

# OPD PROPERTY AND EVIDENCE

Exit Conference Date: December 18, 2024

Release Date: January 27, 2025

Report No. 25-01

## City of Orlando Office of Audit Services and Management Support

George J. McGowan, CPA  
Director

Co-source Partner  
RSM



## MEMORANDUM OF TRANSMITTAL



**To:** Lovetta Quinn-Henry, Police Deputy Chief

**From:** George J. McGowan, CPA  
Director, Office of Audit Services and Management Support

**Dates:** Exit Conference: December 18, 2024  
Release: January 27, 2025

**Subject:** OPD Property and Evidence (Report No. 25-01)

The Office of Audit Services and Management Support, with major assistance from our co- source partner RSM, performed a review of OPD Property and Evidence. You requested that the engagement review the property and evidence section and its operations, including its facilities, processes, and workflow. We interviewed staff and performed benchmarking against agencies which were identified as “peers.” We offer several point for consideration on the topics of: staffing and compensation, enhanced reporting, alternative automation solutions, policies and procedures, staff training, and regular audits.

This work does not rise to the level of an audit and is considered an advisory consulting engagement under the internal auditing standards. All information included in this report is offered for consideration by City management and has been reviewed with the property and evidence management and staff who have concurred with the observations and any associated recommendations for consideration.

We will perform a follow-up review of this report after twelve months to determine whether you have addressed our observations.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies extended by the staff of the Orlando Police Department consulted during this review.

GJM

C:

The Honorable Buddy Dyer, Mayor  
Jody Litchford, Deputy City Attorney  
F.J. Flynn, Chief Administrative Officer  
Eric Smith, Police Chief  
Claudio Rosado Jr., Police Support Services Manager  
Marcus J. Davila, Police Evidence Supervisor



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## The City of Orlando, Florida OPD Property and Evidence Review

December 6, 2024

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# TRANSMITTAL LETTER

December 6, 2024

George McGowan  
City of Orlando  
400 South Orange Ave.  
Orlando, FL 32801

Pursuant to our approved Statement of Work dated June 26, 2024, with the City of Orlando (“City”) and our Master Services Agreement dated January 1, 2021, we hereby present our report on Property and Evidence Review. We will present this report to Management and the Director of Audit Services and Management Support. Our report is organized in the following sections:

Background	This provides an overview of the property and evidence process, including the roles and responsibilities of department staff, and key systems used.
Benchmarking Data	This section provides detail of the comparative analysis performed between the City of Orlando and chosen agencies.
Additional Feedback	This section includes opportunities for improvement based on our interviews and discussions with key personnel within the Property and Evidence Department, as well as our detailed testing.
Points for Consideration	This section includes a summary of our recommendations based on our benchmarking, data analysis, and detailed testing.
Appendix	In the appendix, we have included a process flow chart depicting the property and evidence workflow.

We would like to thank the staff and all those involved in assisting us with this engagement.

Respectfully Submitted,

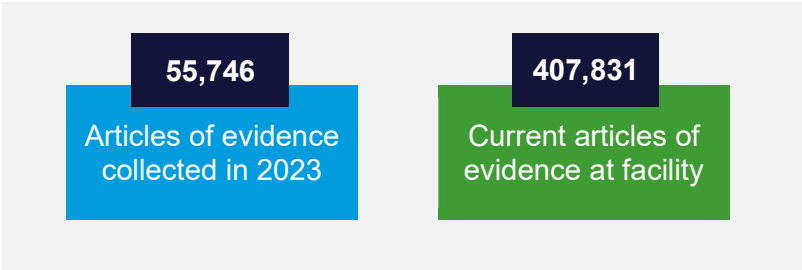
*RSM US LLP*

RSM US LLP

# BACKGROUND

## Overview

The City of Orlando’s Property and Evidence (“P&E”) Department is responsible for the safekeeping and proper disposition of all property and evidence seized by the Orlando Police Department (“OPD”). Key activities include proper identification and recording of seized property, safekeeping and storage, tracking changes in custody, and safe and timely disposal of evidence. Physical items may be seized during an arrest (i.e., firearms, currency), collected at the site of the crime (i.e., blood samples, car bumpers), or turned in by citizens or partner organizations (i.e., knives seized at the airport, lost phones and wallets, etc.). The type of item and the reason for OPD collection may impact where the item will be stored, who may access the item, and when it may ultimately be disposed.



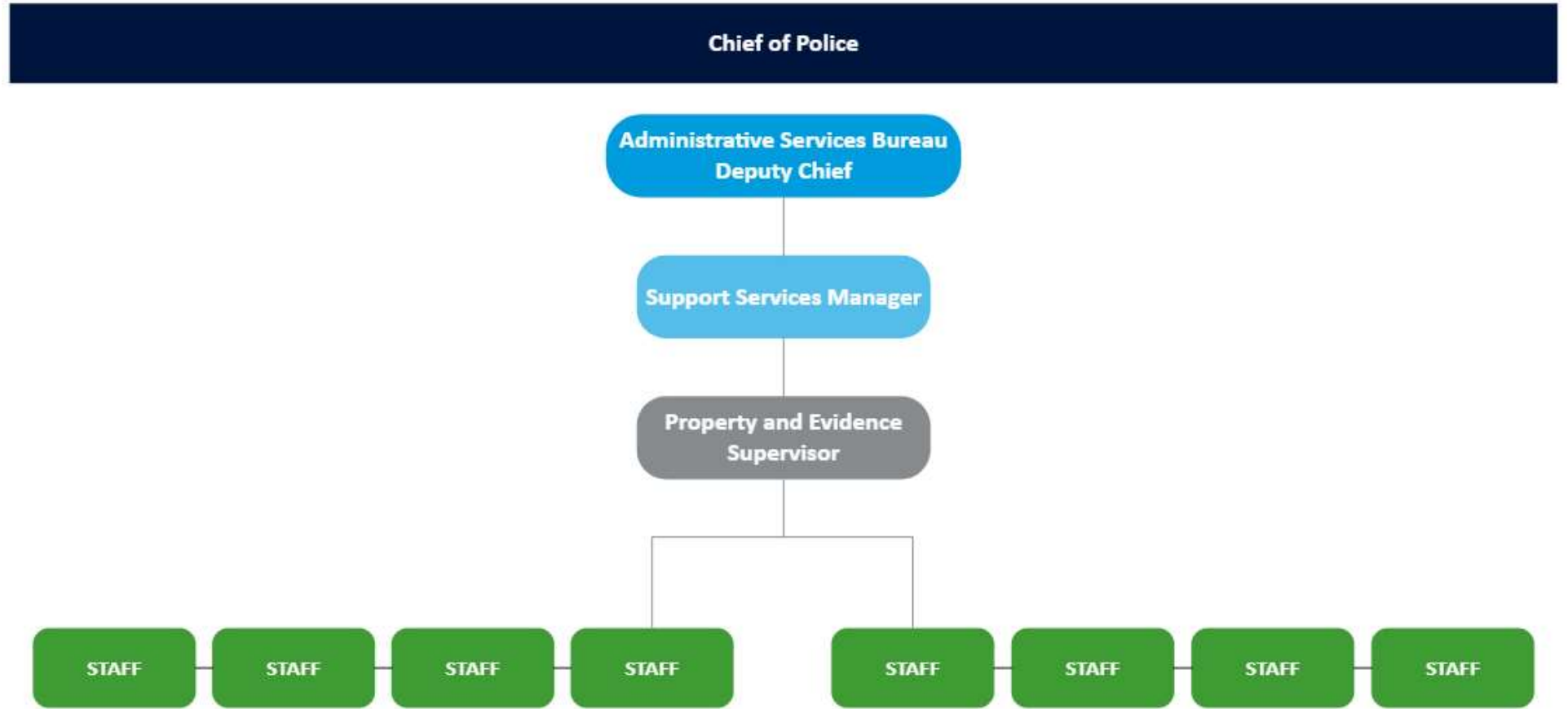
City of Orlando Property and Evidence facility, located at 185 George DeSalvia Way

Storage Size	28,540 square feet
Property and Evidence Types	
Drugs	Controlled substances and paraphernalia containing drug residue.
Firearms	Any weapon designed to, or capable of being made to, propel a projective by explosive action.
Currency	All currency (whether genuine or counterfeit). Currency must be parted from other property and entered separately, regardless of the amount.
Personal Property	Property not included in the above categories and whose owner is known. These items may be released to the owner.
Evidence	Property that will or has the potential to be needed for the prosecution of a criminal case.
Found Property	Property that is not included in any of the above categories.

BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

Organizational Structure

As of October 2024, OPD is comprised of 1,023 sworn officers and 307 professional staff. The Chief of Police is responsible for overseeing all departments, including P&E, which is part of the Support Services Division within the Administrative Services Bureau. Support Services includes seven (7) departments, including P&E, which is comprised of nine (9) employees, including eight (8) P&E staff, and one (1) P&E supervisor.





## BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

### Roles and Responsibilities

**P&E Staff:** Among the eight (8) staff members, tasks are assigned by the type of duties performed; evidence-specific duties, property-specific duties, or a combination of both. In addition, all staff share courier responsibilities. The assignments for each category are outlined below:

- **Evidence Staff:** Key tasks include storing, receiving, and purging property coded as evidence. These employees directly handle firearms, drugs, and hazardous materials, and may process new property within 24 hours of receipt. They are responsible for reviewing property data entered by officers in the system of record upon initial property intake. Evidence staff are charged with locating available space within the warehouse, tracking storage locations, and handling stolen/recovered firearm requests. Other responsibilities include reviewing requests from the public to recover personal firearms, researching case closures, collaborating with OPD detectives and other agencies, and mailing firearms back to the appropriate agency. There are currently three (3) employees assigned to evidence duties, who each have a backlog of approximately 20 firearm files.
- **Property/Found Property Staff:** These individuals are responsible for communicating with the public, internal City agencies, external law enforcement and legal personnel. They must process constituent requests to claim and retrieve property, conduct background checks on owners requesting firearms, process requests to check-out evidence for court-related purposes, and answer questions and concerns from the public. They are also responsible for receiving, storing, and purging all personal/found property, reviewing property data entered by officers in LERMS upon initial intake, locating available space within the Personal/Found property room, tracking storage locations, receiving items left in the lockers/storage closets after hours (including evidence), and physically moving property. This team may also serve as a witness for currency release requests from owners and is responsible for maintaining evidence 'check-out' logs and owner notification logs. Currently, five (5) employees share these responsibilities, who each have a backlog of approximately 200 firearm files.
- **Courier:** All employees rotate in the courier position, which includes retrieving evidence from the Community Policing Offices and the Airport. Employees will also transport evidence to and from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement ("FDLE"), transport weapons for destruction to the Orange County Sheriff's Office ("OCISO"), and transport drugs for destruction to the contracted disposal authority. All employees are also on an on-call rotation schedule, requiring them to respond to situations such as a triggered burglary alarm, full lockers/storage closets, or the submission of a large case.

**P&E Supervisor:** The Supervisor acts as the custodian of all property, enforcing the chain of command, approving the release and destruction of evidence in LERMS, and coordinating with OCISO for firearm purging. They also handle all money deposits for the Legal department and are on-call for the biohazard room.

### Key Systems and Applications

To manage the property and evidence process, the department utilizes the Law Enforcement Records Management System ("LERMS"). Property is categorized by type and is assigned a case and item number. Additional data points, like incident date, chain of custody, storage location, disposal approval, and disposal date, are also recorded. Before implementing LERMS in 2016, the department used AS400 to manage property and evidence. In 2019, AS400 was retired, and all information was transferred to LERMS. Items that were disposed of, released to owners, or had release authority (but have not yet been purged) through the AS400 system were not transferred; only active property and evidence were moved to the current system.

### Property and Evidence Workflow

Each property type adheres to its own intake, storage, return, and disposal procedure, which is managed by the evidence staff and supervisor within the P&E Department. Department policy, City Ordinance, State statutes, and federal laws dictate each of the actions taken, which are described below.

#### Evidence Intake

Each article of evidence submitted to the P&E Department must be accompanied by a Quick Property Receipt. The P&E staff receiving the evidence must verify that all relevant details, such as the case number, item number, and property description, are accurately listed on the receipt, entered into LERMS, and correspond to the physical item. If any discrepancies exist between the physical item and the information recorded, the staff works with officers to resolve. The item is then categorized into one of the six (6) property classes (refer to the **Overview** section). Once this process is complete, the P&E staff must sign the physical Quick Property Receipt in preparation for the next step.



## BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

### Property and Evidence Workflow (Continued)

#### Evidence Storage

The P&E staff responsible for storing evidence must first confirm the item matches the Quick Property Receipt; each item on the receipt should match the corresponding item(s) listed on the package(s). Once the Quick Property Receipt is verified, the P&E staff must locate a space within the warehouse to store the item. Storage locations are identified based on available space for new items or by checking areas where items have been stored for a prolonged period of time to determine if they are ready for purging according to evidence retention timelines and case closure status. The staff records open and occupied spots on a paper sheet when locating space to process and store incoming items. The storage location is then recorded on both the Quick Property Receipt and in LERMS. A barcode label is printed and affixed to the package, and the number of packages submitted is noted on the receipt. The P&E staff responsible for storing the P/E must initial the Quick Property Receipt before submitting it to another P&E staff for a peer review. The Quick Property Receipt is then scanned and uploaded to the Department hard drive.

Specific storage procedures may vary, depending on the P/E type. For example, all drugs are stored in the Drug Room. The quantity and type of substance must be marked on the package, and the weight of the package must be documented in LERMS. Firearms must be confirmed to be cleared and unloaded, and the serial number must be recorded in LERMS.

#### Evidence Check-Out

Evidence may be checked out by OPD employees, including officers and crime scene investigators, for purposes including court proceedings, investigations, or forensic analysis. Each package checked out will have a Chain of Custody label, which must be completed by the individual opening the package. When evidence is checked out, the P&E staff must record the property or evidence on the Checked-Out Evidence Log Sheet, as well as in LERMS. Upon return, the items will be checked back in through LERMS.

#### Property Return

When it is determined that property unrelated to a court case can be returned, the P&E staff or officer may release it to the rightful owner. The Department may send a formal notification to the owner if their contact information (such as address or phone number) is available. When any property is confiscated, the owner is directed to visit the P&E Department to collect their items. Alternatively, property can be returned to the owner if they visit during the Department's open hours (Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM). The owner is then required to provide two signatures: one electronically in LERMS and another on a paper sheet. In some cases, an officer may opt to release the property in person. In these situations, the item is temporarily checked out to the officer in LERMS, and the P&E Department issues a "Release Form" containing the case number, item number, and owner's name. The officer and owner sign this form, and the officer subsequently returns it to the Department. The Department then updates the chain of custody and uploads the Release Form in LERMS. Regardless of the release method, owners picking up property must present a valid photo ID, which is scanned and attached to the property record in LERMS.

Additional procedures may be required for each evidence type. For instance, releasing any currency typically requires two (2) Personal/Found Property staff members. One acts as a witness while the other opens the package to verify that the amount matches what is written on the package.

