responsible for conducting the initial intake, and individuals are then connected with case managers at one of the case management agencies, who work with the individual to develop an IIP. This additional layer emerged in LEAD SF focus groups as having both advantages and disadvantages. Case managers and LEOs described that having clients travel to different agencies is an unnecessary hurdle to LEAD participation, while DPH describes the additional layer as providing program knowledge and facilitating client access to services. And, client success is one of the four successes in the LEAD SF implementation process.

LEAD SF Successes

The themes categorized as successes are *client successes*, *collaboration*, *relationship building*, and *changing perceptions of police.* These themes are interconnected, as accomplishments in one area lead to success in another (see Figure 3).

Client successes. LEAD partners explained that connecting clients to services has been positive. According to the focus groups and Quarterly Reports, LEAD SF was on the path to achieving its third goal, "Improve LEAD participants' health and housing status." The Quarterly Reports indicate successes in connecting clients to medical, health, and housing services; providing legal support to address clients' warrants; and building relationships between case managers and their clients. Small successes among the clients are notable. For clients with substance use problems and/or mental illness, completing ordinary tasks may be arduous undertakings and significant hurdles to further progress.
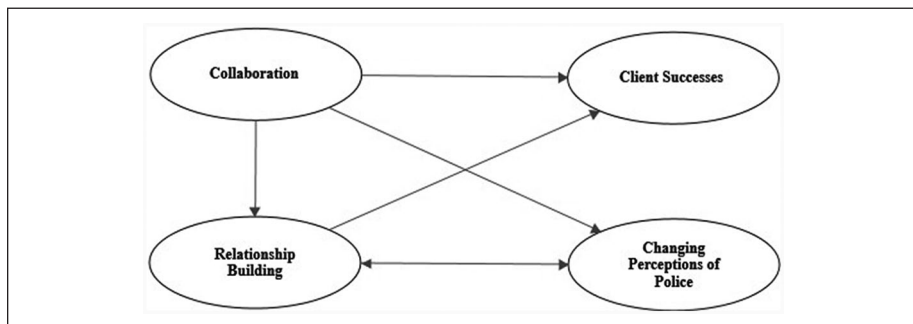
Figure 3. LEAD SF successes.
Note. LEAD SF = Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion in San Francisco.

Collaboration. The collaboration among LEAD SF agencies progressed and solidified throughout implementation. LEAD SF was achieving their second goal:

> Strengthen collaboration across city departments and with community-based organizations to better meet the needs of individuals with a history of substance abuse and low-level drug offenses by diverting them from the criminal justice system and into harm reduction-based social services. (SFDPH, 2016, p. 11)

LEAD SF staff regarded the program's collaborative nature as positive.

> I feel like one of the magic things about LEAD is this like un-silo-ization of these formerly compartmentalized and siloed in organizations that didn't have any connection to each other, and here's an opportunity for us all to come to the same table and look at the same issues in a collaborative way and work together in ways that didn't–weren't really happening before. So, I think that's definitely one of the things that's working. (Case Manager, June 04, 2018)

LEOs especially highlighted how being able to engage a potential LEAD participant, contact a case manager, and then immediately pass the client to a case manager (i.e., the warm handoff) are unique, meaningful, and valuable components of the LEAD SF program.

> Well, I'll tell you, it's the handoffs. The social referral is (A) it cuts down on relatively no paperwork. You just contact [case management agency] and just say, "I've got a social referral," and they—you fill that out. There you go, "all the best," off you go . . . So, when we work, we'll call [case management agency] and say, "Hey, we're on—who you looking for?" And they'll say, "Oh, we're looking for blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah"—and then we'll walk through—"Hey, I just found— he's here—we'll stand by with him until you get here." "Hey, how's it going?" Boom . . . It's warm handoffs. It's not, "Hey, come back next Monday at three o'clock." (Law Enforcement Officer, January 10, 2018)

Collaboration among LEAD SF partners also allowed the identification of implementation challenges and solutions to address those challenges. According to the Quarterly Reports, the partners collaborated to problem-solve and ensure fidelity to program goals and objectives. One example from the focus groups shows how LEAD SF Legal/Courts Partners helped foster law enforcement investment by conducting mini-trainings during officer roll calls: "We do trainings for the officers, just talking about LEAD, the policy and the purpose, and the reason for which it's implemented. . . and why they should believe in the program" (Legal/Courts Partner, January 11, 2018).

