The system utilizes sophisticated statistical methods, yet the results are transparent and easy to comprehend. After constructing the benchmark for each officer, RAND Benchmark

- displays the features of the officer's cases and the features of the benchmark cases, to assure stakeholders that the benchmark comparison is fair
- provides a direct comparison between the officer's performance and the same performance measure computed for the officer's benchmark group.

**Existing Clients**

RAND Benchmark has been deployed at two major metropolitan U.S. police departments: Cincinnati and New York City. Additional information about these engagements is available in *Analysis of Racial Disparities in the New York Police Department’s Stop, Question, and Frisk Practices (TR-534-NYCPF, 2007)* and *Cincinnati Police Department Traffic Stops: Applying RAND’s Framework to Analyze Racial Disparities (MG-914-CC, 2009)*, both by Greg Ridgeway:

- [www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR534.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR534.html)
- [www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG914.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG914.html)

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**About the RAND Corporation**

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis. RAND focuses on the issues that matter most, such as health, education, national security, international affairs, law and business, and the environment. With a research staff consisting of some of the world’s preeminent minds, RAND has been expanding the boundaries of human knowledge for more than 60 years. Through its dedication to high-quality and objective research and analysis and with sophisticated analytical tools developed over many years, RAND engages clients to create knowledge, insight, information, options, and solutions that will be both effective and enduring.
RAND Benchmark is a software application developed by the RAND Corporation that enables police departments to fairly and accurately evaluate and monitor officer performance. By benchmarking each officer against a uniquely chosen set of other officers operating under similar conditions, RAND Benchmark produces evaluations that are more reliable than approaches commonly used by police departments today. RAND Benchmark is a powerful tool that enables departments to evaluate officer performance, track low and high performers, identify outliers in particular dimensions of performance, and mitigate legal risk.

Benefits of RAND Benchmark

- benchmark individual officers against a customized peer group, tailored to ensure that proper comparisons are made
- rapidly identify police officers who underperform or outperform their peers
- implement solutions to address problem situations and improve overall team performance
- protect against legal risk and loss of public trust associated with improper police actions.

Officer Underperformance Puts Police Departments at Risk

Whether warranted or not, police departments today face significant exposure to litigation and loss of public trust. This may include charges that officers are underperforming, including generating a large number of complaints, overstop ping nonwhite drivers, or using excessive force. These incidents erode the public’s confidence in the integrity of the police force, and numerous departments have faced expensive civil litigation as a result of high-profile incidents. In this environment, departments need to be proactive in early identification of problem patterns.

Current Performance Evaluation and Monitoring Systems Are Lacking

Many U.S. police departments have adopted performance evaluation and “early-warning” systems that attempt to benchmark officers against one another and identify potential problems. Those departments involved in litigation with the U.S. Justice Department have almost always been required to implement such a system as part of any settlement.

One common approach is to classify officers into peer groups and then compare officer performance with others in their group. If the officer exceeds certain thresholds compared with the peer group, the system will flag the officer for review. However, these peer-group classifications are often imprecise and do not take into account the different environments in which officers work—for instance, lumping officers working the “tough” side of the neighborhood together with those working the easier side. In one metropolitan department, an estimated 16 percent of the action items generated occurred after only a single complaint or a single use-of-force incident, suggesting a high risk of incorrectly flagging officers.

The utility and acceptance of a benchmarking system depends on its ability to compare each officer with a suitable set of peers—ones who work at the same times, in the same places, and in the same contexts.

The RAND Benchmark Advantage

RAND Benchmark’s advantage comes from creating a customized benchmark for each officer. Using state-of-the-art techniques, RAND Benchmark selects a unique set of comparison cases among other officers operating under similar conditions, so that they collectively match the features and conditions of the officer’s cases.

For example, suppose that a department wishes to evaluate some characteristic of an officer’s patrol stops. To construct a proper benchmark, stops made by other officers are selected so that they collectively match the features of stops made by the officer. If 30 percent of the officer’s stops occur between midnight and 1:00 a.m., so will the stops in the officer’s benchmark. The chosen set of benchmark cases is different for every officer so that each officer is fairly compared with his or her peers and every performance benchmark is as accurate as possible.