I. PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

This paper was developed to accompany the *Model Policy on Law Enforcement-Researcher Collaborative Partnerships* developed by the IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center. This paper provides essential background material and supporting documentation to provide a greater understanding of the developmental philosophy and implementation requirements for the model policy. This material will be of value to law enforcement executives in their efforts to tailor the model policy to the requirements and circumstances of their communities and law enforcement agencies.

II. BACKGROUND

With the ever-increasing focus on police practice, law enforcement agencies operate in an environment that requires the use of cost-effective and evidence-based practices to manage the expectations and demands of their stakeholders. Conducting research through law enforcement–researcher partnerships is one way to increase agency knowledge and use of efficient and evidence-based practices in the field. Having a research partner can add capabilities that improve an agency’s ability to identify problems and develop responses in a more effective and productive manner. Therefore, in many cases, it is advisable for agencies to combine their resources, skills, and knowledge with a research partner.

The idea that research can benefit law enforcement is not new. In fact, efforts to use research to improve the effectiveness and fairness of law enforcement services have existed for almost a century. However, the focus on partnering law enforcement with researchers or research institutions did not come until the late 1960s. Stemming from the 1967 President’s Commission, the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 established the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, now the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). This act provided federal funding for projects that encouraged law enforcement–researcher partnerships. In 1989, the NIJ awarded a grant specifically requiring this type of partnership, the Drug Market Analysis Program (DMAP). This program produced several highly cited publications. These publications helped add to the body of knowledge for law enforcement aimed at reducing drug markets.

However, in the mid-1990s, due to the budgetary strain that the DMAP program created for NIJ, it was replaced by Locally Initiated Research Partnerships (LIRP). This project funded 41 different law enforcement–researcher partnerships nationwide with the intent of expanding...
community policing and providing models of working relationships between law enforcement and researchers.5

In 1994, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement (VCCLE) Act established the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office, which led to additional funding of law enforcement–related research. This act and its funding fueled the community and problem-oriented policing movements, which increased the amount of applied research in law enforcement scientifically evaluating the best practices in the field.6

More recently, the 2011 Smart Policing initiative sought for law enforcement to be “effective, efficient, and economical” in its efforts to prevent and control crime. This initiative funded more than 30 partnerships with the goal of implementing intelligence-led and evidence-based practices.7

Several of the partnerships developed between law enforcement and researchers have been quite successful. Boston’s Operation Ceasefire is an early example. With the intent to reduce violent crime, the Boston Police Department and researchers from Harvard University, in conjunction with other criminal justice agencies and community organizations, produced data-driven problem-solving and targeted enforcement strategies aimed at specific gangs thought to be responsible for violent crime. One part of Boston’s Operation Ceasefire was the development of a working group made up of frontline practitioners from a number of different agencies. These practitioners shared their experiences and expertise with researchers to help develop the strategies and interventions that were implemented. Working group meetings were utilized to develop relationships, facilitate an exchange of information and intelligence, and allow participants to keep abreast of the activities of their respective agencies.8

Since this time, police and researchers have continued to collaborate in Boston on various other projects.9

Law enforcement and researchers have found many ways to work together to incorporate efficient and evidence-based practices into the field of policing. In general, however, these law enforcement–researcher partnerships are identified within three distinct categories: cooperation, coordination, and collaboration.10

Partnerships characterized as a cooperation involve short-term, informal partnerships. This type of partnership may consist of smaller tasks such as agencies seeking advice from a researcher or providing a research partner data for analysis. In contrast, coordination suggests a longer-term, more formal partnership created for a specific goal or project, such as contracting a researcher to conduct analysis or the joint search and application for grant funding for a specific initiative. These types of partnerships will typically end with the conclusion of the specific project. Finally, law enforcement–researcher collaborations involve a structured partnership designed to meet a range of common goals, or multiple projects, over time. Being more formal in nature, these types of partnerships often use a memorandum of understanding (MOU), or similar contract between an agency and research partners, to organize involvement across projects.

III. FULLY COLLABORATIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT–RESEARCHER PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout the history of policing research, law enforcement–researcher partnerships have differed in structure, duration, scope, and funding. Though the exact nature and success of a partnership may vary according to the needs and abilities of the law enforcement agency and research partner, in general, the most successful partnerships are those with law enforcement and research partners who make durable, structured commitments to common goals and research efforts.10 These fully collaborative partnerships are long-term relationships that work to enhance law enforcement services through the use of evidence-based practices. Fully collaborative partnerships come in several forms, such as (1) individual researchers working directly with law enforcement agencies, (2) an academic unit within a single university working directly with law enforcement agencies, and (3) groups of researchers across academic institutions working directly with law enforcement agencies.