Relationship building. LEAD SF has helped build positive relationships that have historically been adversarial or nonexistent between agencies. Even among agencies that typically collaborate, such as law enforcement and the district attorney, relationship building can be absent. The LEAD SF collaboration afforded all LEAD partners an opportunity to gain a better understanding of, and appreciation for, one another's roles. Through that understanding, they have been able to connect and effectively work together.

> On the [law enforcement agency's] side, there's been more communication. But we've also invited them [DA], you know, to come out, them [DA] and the public defender, you know, to kind of brainstorm ideas on some of the people that we're dealing with in the program. . . We've never had that relationship with them, you know, so this is kind of an opportunity to build one. (Senior Commanding Officer, June 05, 2018)

Quarterly Reports indicate that LEAD SF continued to actively work on furthering collaboration and relationship building between partners by introducing "a casual LEAD-team hangout . . . and coffee and donuts at the [OW] meetings" (Quarterly Report 5 & 6).

Changing perceptions of law enforcement. LEAD SF's collaborative nature and active working relationships also facilitated a gradual and positive shift in perceptions of law enforcement, especially among case managers.

> So that's definitely changed my lens and the type of work they [police officers] have to put in, you know, the type of work they have to do, and the shit they have to see every day. So that's changed my view of them a lot. A lot of the law enforcement officers I've met, I can't even say I've met one law enforcement officer I'm like, "god, that guy is a dick." You know, I can't say that. (Case Manager, June 04, 2018)

Challenges

Themes that emerged as challenges at both the initial stage and throughout implementation are *stakeholder investment*, *cultural shifts*, *training*, *policy and goal interpretation*, *procedural ambiguity*, *autonomy*, *LEAD applicability*, *open communication*, *messaging*, and *the implementation of the Healthy Streets Operation Center* ([HSOC]
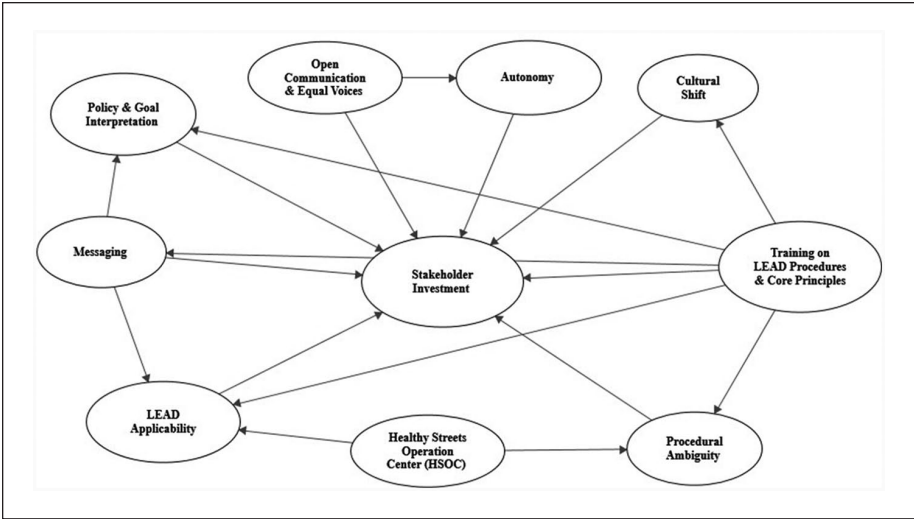
Figure 4. LEAD SF challenges.
Note. LEAD SF = Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion in San Francisco.

see Figure 4). Specifically, LEAD Project Management faced ongoing challenges in securing law enforcement buy-in and clearly communicating goals, values, roles, and procedures to LEAD partners. In addition, the introduction of HSOC in 2018, an SF city response to the increasingly visible unhoused individuals on SF streets, compromised LEAD SF's fidelity to core LEAD elements, such as the warm handoff that makes LEAD unique.