Similarly, before a firearm may be released, a Criminal History check of the owner is conducted, the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network results must be obtained, and the serial number is verified in the Florida and National Crime Information Center databases to determine whether the firearm may have been stolen. Search results are forwarded to the P&E supervisor for review and approval. Documentation that each of these actions has been performed is saved in a file drawer, and the P&E supervisor approves the release. LERMS is updated to record the owner's request to retrieve, and a "Release of Liability" form is completed by the P&E staff on the day of release. According to the Florida State Statute 790.08, any weapons that were not either seized as evidence or seized and subject to forfeiture must be returned upon request to the person within 30 days after such request is made<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Per FSS, "Any weapons, electric weapons or devices, or arms that are taken from a person under paragraph (a) that are not either seized as evidence or seized and subject to forfeiture under ss. 932.701–932.7062 must be returned upon request to the person from whom the weapons, electric weapons or devices, or arms were taken within 30 days after such request is made..."

## BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

### Property and Evidence Workflow (Continued)

#### Evidence Disposal

P&E staff utilize the State Attorney's Office Case Management System, as well as the Comprehensive Case Information System to check the status of a case. When it is determined that evidence is no longer needed as part of a court-related case, the P&E staff will contact the officer to obtain approval for the destruction of the item. Once it is confirmed that the case is closed, with no pending cases or co-defendants, the assigned officer will be notified of the court order. If the officer has no objections, they will email the P&E Department to authorize the release. Upon receiving email confirmation from Legal or the assigned officer authorizing the disposal of evidence, the P&E staff will save the email and upload it to the 'Documents' tab in LERMS.

When the case associated with an article of evidence has been closed, State Statute defines the amount of time it must be retained. After the required period has passed, the P&E supervisor must confirm that release authorizations have been obtained by Legal and/or the assigned OPD officer. Once confirmed, the P&E supervisor updates LERMS to mark the item as "Supervisor Approved Purged."

Evidence Type	Purge Timeline <sup>3</sup>
State misdemeanor or Orlando City Code violation	90 days
Found/abandoned property	90 days
3rd-degree felony and/or narcotic violations	Up to 3 years
Physical evidence regarding sexual offenses	75 years
Physical evidence regarding homicides	100 years

Additional procedures apply to each type of evidence. For instance, drug destruction requires staff to access LERMS and retrieve a list of case numbers associated with the drug(s). A second employee must then perform a 100% verification of the inventory. The drugs are then placed in boxes with their original packaging, and a list of associated case numbers is affixed to the top of each box. The Inspection Unit responds to Property and Evidence to inspect the boxes, who reviews 10% of the drug inventory before sealing the boxes for incineration. The P&E supervisor coordinates the destruction of the drugs at a local incinerator, preparing a list of items scheduled for destruction and submitting it to Legal for preliminary approval. Once approved, the list is forwarded to a Criminal Court Judge in the Orange County Court System for final authorization. Following judicial approval, the drugs are transported to the burn site for destruction.

The P&E supervisor, the staff member responsible for purging the drugs, and two police escorts are required to accompany the drugs to the burn site and witness their destruction. After the incineration, the witnessing officers sign an affidavit, which is then notarized. The P&E supervisor completes a "Return Form," which is also signed and notarized. Following the completion of the burn, all drug entries are signed off in LERMS to confirm their destruction.

For a detailed breakdown of each workflow item, refer to **Appendix A**.



<sup>3</sup> Information is provided by Management and is unaudited. Timelines can vary based on case disposition and confirmation that the evidence is no longer needed for trial or codefendant trial and no appeals are pending.

## BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

### Benchmarked Agencies

Benchmarking data was obtained primarily through questionnaire forms. Through collaboration with the City, we identified ten (10) police agencies to include in our benchmarking efforts. Benchmarked agencies were selected based on numerous quantitative and qualitative factors, including, but not limited to, the number of sworn officers, constituents served, agency size, etc. The following entities were contacted regarding their operations:

#### **Agency Outreach:**

1. Brevard County Sheriff Department, Florida
2. Duval County Sheriff Department, Florida
3. Hillsborough County Sheriff Department, Florida
4. Orange County Sheriff Department, Florida
5. Palm Beach County Sheriff Department, Florida
6. Pinellas County Sheriff Department, Florida
7. Savannah Police Department, Georgia
8. Seminole County Sheriff Department, Florida
9. St. Petersburg Police Department, Florida
10. Tampa Police Department, Florida

Each of the agencies listed above manages its own process for property and evidence. Organizational structure, pay, facility size, technology, and disposal procedures differed from each agency. Detailed comparative information can be found in the pages that follow.


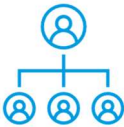




# BENCHMARKING DATA

## Overview

The objective of our benchmarking was to conduct a comparative analysis of facility space and usage, evidence documentation, and chain of custody workflows related to evidence management within the City of Orlando and the selected benchmarked agencies, to identify areas for improvement and gain efficiencies. Benchmark questions included, but were not limited to the following:

- Where does the Property and Evidence team sit within your organization?
- How many full-time equivalent (FTE) workers do you currently have in your P&E team?
- What are the pay ranges for P&E staff and supervisors?
- Is hazard pay utilized in P&E?
- What software system(s) are you currently utilizing to manage P&E?
- How often are laboratory drop-offs made?
- Is the destruction of firearms performed onsite or offsite?
- Approximately how much time (in minutes) does it take to travel to the drug-burning location from the P&E facility?
- What hours are the P&E facility open to the public for walk-ins?
- Approximately how many articles of evidence were received by P&E in 2023?
- Do you have multiple P&E facilities?



 <p>On average, benchmarked entities have <b>16 FTEs</b> (full-time equivalent) dedicated to P&amp;E, including <b>2.4</b> supervisors.</p>	 <p>On average, <b>53,625</b> articles of evidence were collected in 2023.</p>
 <p>Benchmarked agencies utilized <b>8</b> different systems to manage property and evidence.</p>	 <p><b>63%</b> of agencies maintain multiple P&amp;E facilities.</p>
 <p><b>88%</b> of benchmarked agencies utilize hazard pay.</p>	 <p>On average, it takes respondents <b>61</b> minutes to travel to drug burning locations from the main P&amp;E facility.</p>

## BENCHMARKING DATA (CONTINUED)

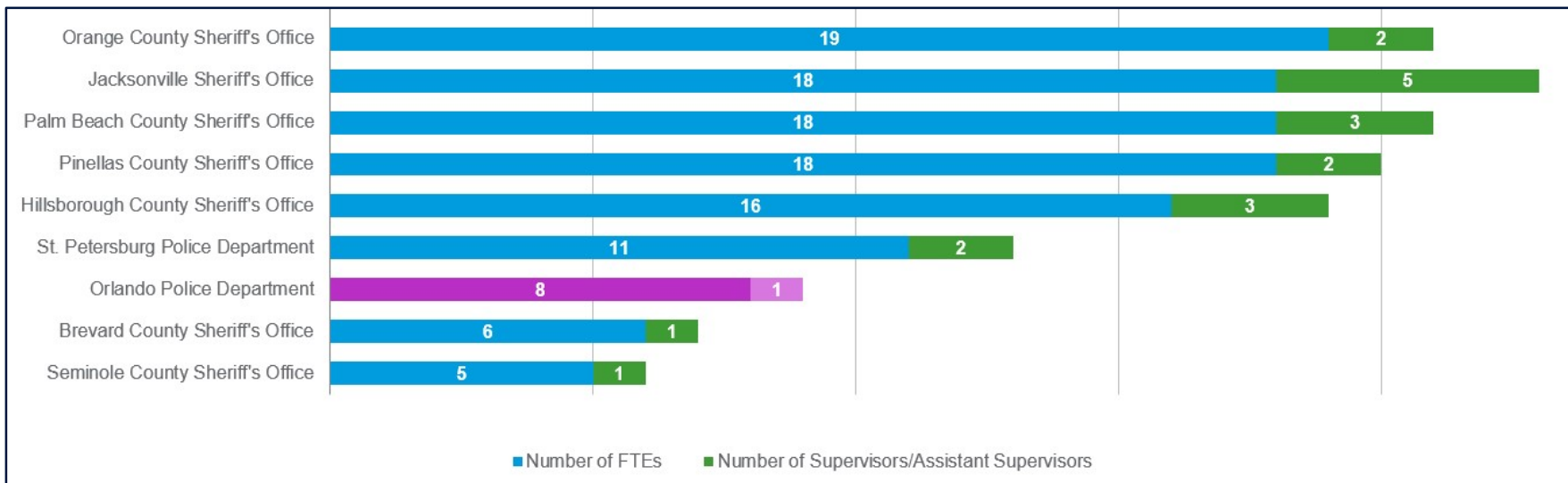
### Detailed Results

The following pages list the questions asked to each of the benchmarked agencies and the answers provided.