Fully collaborative law enforcement–researcher partnerships are designed to help both entities accomplish their goals. Specifically, through these partnerships, law enforcement agencies are better able to respond effectively and fairly in providing services to their communities, while researchers are able to further develop the body of knowledge on police science via publications. The law enforcement agency gains a partner who, for topics where research has been conducted, is versed in evidence-based

6 Rojek, Martin, and Alpert, Developing and Maintaining Police-Researcher Partnerships.
7 Ibid.
law enforcement practices as outlined by the available scientific literature.

Additionally, law enforcement agencies gain an outside perspective and a partner that can evaluate their services, inform their practices, and subsequently provide information that can be shared with members of the community, elected officials, and other stakeholders. Through this external source of support and validation, agencies can gain credibility within their communities and among their stakeholders. Furthermore, the use of empirical research may point to efficient and effective practices, which can help law enforcement leaders do more with fewer resources.\textsuperscript{11}

In exchange, the researcher gains access to law enforcement data, as well as the operational knowledge of existing law enforcement practices. Researchers can also better understand the needs of law enforcement practitioners and target their research toward topics that can have a greater impact on the profession.\textsuperscript{12}

\section*{IV. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS}

Law enforcement practitioners and researchers represent two distinct cultures that differ in their values, goals, reward systems, and language.\textsuperscript{13} Therefore, when attempting to enter into a law enforcement–researcher partnership, it is important for both partners to be aware of, and address, any potential barriers that might impede the creation or sustainability of this type of relationship.

Due to differences in perceived goals and the value placed on research, initial distrust between partners can exist.\textsuperscript{14} Specifically, researchers generally conduct research so they might publish within the academic setting, while law enforcement practitioners work with research to make operational changes within their agencies.\textsuperscript{15} Relatedly, because partners have different occupational demands, the definitions of relevant research topics and the expectations concerning timelines for results might vary. In the past, researchers have been blamed for being unaware of the needs of law enforcement practitioners, while law enforcement practitioners have been accused of placing less value on the empirical evaluation of their practices. Additionally, while law enforcement practitioners are found to prefer research that can be applied to problems in real-time, researchers often prefer longer research periods that allow for more time dedicated to the improvement of their work. Notably, these differences in timelines can cause results from research to arrive too late to be useful to the law enforcement agency.\textsuperscript{16}

Many of these barriers can be addressed through the purposeful structuring of the law enforcement–researcher partnership. Several important factors are crucial to the establishment and maintenance of a fully collaborative partnership. First, involving the right people can mark the success or failure of any partnership. Both partners must be willing to see each other’s perspectives and appreciate the knowledge and skills that the other brings.\textsuperscript{17} Second, with any long-term project, partners must recognize the inevitability of staff turnover and plan for such cases. This can be as simple as creating procedure manuals or assigning “back-up” persons on projects. As a solution, outgoing persons could be required to train incoming persons on the details and processes of specific projects within the partnership. In this case, outgoing personnel should be encouraged to remain available for consultation throughout the duration of the project. A third consideration is, as with any funded project, the possibility that funding will end. Partners must plan for self-sustainability of their partnership both formally and informally through various avenues such as federal grants, internal funding, or an exchange of resources (i.e., law enforcement agency gets research services, while researchers get access to data).\textsuperscript{18} Finally, and most crucial, partners must maintain open lines of honest communication about goals, expectations, risks, roles and responsibilities, and needs. Communication should be honest, but constructive, clear, and consistent.\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{12} Engel, and Henderson, \textit{Beyond Rhetoric}.
\bibitem{15} Rojek, Martin, and Alpert, \textit{Developing and Maintaining Police-Researcher Partnerships}.
\bibitem{16} Engel and Henderson, \textit{Beyond Rhetoric}; Engel, and Whalen, \textit{Police–Academic Partnerships}.
\end{thebibliography}
V. PROCEDURES

Establishing a Collaborative Partnership. From the beginning stages of research development, the agency’s chief executive or his or her designee should be actively involved in the creation and development of the partnership. This active involvement lends legitimacy to the partnership, indicating that participation is important and supported at the highest level within the agency. This active participation can help drive the project and ensure the needs and goals of the agency are being met.