   Stakeholder investment. LEAD SF's most significant challenge was securing stakeholder investment, particularly from law enforcement. In each focus group, LEAD SF partners discussed the importance of securing LEO buy-in and noted how challenging it has been for SF to get LEOs invested in LEAD,

   . . . One of the struggles has been gaining momentum with the police department. (Legal/ Courts Partner, April 18, 2019)

   I mean, law enforcement, it's important to get the right people on board. So, I'm not sure we're totally there yet, but they are very important . . . (Project Management, January 10, 2018)

The partners attribute the challenge to securing and maintaining LEO buy-in to the significant cultural shift; the challenges providing sufficient law enforcement training both on procedures and in harm reduction; difficulties with providing consistent messaging about LEAD's goals, principles, and procedures; and LEAD SF officer perceptions that they neither have open lines of communication nor an equal voice in LEAD.

Cultural shift. Law enforcement and other stakeholders identified how practicing and valuing LEAD's principles of harm reduction and diversion is crucial, albeit difficult because the partnership required between police officers and case managers is unique, and LEAD is a significant shift from traditional U.S. policing. Most case managers have not worked closely with law enforcement, and many were hesitant about doing so.

> Most of them [case managers] have never worked in this, you know, truly diverse, multidisciplinary team, you know, working with law enforcement. You have to allow these folks that are working, you know, for these programs, that live on the streets, that they were addicts themselves, or they've been in jail or had these experiences with law enforcement. So, for them it's a growing experience as well. (Senior Commanding Officer, June 5, 2018)

The police also struggled with certain agency partnerships:

> So, it's a weird relationship to try to be partners with people who like the commander said, calls a press conference and says, "Look at all these dirty cops, look at the sheriffs, look what they do in their jails. You know, they're all terrible people." But, "let's be a partner now because you're going to help us keep people out of jail." (Senior Commanding Officer, June 05, 2018)

Training on LEAD procedures and core principles. In the grant proposal, LEAD SF indicated the LEAD National Support Bureau, the Harm Reduction Coalition (n.d.), and the Drug Policy Alliance would provide numerous trainings covering LEAD SF procedures and principles (e.g., harm reduction). Law enforcement and case managers would receive additional trainings as necessary. According to the Quarterly Reports, 73 trainings occurred between September 22, 2017, and March 12, 2019. Topics included an overview of LEAD with the LEAD National Support Bureau, harm reduction, motivational interviewing, mental health and trauma, trauma informed care, the criminal justice system (e.g., laws and processes), and behavioral huddles. Harm reduction–specific trainings occurred on five separate occasions, and various LEAD SF staff attended.

Because LEAD SF launched throughout all LEAD SF partnering police departments, it would have been difficult to train all LEOs. For example, the San Francisco Police Department ([SFPD], 2018) has about 2,000 LEOs, and training all LEOs both in LEAD and in harm reduction is an inevitable challenge. Nonetheless, the data suggest that law enforcement could have benefited from more harm reduction trainings tailored to police officers. For example, when asked during a focus group of 10 LEOs in January 2018 about harm reduction and again in June 2018 with five LEOs, the police officers neither knew nor heard of it.

> So what I figured out, on my own, is that the Department of Public Health has what's called a harm reduction. Harm reduction is everything. It's panacea. It's the golden chalice. As long as something is a little bit better than when I first talked to this person

five minutes ago, like, you know, giving them a sandwich—I just had a success. (Law Enforcement Officer, June 06, 2018)

LEAD case managers who attended the focus groups also iterated this sentiment. They emphasized the need to train law enforcement in harm reduction principles and commented that the harm reduction training for law enforcement may have been insufficient:

> The police did not get front-end training on this. We weren't training with a bunch of people with lots of bars and stars and all kinds of stuff, that took ten, fifteen, twenty years to get. But the line cops, our best stuff is the cops that we talk to on the street that didn't get any training but learned about it from us. And well, guess what, a half hour discussion with a couple people on the street isn't good enough for any one or two officers who care to learn about LEAD. (Case Manager, January 10, 2018)

As such, LEAD SF Project Management offered additional trainings that were grounded in harm reduction (e.g., syringe access, Narcan, social justice, and medication-assisted treatment). However, few LEAD SF partners attended the trainings, and only two LEOs attended a motivational interviewing training that LEAD SF Project Management describes as "steeped in harm reduction principles." However, even as LEAD SF neared the end of its pilot implementation, January 2019 focus groups indicated that incongruous definitions of success persisted and harm reduction buy-in from LEOs remained challenging.