**Where does the Property and Evidence team sit within your organization (under what department or division)?**

Orlando Police Department	Support Service Division
Brevard County Sheriff's Office	Administrative Services
Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office	Forensic Services and Support Division
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office	Police Services
Orange County Sheriff's Office	Criminal Investigations Division
Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office	Technical Services
Pinellas County Sheriff's Office	Support Services Bureau
Seminole County Sheriff's Office	Forensic Laboratory Services Division
St. Petersburg Police Department	Investigative Services Division

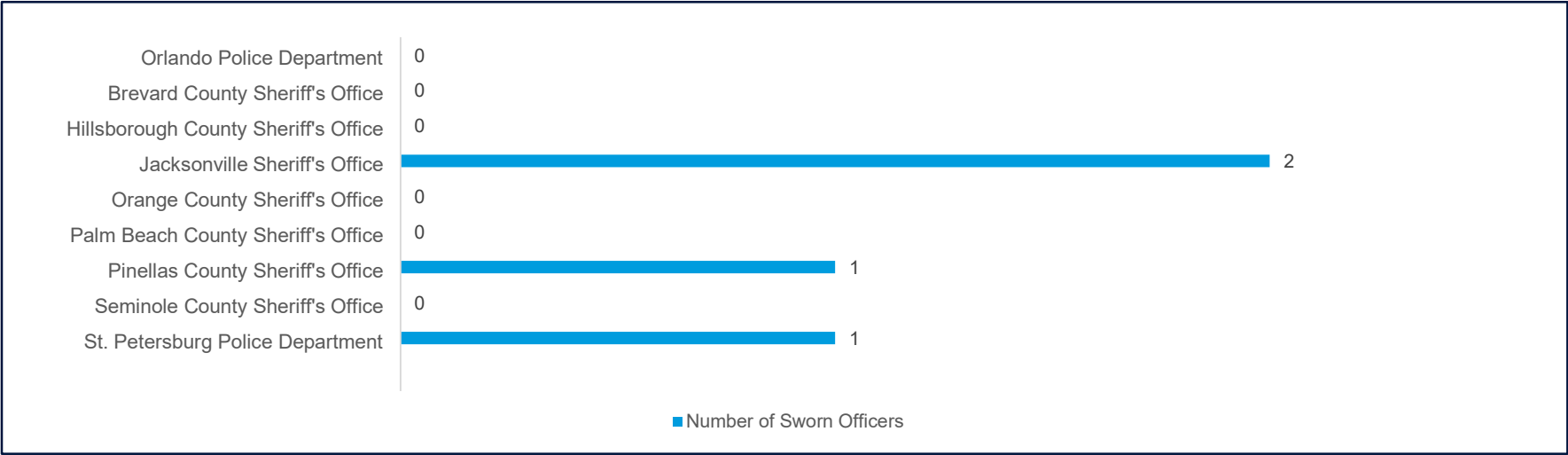
**How many full-time equivalent (FTE) workers do you currently have on your P&E team? How many supervisors (and assistant supervisors) do you currently have on your P&E team?**



BENCHMARKING DATA (CONTINUED)

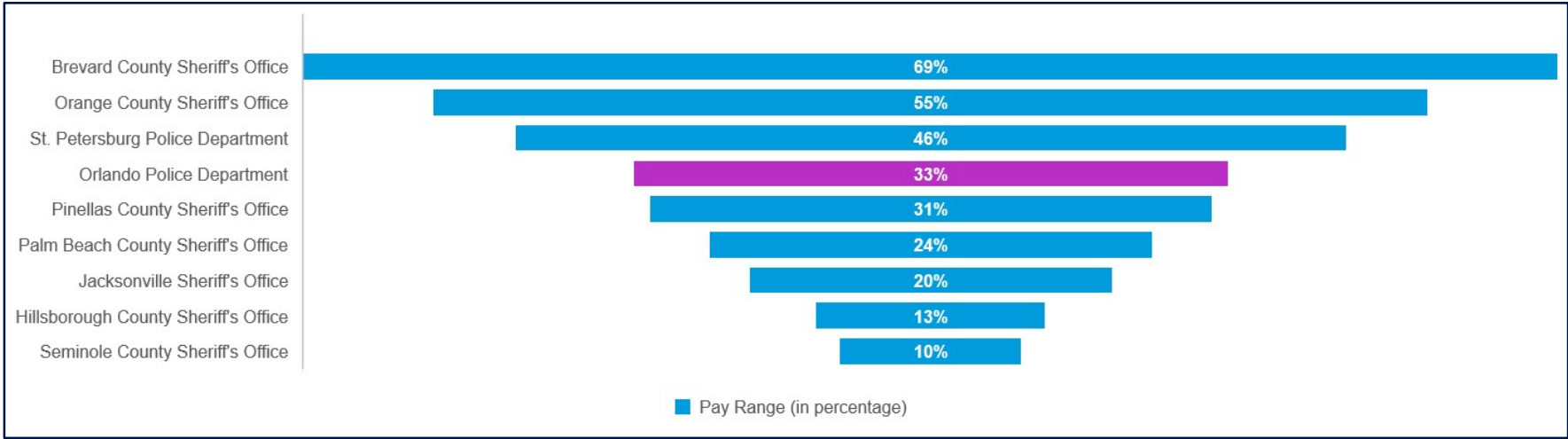
Detailed Results (Continued)

How many sworn officers (if any) do you currently have on your P&E team?



For additional detail related to staffing, refer to page 18.

What is the pay range between staff and supervisors?



## BENCHMARKING DATA (CONTINUED)

### Detailed Results (Continued)

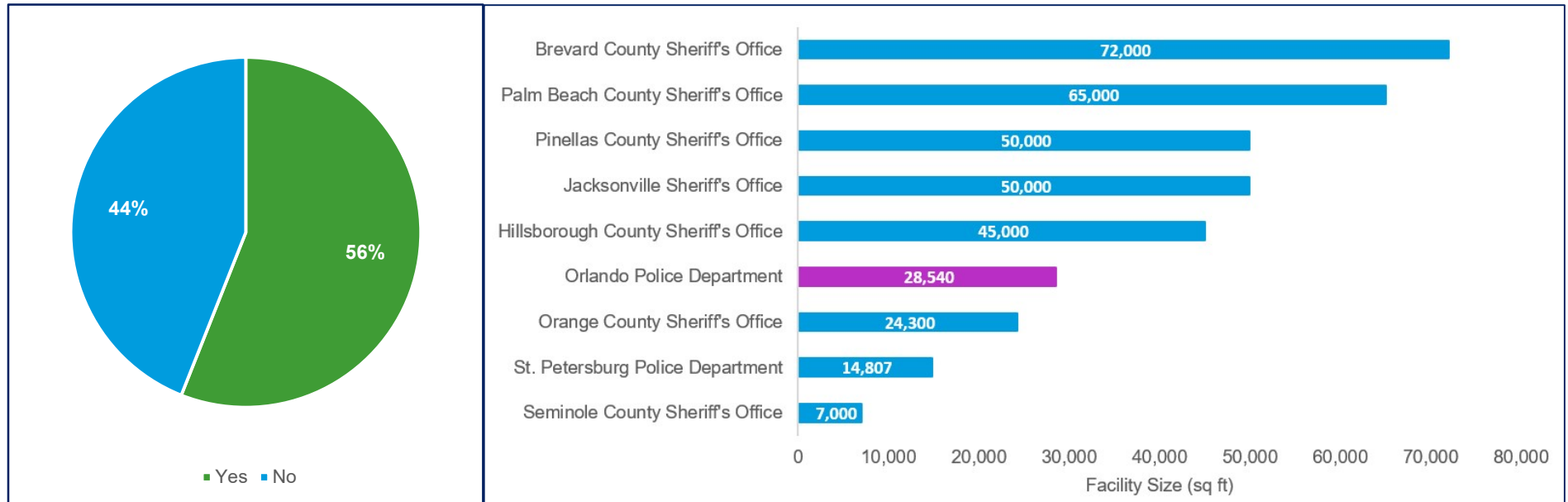
#### Is hazard pay utilized in P&E?