Once an agency has made the decision to engage in a collaborative partnership, the chief executive or his or her designee should identify a program manager within the agency to assist in the coordination of all aspects. Identifying the agency’s program manager is important for communication with the future research partner, as well as the organization of the partnership. For this reason, it is recommended that the program manager designation be assigned to a specific position within the agency, as opposed to a specific person. In doing this, the agency ensures that these coordination efforts will continue despite possible personnel changes. The same arguments can be made regarding staff turnover with the research partner.

The next step is to identify potential research partners. Agencies can locate research partners through previous relationships, colleagues, attendance at criminal justice–related conferences, practitioner or academic literature, social science consortiums such as the Society on Evidence-Based Policing and the Ohio Consortium of Crime Science, contacting local universities, or by reaching out to the IACP or other state and local law enforcement organizations.

Due to the high level of participation needed for a collaborative partnership, it is important that partners trust and communicate with each other. However, trust between partners takes time to build, with partnerships between agencies and researchers that have had no prior relationship taking longer to form. For this reason, agencies should consider their potential partner’s compatibility in regard to values, staff, and goals. The more compatible the partners, the more likely the partnership can be sustained over time.

One key factor when assessing overall compatibility is the research partner’s proximity to the agency. Proximity allows researchers to become more familiar with the law enforcement agency, its concerns, and the community it serves. Additionally, because of the greater opportunity for in-person contact, having partners nearby can assist the parties in developing trust and accountability in their working relationships.

Agencies can further evaluate their compatibility based on the researcher’s experience and expertise, to include areas of interest, past publications, and former working relationships. In general, this information can be accessed through the academic department or research institution’s websites.

When a potential partner has been identified, several phone or in-person contacts should take place to discuss the collaborative partnership. These conversations should include an introduction between the agency and research partner, the specific problems or general topic areas that a partnership could work to address, potential sources of funding, and next steps for forming a collaborative partnership.

Confidentiality. Confidentiality is a very real and important concern for law enforcement agencies. Information may be subject to state or federal statutes and agencies must be certain that any data shared with the research partner complies with these statutes. Agencies must also be assured that the research partner understands the importance of confidentiality and the associated risks in disclosure of confidential information. Often, these confidentiality agreements are part of the research partner’s institutional review board (IRB) plans to ensure data and participant confidentiality. IRBs are independent committees whose primary purpose is to protect the rights and welfare of subjects participating in a research study, and IRB approval is required for all research that involves human subjects. All areas of confidential information sharing must be explored with the appropriate counsel and be included in the memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). If the decision to transition into a collaborative partnership is made, the partners should participate in more formal discussions. These formal meetings can lay out the format of the relationship for future projects and work to build trust and communication between partners. At this stage, partners should exchange views and seek to understand each other’s unique vocabulary or individualized language and perspectives. The importance of open and honest dialogue in these conversations is essential to the success of the partnership.

Topics for discussion during these meetings should include the short- and long-term goals of the partnership; the specific strategy, program, or initiative that will be implemented; the methodology and analysis to complete these goals; a communication plan; and a timeline. The roles and responsibilities of each party should be developed, as well as identifying relevant participants and community stakeholders. As mentioned, the partners should work together to identify sources of funding, either internal or external. Finally, partners should discuss data management. Data can refer to any information that is collected during the partnership, and may include such items as video or audio recordings, coded information, and personally identifiable information. The discussion concerning data collection and management is essential as
both partners need to understand what data is needed for
the project, how the data is obtained, where it is stored,
and who maintains ownership. The quality of the data is an
important factor for the value of research. Consistent and
sound data is required for the research to be considered
valid. Researchers and practitioners must work together to
discuss what data currently exists, additional data needs,
the condition and form of the existing data, and how the
data will be used.

An MOU should be created to formalize these
discussions. This document is a critical part of the
collaborative partnership process, as it identifies the points
of contact for each side of the partnership, the deliverable
items to be created by the partnership, the accountability
mechanisms in the partnership, and processes for
dissolution. It can define the goals of the partnership;
facility and data access and storage; confidentiality
agreements; duration of the partnership; and how materials
from the partnership will be disseminated. The focus of
the MOU should be the active exchange of knowledge
and information through the collaborative effort of the
partners. This agreement should focus on the process of
the partnership, rather than on specific research projects,
in an effort to increase the likelihood of sustainability over
time.19

Though the MOU can contain a multitude of
information about the partnership, it should be noted that
it is not a step-by-step guide on how to conduct scientific
projects or programs or to identify the specific strategy,
program, or initiative to be used. Instead, it is intended
to be a broad agreement that outlines the partnership and
the deliverables within the partnership. However, further
documents or contracts can be developed that outline the
specifics of the strategy, program, or initiative that is to be
implemented.