LEOs also identified the need for training with LEAD Seattle. They stressed communication with the LEAD National Support Bureau should have occurred prior to program launch. While four LEOs went to Seattle prior to implementation in October 2017, other LEOs stated it would have been beneficial to work with the Seattle team prior to launching the program. They would have preferred to gain a hands-on view of the referral process and learn from Seattle officers the likely challenges throughout program implementation.

Messaging. Case managers also identified a lack of information dissemination about the LEAD program to officers. One case manager explained,

> I think if I look at it in a whole nutshell, it's like I said, there's a lot of policemen out there that don't even know about LEAD. So, you take the ones in the Tenderloin . . . They might not even understand what LEAD program is because the police department is not actually fully presenting this to the whole enforcement unit. . . . Just like in Mission, I talk to cops, they don't know what LEAD's about . . . But how can you not know when you're from the Mission Station and your captain is supposed to be on top of this? (Case Manager, June 04, 2018)

LEAD applicability. The topic of LEAD applicability to San Francisco was a recurring theme in three contexts. First, California's Proposition (Prop) 47[2] impacted client eligibility. Second, the eligibility and exclusion criteria were obstacles to enrolling

pre-booking clients. Last, the services LEAD provides, such as homeless outreach, are already present in San Francisco.

A common perception among many LEAD SF LEOs was that Prop 47, the reduction from a felony to a misdemeanor[3] charge for certain crimes (California Courts: The Judicial Branch of California, 2018), makes diverting low-level drug and alcohol offenders from the system more challenging. LEAD SF LEOs stated that they seldom arrest individuals for low-level drug offenses, which poses a challenge for LEOs who are trying to divert individuals into LEAD; a misdemeanor charge is not a "hammer."

LEAD SF Legal/Courts Partners noted the impact of the eligibility and exclusion criteria on the low number of pre-booking referrals. They raised concerns that the eligibility criteria make it difficult for LEOs to bring in pre-booking referrals:

> It's been a struggle for law enforcement to make those pre-booking referrals. What we're hearing from them is that they're not arresting folks for drug offenses or the DA's office doesn't prosecute those, and so it's definitely been a conversation that's ongoing of how do we get those referrals. . . (Legal/Courts Partner, January 10, 2018)

LEOs echoed this sentiment:

> Can't sell it. And we don't—we don't make the type of arrest that LEAD is like. Look, they said we're not making those arrests, so we would actually have to like, potentially make arrests that are like, that fit the mold for a LEAD case. We don't make those arrests anymore. (Law Enforcement Officer, January 11, 2018)

As a result, the policy group met to discuss expanding charges to include certain felonies. At the April 2018 Policy Committee meeting, the majority voted (of which many LEOs opposed) to add felony vandalism and felony theft-related charges to increase pre-booking referrals.

Policy and goal interpretation. An early sentiment among police officers who attended the focus groups was that LEAD is not necessary in SF, and later focus groups with LEOs indicated that this sentiment remained. Some LEOs argued that a multitude of diversion and related services already exist. Specifically, LEOs noted that LEAD is simply a duplication of services and that LEAD funds would be better utilized to support existing services:

> Let's put it this way. We have 160 non-profit providers in the Tenderloin. We don't need another one. We don't. We just don't need it. (Senior Commanding Officer, January 11, 2018)

LEOs noted that while LEAD is a valuable tool, individuals can still get connected to services via other avenues:

> I don't think LEAD is the only pathway to services. The officers have discretion. . . San Francisco is a service rich city. (Senior Commanding Officer, January 11, 2018)

A shortage of training and ambiguous messaging about LEAD goals could have led the LEOs to both interpret LEAD as a typical diversion program and misunderstand the program's goal. LEAD's philosophy is centered on harm reduction principles, which differentiate the program from other services in that it seeks to take a client-centered approach by providing services based on the client's wants (e.g., medically assisted treatment; use reduction rather than abstinence; a shower). It creates an understanding that criminal behaviors are, in some instances, driven by substance use and poor mental health.