Orlando Police Department	No
Brevard County Sheriff's Office	Yes <sup>1</sup>
Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office	Yes
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office	No
Orange County Sheriff's Office	Yes
Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office	Yes
Pinellas County Sheriff's Office	Yes
Seminole County Sheriff's Office	Yes
St. Petersburg Police Department	Yes

<sup>1</sup> Increased retirement multiplier and property and evidence certification-based incentive pay are given to P&E employees.

#### Do you have multiple P&E facilities?

#### What is the total size of your P&E facility/facilities?

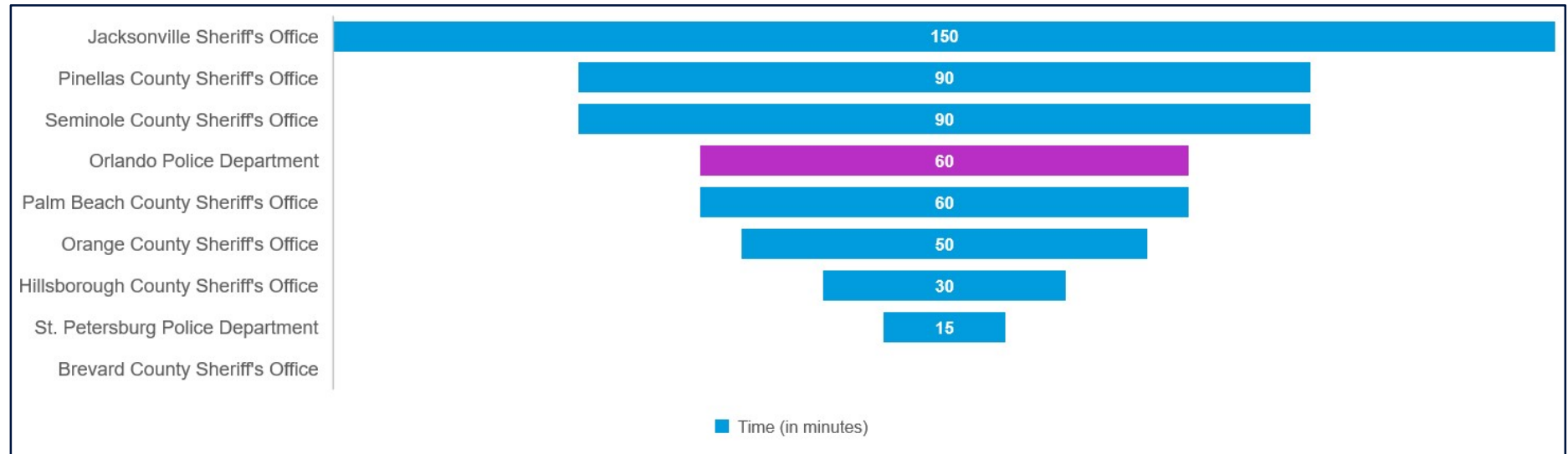




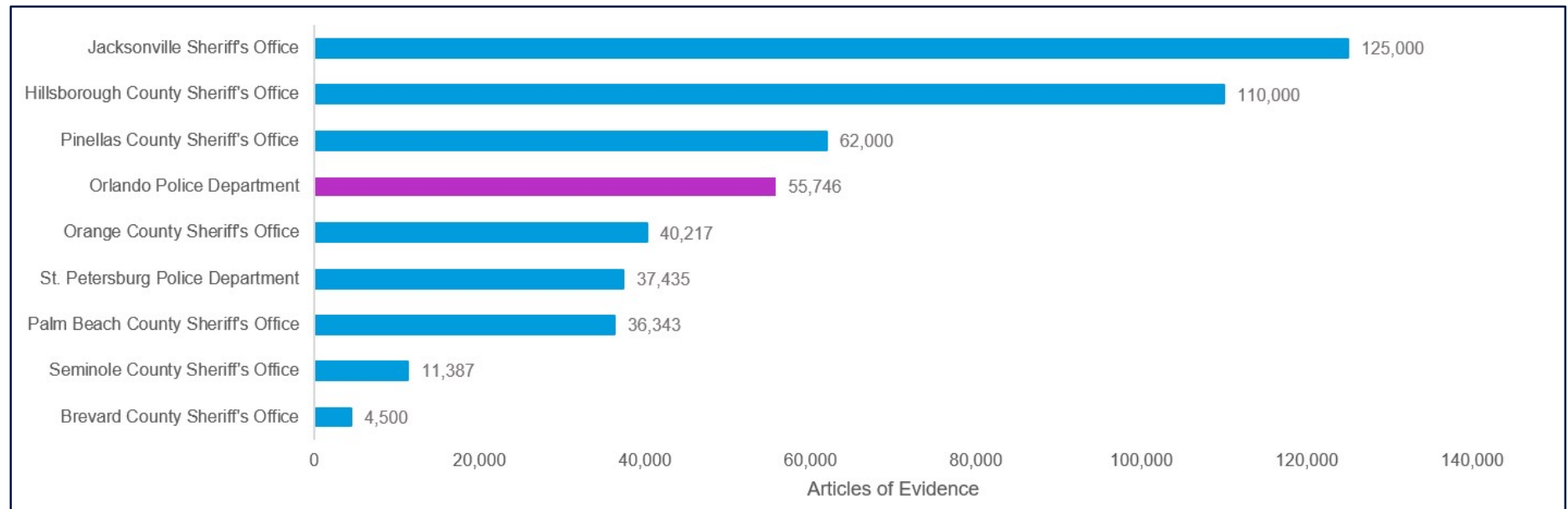
## BENCHMARKING DATA (CONTINUED)

### Detailed Results (Continued)

Approximately how much time (in minutes) does it take to travel to the drug-burning location from the P&E facility?



Approximately how many articles of evidence were received by P&E in 2023?



## BENCHMARKING DATA (CONTINUED)

### Detailed Results (Continued)

	Software System(s) Used	Are target disposal dates recorded?	Does the system prompt officers to approve upcoming disposal automatically?	Satisfaction Level (1 – 5) <i>See ranking scale below</i>
Orlando Police Department	LERMS	Yes, but functionality is not used	Yes, but functionality is not used	2
Orange County Sheriff's Office	Central Square Technologies	No	No	3
St. Petersburg Police Department	Intergraph I/LEADS Record Management System	Yes	Yes	3
Pinellas County Sheriff's Office	ACISS	Yes	Yes	4
Brevard County Sheriff's Office	LERMS	Yes	Yes	3
Seminole County Sheriff's Office	Evidence Web	Yes	Yes	3
Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office	Justice Trax Lab	No	No	3
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office	JSCOPE	Yes	Yes	1
Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office	Versaterm	No	No	3

#### Ranking Scale

1: I am not satisfied at all. Currently seeking an alternative.

2: Not satisfied, but we are keeping it for now.

