21st CENTURY POLICING
INNOVATION IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES
INTRODUCTION

No single factor is more crucial to reducing crime levels than the partnership between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. In order for law enforcement to be truly effective, police agencies cannot operate alone; they must have the active support and assistance of community members.

With support from the Motorola Solutions Foundation, the International Association of Chiefs of Police’s (IACP) Institute for Community-Police Relations implemented an initiative to learn about and support innovative and evidence-based 21st Century Policing practices in local communities. IACP worked with five demonstration sites to learn about promising practices, common challenges, and community-focused solutions in the following areas:

- Building Trust and Legitimacy
- Policy and Oversight
- Technology and Social Media
- Community Policing and Crime Prevention
- Training and Education
- Officer Wellness and Safety

The five demonstration sites represent agencies of varying size and geographic location to showcase a representative range of experiences.

- Anne Arundel County, Maryland, Police Department
- Elgin, Illinois, Police Department
- Poarch Creek Tribal Department of Public Safety, Alabama
- Provo, Utah, Police Department
- Springfield, Vermont, Police Department

This report includes highlights from the proactive work the demonstration sites accomplish within their internal agencies and communities.

Anne Arundel County, Maryland, Police Department

Anne Arundel County, Maryland, is located in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area with a population of more than 560,000. The county includes a mix of high-density and suburban residential areas, business districts, and rural areas. The county includes Annapolis, the state capital, and is home to the U.S. Naval Academy. The county’s public safety services are provided through the Anne Arundel County Police Department (AACPD) with a force of 720 sworn officers. The department prioritizes community and police relations through training, formal engagement programs, and a daily commitment to respect and service for their community members.

Community Engagement

Giving community members a voice is one of the primary ways to build trust and legitimacy, and AACPD provides multiple ways for community members to interact with police officers. The department’s 51-year-old Police-Community Relations Council (PCRC) shows the depth and history of the department’s commitment to engaging community stakeholders. Each of AACPD’s four divisions has its own council, providing ample opportunity for a diverse group of residents to get involved in a setting that is intimate enough to build relationships and actively take on community problems. The members of this group are dedicated to the mission of the department and appreciate the opportunity to lend their voice and perspective to the department. PCRC members help officers connect with local businesses that make significant contributions to support community activities, particularly with local youth.

As the population of the community continues to expand and grow more diverse, AACPD continues to demonstrate commitment to the principles of community policing. The department is working to incorporate policing metrics in their performance appraisals to ensure that community policing remains a priority. The updated appraisals will be designed to reflect and measure commitment to community and incentivize outreach. By using these metrics, they hope to encourage community policing over other traditional measurements of success.

Trust through Transparency

Another way the department commits to building community trust is through an increased focus on transparency. By providing opportunities for the community to learn and view data about the department’s operations, AACPD helps the community understand the work they do and reduce misconceptions that can act as
barriers to trust. The department’s informative website contains publicly available data about use of force and citizen and internal complaints. Under the direction of a dedicated Strategic Planner for the agency, AACPD also provided a comprehensive Annual Report that highlights crime statistics, departmental goals, policies, and information about the organization and functions of the department. AACPD also effectively uses social media as a means to reach its community members. With more than 97,150 Facebook followers, 64,000 Twitter followers, and an active Nixle presence, the department has an impressive reach. AACPD uses these tools to share information about emergencies, community outreach events, recruitment opportunities, department news, and traffic issues.

Across all of these transparency efforts, AACPD aims to deliver its communications to the community and county government in language and formats that are accessible and relatable. This allows the department to go beyond just providing the information but also to make sure it can truly be understood by those who may not be familiar with law enforcement operations.

Elgin, Illinois, Police Department

Elgin, Illinois, is a northwest suburb of Chicago with a population of 112,000, making it the eighth largest city in the state. Elgin in a fast-growing residential community. The Elgin Police Department (EPD) serves the city with an authorized sworn officer strength of 182 officers. The EPD command staff have worked hard to instill a culture of community involvement throughout its operations.

Community Involvement in Policy Review

When new, high-profile policies are developed, updated, or released, EPD makes a concerted effort to share this information with the community. When use of force issues were making media headlines in the United States, the chief organized a Use of Force forum to talk with community members about Elgin’s policies and procedures and provided time for comments and questions. Similarly, when EPD began planning and implementing a new Drone Program which would use drones to help solve crimes and monitor identified problem areas, community input was one of its first steps. The community was given the opportunity to provide feedback on this initiative through public meetings to give the community a voice, allay concerns, and learn about the specific public safety use and benefits of the drones.

The police department’s Surveillance Unit uses numerous cameras located in strategic spots throughout the city to help monitor higher-crime areas, identify suspects, aid in investigations, and public safety. The unit also makes an effort to educate the community about the use of cameras in their neighborhoods. Beyond the policy and procedural information, officers use these opportunities to work with business leaders and community residents to teach them about the best placement for personal security cameras and how to preserve footage should a crime occur.