Procedural ambiguity. Partners reported a lack of procedural clarity in three contexts: warrants, the referral process, and referral types. LEAD partners highlighted that many policy or procedural questions remain unanswered. LEAD SF Legal/Courts Partners noted the lack of specific guidelines in how to deal with clients who have criminal charges and/or warrants in a different county.

Many officers expressed dissatisfaction about not having a thorough understanding of the process. First, new eligible felony charges were added and then the steps to initiate a referral were changed (i.e., who officers first contact, when they email documents to each recipient, and when they contact case managers). LEAD SF Legal/Courts Partners also found that officers lacked clarity in social contact versus a pre-booking referral.

Open communication and equal voices. LEOs perceived their voices as not being heard. Specifically, LEOs expressed disappointment in the lack of recognition for their efforts from LEAD partners, at the OW and the policy level. Their concerns were dismissed:

> LEO: And [name redacted] . . . said, "well, we're all supposed to be equal." I said, "well, how are we equal as cops in the back of the room?" like little kids, while the adults talk, and they only talk to us when,—"Hey you guys, you wrote out the form, do you have anything you want to add? Good, okay, anyway, so," and then they start in, "so, anyone want to accept who the officers added?" "Yeah, no, I got a problem. I don't want them in." I said, "So, what are we supposed to be doing? What do I do?" I talk to somebody out there, when they ask me, "What's LEAD?" I don't know what to tell them. I see them again, "So, what's going on with LEAD?" "I don't know, sir. I got you in, and you're supposed to trust me as a cop, but I have nothing to tell you, because they won't talk to us." They won't work with us, and they definitely don't want us running it. (Law Enforcement Officer, June 06, 2018)

LEOs also reported feeling frustrated at meetings, as they perceived their contributions as ignored or silenced. LEOs also noted that conversations about racial disparities are tense and difficult. This demonstrates that LEAD SF Project Management faced challenges maintaining open communication and allowing all an equal voice.

Agency autonomy. LEOs were concerned about the perceived lack of trust in officer discretion and accusations of biased client selection. Some LEAD partners pushed for oversight, which highlighted LEOs' lack of autonomy in the implementation process.

While police officers seek to effectively carryout their responsibilities, they feel frequently criticized and directed on how to perform their duties. LEOs emphasized the need to give LEOs some level of autonomy, since LEAD is law enforcement driven:

> I think another thing, just for future, like if you're recommending this program to another agency, I think what would be key to the success is having–if it's called a law enforcement assisted diversion program, that law enforcement really drive the program to a certain extent. (Senior Commanding Officer, January 28, 2019)

Healthy streets operation center. The final challenge LEAD SF confronted was an initiative outside of and separate from LEAD SF: the Healthy Streets Operation Center (HSOC). In January 2018, the City of San Francisco implemented HSOC to tackle SF's homelessness crisis (City & County of San Francisco Office of the Controller [SF Controller], 2019). Using coordinated city efforts, HSOC relies on the police and city service providers to address street cleanliness, public safety, and behavioral health problems among those without housing.

Many LEAD SF officers considered HSOC another service connection tool whose target population largely overlaps with LEAD, and LEAD SF Project Management agreed. Thus, in July 2018, they began a partnership with HSOC, and between July and December 2018, LEAD SF Project Management trained HSOC officers in LEAD SF procedures. Under the HSOC protocol, officers who responded to public calls about people who were unhoused could refer individuals to staff who would determine if they qualify for LEAD or are better served by other services (SF Controller, 2019). HSOC was equivalent to a social contact referral without the LEAD paperwork.

The introduction of HSOC to LEAD SF marked an important deviation in model fidelity, and it emerged as a concern for LEAD SF case managers, case manager administration staff, and the LEAD National Support Bureau. Specifically, they expressed concerns that HSOC practices are the antithesis to harm reduction and impact case managers' ability to build relationships with officers and clients. Because in HSOC operations individuals are removed from the streets by bringing them to the LEAD SF Project Management intake office, the warm hand-off component that makes LEAD unique and facilitates rapport-building was lost.