Once the MOU has been finalized and signed, the
partners should organize a meeting with all stakeholders.
This meeting provides the opportunity to inform all
invested parties of the MOU, the individual roles and
responsibilities in the partnerships, the outline and timeline
of deliverables, and the next steps for the partnership.
Keeping stakeholders informed can lend legitimacy to the
newly-formed partnership.

Training. As previously mentioned, law enforcement
practitioners and researchers often come from two distinct
occupational cultures. In many cases, researchers do not
have practical experience in policing. Meanwhile, not all
law enforcement practitioners have academic backgrounds.
Therefore, it is important for individuals working within
the partnership to learn about the norms, values, and
assumptions of their partner in an effort to help build
the trust that is necessary for a successful relationship.
Training should incorporate all aspects of the partnership as
outlined by the MOU and should be provided to all levels
of individuals within the partnership. The training should
be co-developed by the partners and delivered by the
researcher’s principal investigator and the project manager
from the law enforcement agency. Pre-research training
with those directly involved in the research, such as crime
analysts, records personnel, and graduate assistants, helps
to establish roles and responsibilities, as well as familiarize
partners with the data collection process, data storage,
and important technology and resources for the research
project. Post-research training should be agency-wide to
explain the research conducted, why it was conducted,
the results, and how results will be applied. This pre- and
post-research training should take place for each research
project throughout the partnership.

Sustaining the Partnership. It is beyond the scope
of this document to outline specific steps required for
the successful creation and implementation of law
enforcement–researcher research projects. However, there
are several steps both parties must take throughout their
partnership to support sustainability. This includes the
maintenance of regular communication. As previously
suggested, communication must involve open discussions
about expectations, goals, and concerns throughout the
development of the partnership and any related research
projects. This communication can be maintained in many
ways, such as through in-person meetings, interim reports,
or conference calls. Overall, regular communication
between partners helps strengthen the interactive process of
the partnership, ensuring that partners remain informed on
the progress of any ongoing research projects.20

In addition to regularly communicating, both partners
should fulfill their roles and responsibilities as outlined
by the MOU. Fulfilling assigned roles helps to enhance
trust between partners, as well as overall satisfaction with
the partnership. Partners should also work to co-publish
any findings. This requires partners to collaborate in the
creation of two or more publication formats that can
expose different audiences, both practitioner and academic,
to information on effective practices.21 In a similar vein,

19 Engel, and Henderson, Beyond Rhetoric; Nicholas R. Fyfe and Peter
Wilson, “Knowledge Exchange and Police Practice: Broadening and
Deepening the Debate Around Researcher–Practitioner Collaborations,”
Police Practice and Research 13, no. 4 (2012): 306-314; Alistair Henry
and Simon Mackenzie, “Brokering Communities of Practice: A Model
of Knowledge Exchange and Academic-Practitioner Collaboration
Developed in the Context of Community Policing,” Police Practice and

20 Rojek, Martin, and Alpert, Developing and Maintaining Police-Rese-
archer Partnerships.

21 International Association of Chiefs of Police, Law Enforcement
Research Priorities 2011 and Beyond (Alexandria, VA: International As-
sociation of Chiefs of Police, 2011); Darrel W. Stephens, “Enhancing the
Impact of Research on Police Practice,” Police Practice and Research:
partners should work to translate findings into actionable changes for the agency. Additionally, the partners should discuss the presentation of potentially negative findings prior to their publication. These types of discussions prevent agencies from being blindsided by the possible controversial results of their research.

Finally, partners and stakeholders should regularly revisit their MOU to ensure it meets the needs of the research partner, law enforcement agency, and the community. It should be amended as needed, but may also lead to the dissolution of a partnership should the needs of the partners or stakeholders not be met and reasonable solutions not identified.

Acknowledgment

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Every effort has been made by the IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center staff and advisory group to ensure that this document incorporates the most current information and contemporary professional judgment on this issue. Readers outside of the United States should note that, while this document promotes procedures reflective of a democratic society, its legal basis follows United States Supreme Court rulings and other federal laws and statutes. Law enforcement administrators should be cautioned that no “model” policy can meet all the needs of any given law enforcement agency. Each law enforcement agency operates in a unique environment of court rulings, state laws, local ordinances, regulations, judicial and administrative decisions and collective bargaining agreements that must be considered, and should therefore consult its legal advisor before implementing any policy. In addition, the formulation of specific agency policies must take into account local political and community perspectives and customs, prerogatives and demands; often divergent law enforcement strategies and philosophies; and the impact of varied agency resource capabilities among other factors. This document is not intended to be a national standard.

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