



### **B33 Building a New Crime Laboratory Facility With Strategic Partnerships**

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The goal of this presentation is to provide new insights how different agencies can work together for the benefit of all. It is an example of the saying: the sum of the parts is greater than the individual components.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by demonstrating how even in difficult economic times, major funds to construct a new lab can be obtained. They will also learn how partnering with neighboring agencies can create a new and vital forensic science service delivery system.

Finding ways to finance a new crime laboratory is challenging even in the best of circumstances. When budgets are tight, finding sources of funding can become a near impossibility. This presentation describes a novel way this problem was solved in Los Angeles through strategic partnerships and political acumen.

By the early 1990s, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) faced chronic overcrowding in the laboratory along with a classic case of so-called "sick building syndrome." When LASD moved into the current facility in the mid 1970s, the lab was only supposed to be there for a couple of years while funding would be found for a new facility. Twenty five years later, the facility was no longer doing the job for us. Major systems were failing and the staff was becoming increasingly unhappy with crowded working conditions.

Inadequate work space is an insidious problem. It's very easy to get used to inadequate workspace and accept that reality as the way things are meant to be. However, productivity and employee morale begins to suffer. Often, by the time laboratory management recognizes the need to act; overcrowding goes from being a small problem into a serious issue.

LASD took these problems to the county's Board of Supervisors in 1994 but because of the costs associated with building a new facility, a decision was made to wait for better economic times. Later, LASD was able to fund a needs assessment by engaging a local architectural firm which brought in considerable crime laboratory experience. That study became the basis of the future project. Through that process, the lab learned an important lesson: building crime labs is as much a political issue as a public safety issue. LASD also learned that selling the idea for a new lab was the key. The lab had to learn how to market!

Los Angeles is home to two large metropolitan crime laboratories operated by the LAPD and the LASD. As it turned out, both needed new facilities and both were having problems finding funds. The key to the project was capturing the interest of local political leaders who recognized the unique collaboration forged as a strategic partnership between the LASD and LAPD crime labs, a local university offering a MS degree in Criminalistics – California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA), the CA DOJ California Criminalists Institute and a new created California Forensic Science Institute at CSULA.

The vision that was presented was an extraordinary partnership between the city and county of Los Angeles, and the State of California. That vision was articulated by the sheriff who was able to persuade the state to fund the project at nearly \$100M. The project is under construction and occupancy is expected in early 2007.

**Building a New Crime Lab, Funding Strategies for Lab Construction, Forensic Synergy**