Discussion

LEAD SF experienced four successes and ten challenges. LEAD SF's successes were *collaboration*, *relationship building*, *changing perceptions of police*, and *client successes*. SF partners noted that LEAD's multiagency collaborative nature provided a platform for agencies that typically do not work together (e.g., case managers and police officers) to convene and tackle issues as a team. The collaboration encouraged partners to identify and monitor challenges to ensure program fidelity. The collaboration and relationship building allowed SF partners to better understand one another's roles, leading to positive shifts in perceptions of police officers.

LEAD SF partners referenced the progression of their collaboration as a facilitator in building relationships with partners/clients and connecting clients to services. These

Stakeholder buy-in is also more likely when SLBs feel that they have a degree of autonomy and equal say in program development and implementation (Lipsky, 1980). It is necessary for implementation success as SLBs may feel that they have deeper insights in how to help the target population. Researchers have proposed that programs that grant SLBs some level of authority and inclusivity increase implementation success (Maynard-Moody et al., 1990). When SLBs have a greater understanding of a policy and a sense that they can contribute and their contributions will be used to create or refine a program, they are more willing to adopt it. At the forefront of LEAD are law enforcement officers; LEAD officers must have a certain level of program ownership, which officers in SF, Seattle, and Albany reported they did not have.

Ambiguities regarding program goals, policies, procedures, and staff roles also challenge stakeholder buy-in. And, deviations and changes to program goals and processes, without transparent avenues of communication, lead to confusion, misinterpretation, and challenges in implementing a program with fidelity. LEAD SF faced challenges with policy and procedural ambiguity. Many LEOs noted they were uncertain about LEAD's goals and objectives because of the inconsistent messaging provided in meetings. LEAD SF partners tried to mitigate these ambiguities and encourage buy-in by conducting mini-trainings during LEO roll calls. Still, ambiguity remained, even at later stages of implementation.

These findings have yielded valuable information about SF implementation barriers and facilitators and how these reflect similar situations in other LEAD sites. However, one must consider the unique contexts under which LEAD SF's successes and challenges exist and LEAD SF's mechanisms operate. The historical, political, financial, and service-related contexts of SF both strengthened and weakened LEAD SF's fidelity to LEAD core mechanisms.

The original LEAD model is a pre-booking diversion program. Individuals are diverted from criminal justice system involvement before they have an opportunity to make contact with the system. LEAD SF data indicate that most stakeholders, apart from law enforcement, were committed to the concept of pre-booking diversion. SF's history of criminal justice reform efforts likely facilitated LEAD stakeholder willingness to divert low-level drug offenders and sex workers. Diversion programs in SF are prevalent (e.g., drug courts, neighborhood courts, young adult courts, and community justice centers [San Francisco District Attorney, n.d.-a, n.d.-b]). One LEAD SF Legal/Courts partner stated that LEAD SF was "already kind of a natural progression from all the other types of diversionary type of courts and programs that we were already implementing" (January 11, 2018).

As with SF's history of criminal justice reform, the City is also a pioneering advocate for harm reduction practices, especially regarding drug use and HIV prevention (San Francisco Department of Public Health [SFDPH], 2017). SF's harm reduction practices trace back to 1993, when the city started to fund syringe access programs (SFDPH, 2017). In 2003, SF was one of the first U.S. cities to adopt the use of naloxone to reduce opiate overdoses (SFDPH, 2017). Even the current SF Mayor, London Breed, is hoping to open SF's first safe injection site in efforts to reduce the prevalence of needle waste on SF streets (Knight, 2018). Thus, implementing LEAD with harm

reduction at its core was expected to be relatively straightforward. And many LEAD SF stakeholders, including case managers and public defenders, were comfortable with harm reduction. LEAD SF officers, however, struggled to adopt this philosophy at all stages of implementation. SF's continuous problem with drug markets and the prevalence of open street drug use and homelessness (SFDPH, 2016; Raphelson, 2018; Simon, 2018)—the abundance of diversion programs and harm reduction services—could have led most LEAD SF officers to view LEAD as just another SF program that likely will not have an impact.