3: I am somewhat satisfied. The software serves its' purpose.

4: I am happy with our software. It works great.

5: I love our current software. It has all required functionality, plus it has automated components that increase efficiency.

## BENCHMARKING DATA (CONTINUED)

### Detailed Results (Continued)

Police Agency	Hours Open to the Public	How often are evidence pick-up runs made?	How often are laboratory drop-offs made?
Orlando Police Department	Monday through Friday 9:00 am – 4:00 pm	5	2
Brevard County Sheriff's Office	Monday through Friday 8:00 am – 4:00 pm	3	1
Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office	Monday through Friday 8:00 am – 5:00 pm	2	1
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office	Monday through Friday 8:00 am – 4:00 pm	2	2
Orange County Sheriff's Office	Monday through Friday 8:30 am – 4:00 pm (primarily appointment-based)	5	2
Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office	Tuesday through Friday 8:00 am – 3:30 pm	7	7
Pinellas County Sheriff's Office	Monday through Friday 6:00 am – 8:00 pm	3	2
Seminole County Sheriff's Office	Monday through Friday 9:00 am – 4:00 pm (appointment-based only)	1	1
St. Petersburg Police Department	Monday 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm Tuesday through Friday 8:00 am – 4:00 pm	0	2

## ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

Through sample-based testing, benchmarking efforts, and data analytics, we identified the following areas of improvement the City may consider.

### 1. Manual Disposal Processes

During our review, we noted the City of Orlando Property and Evidence Department's process for determining which items are ready for disposal is heavily manual in nature. Currently, P&E staff physically inspect warehouse areas where items may have been stored for extended periods. They compile a list of these items and individually research each case number to verify whether the associated case has been closed. If a case is closed, staff then contacts the officer in charge and/or the Legal Advisor Office ("Legal") to obtain approval for disposal. The responsibility for confirming that retention periods comply with state and federal regulations rests with the officers and Legal. Once Legal approves the purge, P&E staff document this approval in the LERMS system. The staff uploads the approval email under the piece of property in LERMS. They then send the approval email to the P&E supervisor for final approval, indicated by changing the status in LERMS to "Supervisor Approved Purge." During our testing, we noted the following related to evidence disposals:

Evidence Detail	Percentages of Instances
Evidence was not yet disposed of although the case was closed	52%
Purge approval was obtained but disposal had not yet occurred	31%
Approval by the Officer or Legal had not been requested although the case was closed. On average, 731 days passed since case closure.	69%

In addition, two (2) of the five (5) property samples, which were not used in a court-related case, remained in the facility for 73 and 211 days, respectively, past their disposal dates.

Based on the data on page 14, five (5) of the eight (8) benchmarked entities record target disposal dates and utilize the system to automatically request officer/Legal approval to purge. Although the LERMS system has this capability, the Department has opted not to use this functionality. The target disposal date for Personal and Found Property was set to 90 days, triggering an automated email to officers. However, since Florida State Statute and policy permit the disposal of unclaimed Personal/Found property after 90 days, the email function was deemed unnecessary and as a result, it was removed.

Efforts to automate disposal dates for evidence based on offense type or statute of limitations were unsuccessful due to system limitations, so this task is now managed manually. Given the limitations within LERMS, alternative automation solutions should be explored. For instance, a process automation tool could integrate with LERMS to identify case numbers associated with the oldest intake dates, cross-reference them with state records to confirm case status, and generate a list for P&E staff review. This approach would streamline the process by reducing the time required for manual searches and individual case reviews.

## ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK (CONTINUED)

### 2. Staffing and Facility Size

Based on the data presented below, the City of Orlando has the lowest ratio of Property and Evidence (P&E) staff to sworn officers and has the second-lowest ratio of P&E staff to evidence received annually. On average, the City of Orlando has 32 more sworn officers per one P&E staff member than in benchmarked jurisdictions. Each OPD P&E staff member is also responsible for processing an average of 3,270 more articles of evidence annually than their counterparts in other jurisdictions. We also noted that, on average, there are 2.88 more square feet of storage, per article of evidence, at the benchmarked entities than at the City of Orlando.

Police Agency	P&E FTEs to Sworn Officers <sup>1</sup>	P&E FTEs to Articles of Evidence	Articles of Evidence to Facility Size (in square feet)
Orlando Police Department	1 : 111	1 : 6,194	1 : 0.51
Brevard County Sheriff's Office	1 : 83	1 : 643	1 : 16
Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office	1 : 92	1 : 5,789	1 : 0.41
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office	1 : 90	1 : 5,435	1 : 0.40
Orange County Sheriff's Office	1 : 78	1 : 1,915	1 : 0.6
Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office	1 : 83	1 : 1,730	1 : 7.9
Pinellas County Sheriff's Office	1 : 50	1 : 3,100	1 : 0.81
Seminole County Sheriff's Office	1 : 98	1 : 1,898	1 : 0.61
St. Petersburg Police Department	1 : 55	1 : 2,878	1 : 0.39
Average (excluding Orlando)	1 : 79	1 : 2,924	1 : 3.39

<sup>1</sup> The number of sworn officers is based on the data reported by Safety Source through the National Public Safety Information Bureau.

Currently, the P&E team is tasked with processing approximately 300 new property items daily, reviewing information entered into LERMS and adding additional data fields, creating and reviewing Quick Property Receipts, sending property back to officers in the event it was processed incorrectly or safety hazards were identified (i.e., weapons that are not fully neutralized), conducting background checks for owners requesting their firearm, locating acceptable storage locations, facilitating the movement of property in the event it is pulled for testing or court use, accepting pulled property back into the facility after testing or court use, communicating with the public to answer questions and return property, working with law enforcement and Legal to determine if evidence can be purged, and ultimately disposing of property in conformance with legal and safety standards. As noted on page 11, the City of Orlando's Property and Evidence team has the third lowest staffing levels compared to benchmarked agencies. OPD P&E also employs one (1) supervisor, contrasted by the benchmarked average of 2.4.

## ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK (CONTINUED)

### 2. Staffing and Facility Size (Continued)

The P&E Department currently has a backlog of over 8,000 property and evidence items awaiting disposal. This figure is based on the last available LERMS report and includes data as of July 2023. Based on discussion with P&E, this figure has grown in 2024. Included in this figure is a backlog of over 300 firearms waiting to be purged in the storage room and approximately 917 total items in the P&E supervisor's queue for approval.

Given the data presented in the table above, the backlog suggests a shortage in manpower and staff availability. The shortage of facility space may further exacerbate the backlog.

Should the City align staffing levels closer to the benchmarked average, the P&E Department may address the backlog of items to be purged. In addition, the City may consider aligning facility space closer to the benchmarked average to continue operations more efficiently.

### 3. System Reporting and Functionality

During our review, we noted that the LERMS system currently lacks the ability to produce certain datasets or reports that would support the City in measuring key performance indicators (KPIs) and inform decision-making.

Currently, the system is unable to generate a comprehensive report listing all P&E items along with their associated case number, intake date, location, and type. Whether this functionality is available within the system remains uncertain; at the time of our review, the City's Information Technology team was working with the vendor to modify reporting configurations. Such a report could enable the City to better understand the volume and types of P&E held, potentially informing staffing and efficiency decisions, and could be used to identify the exact volume of evidence that is ready to be disposed of.

Further, the system does not provide real-time data on the number of items awaiting approval in officers' queues.

The limited reporting capabilities of LERMS, along with the lack of an automated evidence target disposal review process (refer to **Additional Feedback #1**), restrict the City's ability to gain insights into departmental performance and efficiency. Year-over-year trends related to evidence intake, evidence types, and disposal timeliness remain unavailable. We noted the City has recently begun exploring opportunities to upgrade the existing LERMS system, which may offer enhanced reporting capabilities. We recommend that the City continues to create purging schedules for personal/found property items and explore automation efforts for articles of evidence.

## POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

The following table summarizes each of our recommendations noted above.



**Staffing and Compensation Study:** Given the results of our benchmarking analysis, we recommend the City consider conducting a staffing and compensation study to identify any necessary staffing changes.

**Management Response:** Over the past two years, Property & Evidence has experienced staffing challenges due to resignations and retirements. Former employees cited that the workload was not commensurate with the current salary, and there have been instances where applicants declined conditional offers due to the non-competitive compensation. Additionally, two employees at the Orlando Police Department hold the same position title, Police Service Specialist, but are not assigned to Property & Evidence, leading to compensation equivalency despite differing job responsibilities. This discrepancy highlights the need for a comprehensive staffing and compensation review to ensure fair and competitive practices.



**Enhanced Reporting:** The City should continue efforts to improve P&E reporting (i.e., backlog reports, key performance indicators, cumulative property listings, etc.) to improve performance monitoring and decision-making. Should staffing levels allow, the P&E Department should continue creating daily or weekly property purging lists and should maintain a routine property purge schedule.

**Management Response:** A lack of a fully functional reporting system has contributed to backlogs in Property & Evidence. Department management is collaborating with IT and the records management vendor to identify and implement effective solutions to improve reporting capabilities.



**Alternative Automation Solutions:** If the Department finds the existing LERMS functionality impractical or unavailable, automation solutions should be explored to reduce the manual effort required to obtain purge approval for evidence items. Specifically, a process automation tool could integrate with LERMS to identify case numbers associated with the oldest intake dates, cross-reference them with state records to confirm case status, and generate a list for P&E staff review.

**Management Response:** In parallel with addressing reporting challenges, management and IT are exploring additional automation solutions with the records management vendor to enhance operational efficiency.



## POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION (CONTINUED)



**Policies and Procedures:** We noted the existing SOP may not reflect the current practices. For example, the “release form” noted in the SOP has been updated to the “Disposition of Property” form, and additional detail could be added to describe use of the State Attorney’s Office website to check the status of a case. We recommend the SOPs are updated to confirm accuracy with current practices.

**Management Response:** The Support Services Manager and Property & Evidence Supervisor are actively updating policies and procedures to reflect current practices and ensure compliance with accreditation standards. This ongoing review process aims to strengthen operational consistency and accountability.



**Staff Training:** Currently, trainings are conducted irregularly and informally due to staffing limitations. We recommend the City develop and conduct ongoing training for staff to stay updated on best practices and legal requirements related to property and evidence handling.

**Management Response:** Training for Property & Evidence staff is primarily conducted on-the-job due to the unit’s specialized nature. When new policies, procedures, or legal requirements are introduced, staff receive thorough instructions and guidance. The Property & Evidence Supervisor dedicates additional time to training the Assistant Supervisor Liaison (ASL) to ensure continuity of knowledge and leadership in the supervisor’s absence. Regular updates and hands-on training are provided to ensure staff remain proficient in their roles.



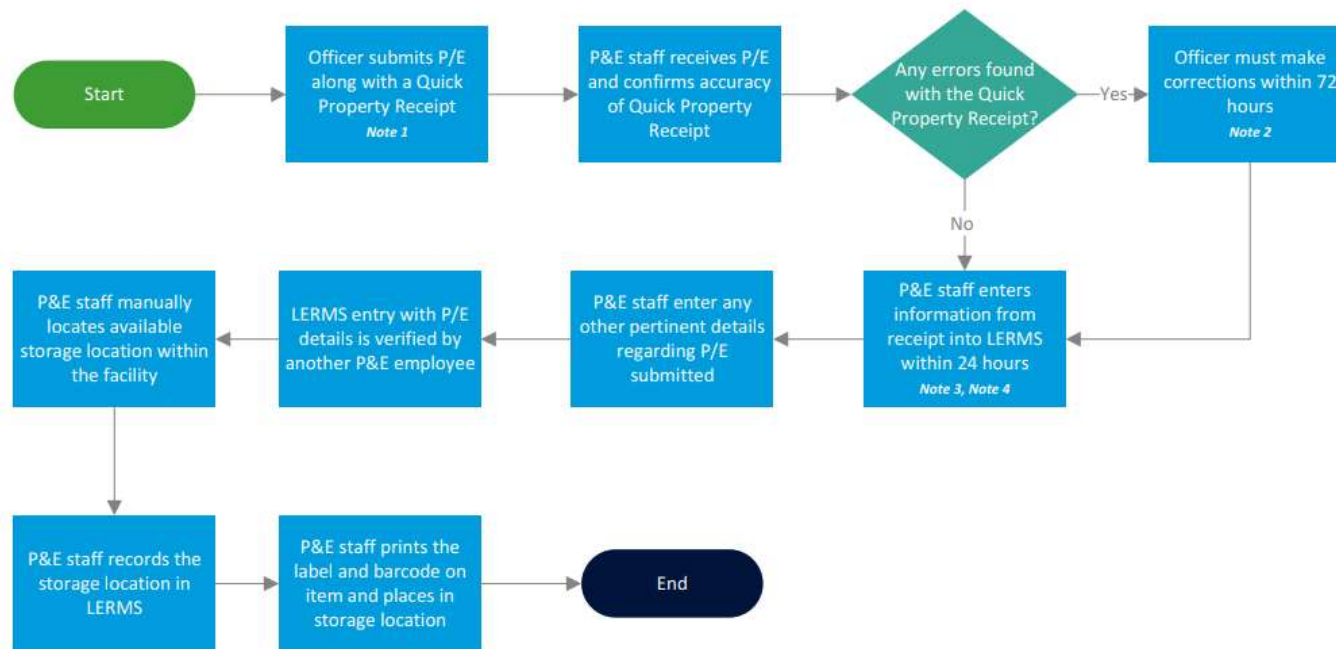
**Regular Audits:** Once reporting mechanisms are improved (see above recommendation), we recommend the Department implement regular audits of the property and evidence inventory to confirm accuracy and accountability.

**Management Response:** The Professional Standards Unit (Accreditation) conducts annual audits of Property & Evidence to verify adherence to policies and accreditation standards. These audits serve as a key mechanism for maintaining compliance and identifying areas for improvement.

## APPENDIX A

### Property and Evidence Workflow

#### Property and Evidence: Intake Process



**Note 1.** After normal working hours, evidence can be brought to the P&E department by officers, along with a completed Quick Property Receipt, and placed in a locker or storage closet. Property can also be submitted in lockers located at all off-site Community Policing Offices and the Airport.

**Note 2.** After 72 hours, a copy will be emailed to the officers sergeant and moved up chain of command until its corrected.