The prevalence of diversion practices and harm reduction services also explains why most LEOs felt that LEAD is not applicable in SF and why they do not have a "hammer" when engaging potential LEAD clients. Stated otherwise, LEOs felt that they did not have any sort of "negative reinforcement" or "legal deterrent" to incentivize client participation into the program. LEAD is intended to divert low-level drug offenders and sex workers, but SF's criminal justice reform efforts (see Still, 2013) made reaching this population challenging. Because many felony charges for certain theft and drug possession offenses were reduced to misdemeanors under California's Proposition 47 (California Courts: The Judicial Branch of California, 2018), the typical LEAD-eligible offenses were arguably rarely pursued by SF police and charged by prosecutors. Thus, SF LEOs questioned LEAD's applicability. To reach the target population, LEAD SF expanded its charges to include certain felony thefts, but this further reduced officers' willingness to divert, as they opposed the expansion and have the discretion to refer to LEAD.

SF's political climate regarding the prevalence of those unhoused is probably the most important context that has single-handedly affected LEAD SF's core mechanisms, especially maintaining a housing first framework. In 2017, of the 7,499 individuals who were unhoused (ASR, 2017), 3,146 were sheltered (e.g., shelter program, friend/family house, hotel, foster care, hospital, jail/prison) and 4,353 were unsheltered and living outdoors in the streets, parks, or encampments. And, the City simply does not have enough resources to shelter, much less permanently house, unhoused individuals (Herring, 2019). Consequently, SF's LEAD grant proposal chose not to include a housing first component. And, when prompted, LEAD Project Management Staff reported feeling "helpless" because SF's housing conditions (e.g., housing affordability, housing resources for unhoused individuals) make it nearly impossible to house LEAD clients. And, even when clients were housed, LEAD SF partners faced challenges securing housing long-term. Yet, housing first is one of LEAD's core principles. By providing clients with housing first, they can gain a certain level of stability and best address underlying issues of the criminal behavior.

SF's high rate of unsheltered individuals has caused additional concerns about public health and safety, including issues with the prevalence of human and drug waste on the streets of SF (Raphelson, 2018; Simon, 2018; Zanotti, 2018). An *NPR* news article compared SF street conditions to slums in third world countries, arguing that SF streets are worse than those in the slums of Kenya, Brazil, and India (Raphelson, 2018). SF citizen complaints about open drug use on the streets, drug paraphernalia, and human waste are at their highest (Simon, 2018). Even SF Mayor Breed noted that SF streets

are in some of the worst conditions to date and prompted providers serving that population to educate them on the value of cleaning up after themselves (Shaban et al., 2018). This led to the creation of HSOC, which was budgeted approximately $4.0 million dollars for 2 years (Mayor's Office of Public Policy and Finance, 2019).

LEAD SF's collaboration with HSOC led to the creation of a new referral avenue for LEAD, which greatly impacted LEAD's diversion protocol. Typically, LEAD officers, throughout their shift, determine who is eligible for a social contact or pre-booking referral. Now, LEOs simply conducting homeless "sweeps" on the streets were bringing individuals as a potential LEAD referrals, but the intake staff were determining who was eligible. This introduction of HSOC corroded the LEAD SF model. And, the LEAD National Support Bureau worked with LEAD SF to identify a solution (LEAD National Bureau, personal communication, June 3, 2019). Although the Bureau posits that LEAD is adaptable, certain core principles and processes are indispensable, and sites should exercise caution when making significant changes and adaptations to the LEAD model. When LEAD no longer encompasses core LEAD mechanisms—theoretical frameworks, objectives goals, processes—then, the program is not LEAD.

As of January 2021, LEAD SF was discontinued in the City and County of San Francisco. Ultimately, LEAD SF deviated from the core components of what made LEAD successful in Seattle and was unable to reach a key goal of reducing the city's jail population. Even so, LEAD SF brought many positives elements, not only to the clients it served (see also Perrone et al., in press) but also to the LEAD SF partners. Through LEAD SF, new relationships were built. As per a December 2020 interview with Project Management, law enforcement continues to contact LEAD SF partnering agencies—such as the Department of Public Health—when they have concerns about the well-being of those they meet on the street. In fact, officer concerns about individuals led to the creation of a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) that operates much like the LEAD OW. The team comprises many of the original LEAD SF partners, including law enforcement, and meets monthly to identify and discuss best ways to support high acuity individuals. Still, LEAD SF Project Management stressed that otherwise, "the LEAD model was not all that successful in San Francisco" (December 1, 2020). LEAD SF's primary goal, "basically, reducing the jail population, did not happen" (Project Management, December 1, 2020).

Furthermore, the political landscape of San Francisco, positioned within the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, has sought the City and County of San Francisco to remove SFPD from responding to certain 911 calls. Project Management stated, "in just response to like George Floyd, and in a lot of the protests and the movement around that, the mayor was also focused on like, 'we need police not to be responding to these situations. . .'"(December 1, 2020). As a result, the LEAD SF partners have decided to discontinue their LEAD program.

This discussion of LEAD SF's process evaluation makes apparent Pawson and Tilley's (1997) argument that program mechanisms (e.g., LEAD diversion, harm reduction, ICM, and housing first) interact with their contexts and impact implementation and outcomes. San Francisco's political state positively and negatively impacted

LEAD, and ultimately led to a compromise in fidelity and the end of LEAD SF. Thus, LEAD SF's successful outcomes cannot be attributed to the original LEAD Seattle model because LEAD SF was *not* LEAD. And, knowing this is important for LEAD replication purposes. The identification of these mechanism–context relationships lets other sites know that LEAD SF's outcomes are site-specific—other sites will likely not have the same (positive or negative) outcomes unless the conditions under which they implement LEAD echo those in SF.

Conclusion

Most criminal justice program evaluation studies assess program effectiveness using impact and outcomes evaluations (JRSA, 2014; Miller & Miller, 2015; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Despite the value of this research, it falls short of identifying the role of program implementation on experienced outcomes. Using LEAD SF as an example, this study triangulated various data, including stakeholder focus groups and policy and procedure documents, to identify implementation facilitators and barriers and the contexts that produced them.

LEAD SF made significant progress in strengthening partnership collaboration between city and community-based services to meet LEAD participants' needs, and it progressed the health and housing status of some LEAD participants. However, LEAD SF's barriers and challenges hindered LEAD SF implementation.

LEAD SF struggled building and maintaining meaningful police relationships, had a shortage of harm reduction trainings specifically tailored to police officers, and could not maintain a housing first framework. LEAD SF partners stayed abreast of these challenges by documenting, discussing, and devising possible solutions, including consulting with the LEAD National Support Bureau as needed, but LEAD SF was strained. Furthermore, LEAD SF's model significantly deviated from LEAD Seattle's model in two ways: LEAD SF had an additional layer in the referral process where clients had to meet with DPH before enrolling in LEAD, and fidelity was compromised by the partnership with SF's HSOC. As a result, LEAD SF was no longer a true pre-booking diversion or LEAD and dissolved.

Based on these findings, the following conclusions can be drawn about the conditions under which LEAD is likely to operate successfully: (a) committed stakeholders, especially law enforcement; (b) a certain level of autonomy and equal voice in program development; (c) clear lines of communication regarding goals, policies, and processes; (d) thorough and sufficient training in principles and procedures, especially officer-tailored and harm reduction trainings; (e) appropriate eligible crimes; (f) political support; and (g) financial support, especially for housing, to maintain a housing first framework.

LEAD now no longer operates in San Francisco but is operational in 55 sites nationwide. Researchers evaluating LEAD programs across the U.S. should consult with LEAD stakeholders, partners, and, most importantly, staff implementing the program (SLBs). SLBs hold key insight into how the program operates in reality as opposed to in theory. Using LEAD as an example, (a) more process evaluations of

criminal justice policies and programs, in general, are needed, and (b) other sites currently operating LEAD should consider conducting a process evaluation to assess implementation and ensure program fidelity.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Notes

1. Notably, we also evaluated the LEAD Los Angeles County (LAC) program. While LEAD LAC has the same differences in felony and misdemeanor charges to LEAD Seattle, they did not expand their charges.
2. For more information on California Proposition 47, see https://www.courts.ca.gov/prop47.htm
3. Generally, felonies are considered serious offenses (e.g., murder, rape, burglary) with prison sentences of more than 1 year. Misdemeanors include less serious offenses (e.g., petty theft, traffic offenses) with jail sentences of 1 year or less. Importantly, we also evaluated the LEAD Los Angeles County (LAC) program (also in California), and Prop 47 did not affect the program as it did LEAD SF. This further demonstrates the value of context.

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