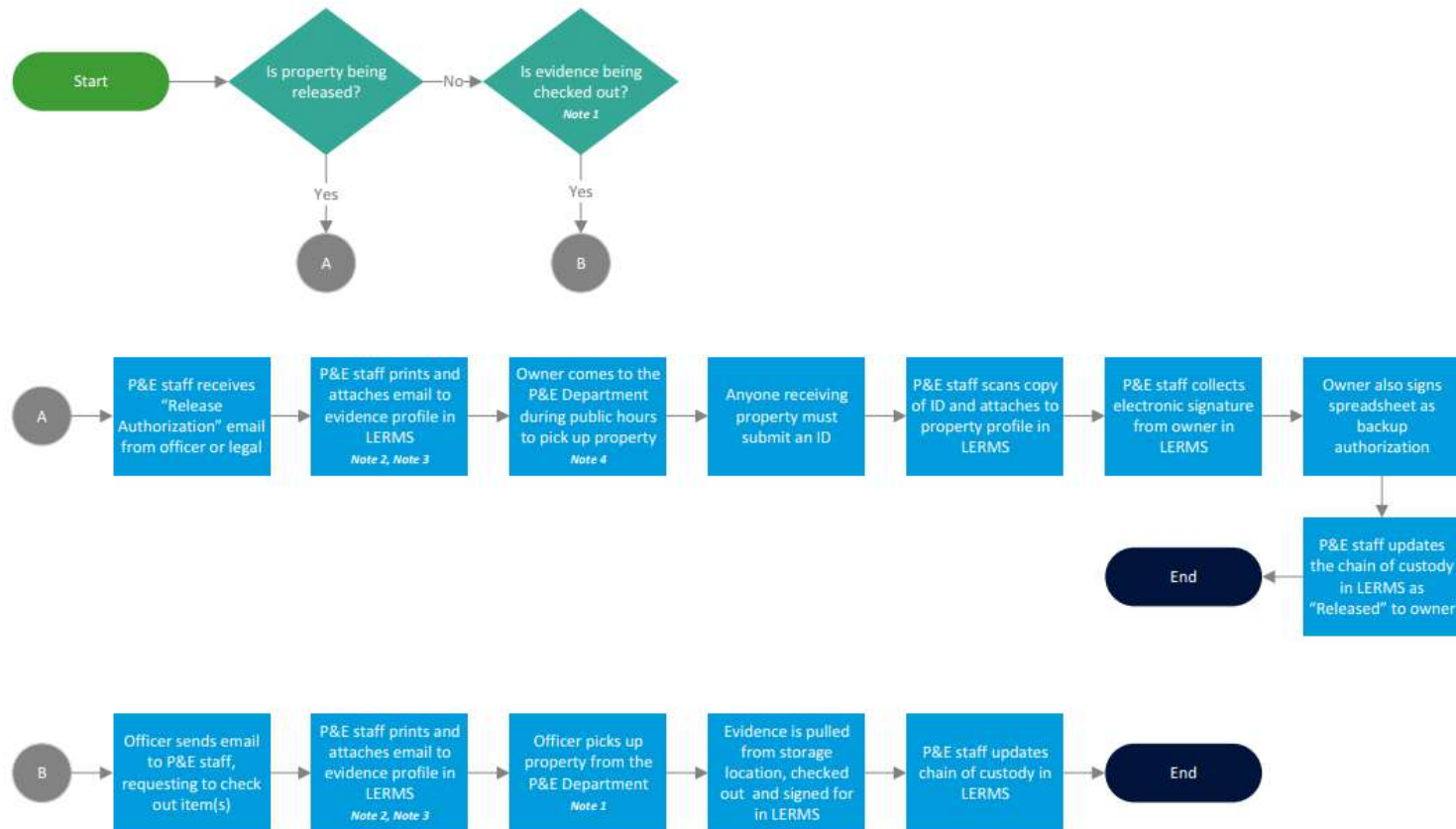
**Note 3.** A copy of the paper Quick Property Receipt is then printed and scanned on to a thumb drive to be kept for recordkeeping.

**Note 4.** Errors or cases with items 100+ may take longer to process.

## APPENDIX A (CONTINUED)

### Property and Evidence Workflow (Continued)

#### Property and Evidence: Release / Check Out Process



**Note 1.** Only sworn OPD employees and select civilians who are responsible for processing evidence (i.e., crime scene investigators, video technicians, latent print examiners, and forensic photographers) are permitted to check out evidence.

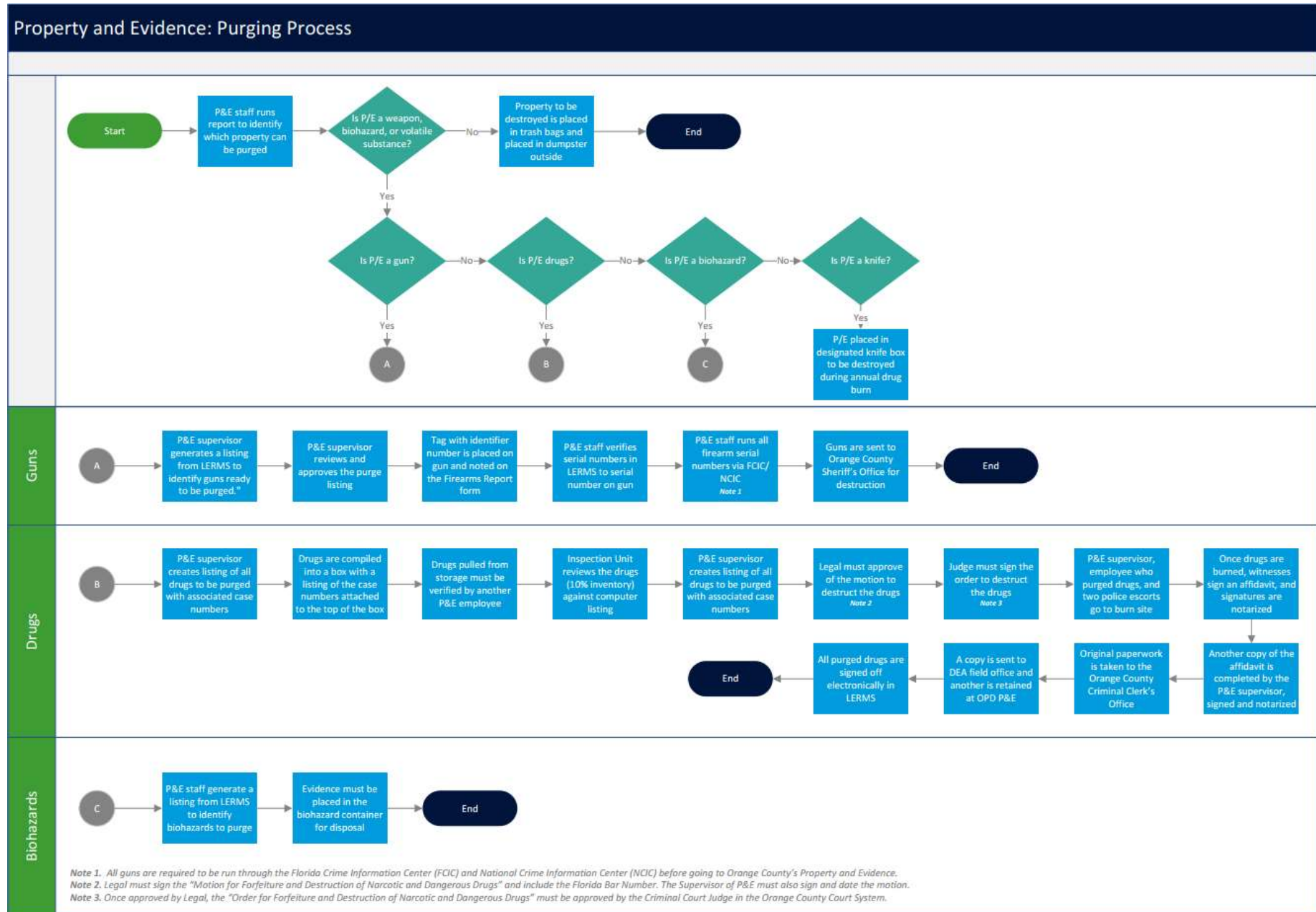
**Note 2.** If the evidence released is money, a representative from the legal department and/or employee in P&E must count the money.

**Note 3.** If the evidence released is a gun, the form provided by the Legal Advisor will be filled out, a Criminal History check completed, Clerk of Courts website checked, NIBIN results obtained, and the serial number(s) will be checked in FCIC/NCIC to determine if the gun is stolen/recovered. The P&E employee must verify the gun is in LERMS, the location of the gun is noted, and include it on the form. The Supervisor will review the documentation, and if the officer has authorized the release, the gun will then be ready for release.

**Note 4.** Property can be released to someone other than the owner, if a notarized letter is presented.

## APPENDIX A (CONTINUED)

### Property and Evidence Workflow (Continued)





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