Through these official forums, as well as fun and educational opportunities like the “SWAT for a Day” community event that offers demonstrations of police equipment, the department introduces its policies, procedures, and the equipment it uses to inform community members and reduce fear.

Resident and Neighborhood Officer Programs

EPD has numerous outreach and educational programs to engage all facets of the community. One of the more unique and longest-standing efforts is the Resident Officer Program of Elgin (ROPE), started in 1991. Officers assigned to this program reside in houses owned and maintained by the City of Elgin. Four officers are assigned to this program, and they live in various neighborhoods across the city. They are on call at all times via a department issued cell phone number that is posted on a sign outside the officers’ homes. These officers build close relationships with their neighbors in the community and have become a part of the fabric of those neighborhoods.
Poarch Creek Tribal Department of Public Safety, Alabama

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians is the only tribe in Alabama, with its tribal land located in Southwestern Alabama. The tribe’s 3,000 members are served by the Poarch Creek Tribe Department of Public Safety (the Department). The Department’s coverage area is a checkerboard jurisdiction over a vast area of land. Its main reservation in the town of Atmore, Alabama, is the primary area in which tribal members reside. The Department also provides policing services on tribal land in Montgomery County and Wetumpka, Alabama, approximately 140 miles from the Atmore headquarters. The tribe is experiencing rapid economic growth in the entertainment and hospitality industry among other business ventures, bringing a strong resource-base to the tribe, but also adding to its public safety needs.

Capacity-building Partnerships

As a tribal police department, building trust and partnerships with neighboring law enforcement agencies is particularly important for overcoming jurisdictional barriers to effectively controlling crime and holding offenders accountable. Until very recently, the Poarch Creek tribal police officers were not recognized as state police officers. Their authority was granted through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Office of Justice Services Special Law Enforcement Commission and cross-deputation agreements with the local sheriff’s departments of the three counties that include Poarch Creek tribal land. These close relationships with the local sheriffs expand law enforcement capacity both ways by providing more coverage to support residents on and off tribal land. The relationships and ability to communicate became even more important when the tribe sought state recognition for its officers, as the partners were able to show their support and testify to the value and quality of the Department’s police services. The tribe had formal support from the Alabama Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission (POST) and Alabama Sheriff’s Association, which is a notable success, as tribes in other states have faced significant challenges in earning this type of state

Compassionate Response to Persons in Crisis

Crisis intervention training is an important focus for agencies looking to improve response to persons with mental illness, and EPD recognizes the need for and importance of this topic. Currently, 60 percent of officers are trained in crisis intervention response. International research has shown the effectiveness of this type of training, and command staff and officers report how helpful it has been to have officers on call to respond to mental health related calls. EPD plans to eventually have all officers trained in crisis intervention. The department has also taken IACP’s One Mind Campaign pledge to establish a clearly defined and sustainable partnership with a community mental health organization; develop a model policy to implement police response to persons affected by mental illness; train and certify sworn officers and selected non-sworn staff in mental health first aid training; and provide crisis intervention team training. Elgin’s CIT Team responds not only to crisis situations, but also partners with mental health providers and social service interns to provide follow up support to those individuals with mental health challenges that have repeat calls for service. This ensures these individuals can access the treatment they need. With cutbacks to city social services, the department’s efforts are meeting a critical need for community members.

Other programs with similar success include the Neighborhood Officer Program of Elgin and the Crime Free Housing program. These programs operate similar to the ROPE program and the officers assigned to these programs work very closely with the community members in their area. The officers take great pride in the work they do with the community in an effort to work together to provide a safe community for all. The officers from these divisions work closely with the local faith-based organizations, businesses, and schools to get resources and donations for the various community programs the department runs. Many of these programs engage youth in the at-risk areas of Elgin. Officers have taken youth to golf lessons, a dude ranch, and other excursions, in addition to weekly programs where the kids and officers get together to play basketball, do crafts, and other activities. Through the Managers Against Crime program, officers teach a course about property crime threats and mitigation efforts for landlords in the area, allowing officers to build relationships with landlords and work with them to develop plans to address specific issues with their buildings. These programs give the community an active role in co-producing public safety, while still maintaining transparency and open dialogue.

level support. In March 2018, Alabama House Bill 149 was signed into law, granting police powers to the tribal police to act as state officers as needed on tribal lands. The act was a historical event for Alabama and sets an example for other states with tribes. Beyond providing tribal officers with expanded capacity to serve all community members, on and off tribal land, this recognition adds to the professionalism of the Department, which helps to build trust.

**Engaging Youth**

With an emphasis on youth, the department has become an active participant with local youth activities in the tribe and in the local schools. Realizing that they had a tribal member police officer who enjoyed and was very effective at working with children, they assigned him full time to youth programming. He spends the majority of his time at the tribe’s community center which is the focal point of all youth programs within the reservation. It includes a Boys and Girls Club program for tribal and non-tribal youth, as well as a host of cultural activities. The officer provides security presence and safety recommendations to the community center staff, and he interacts with children and parents in an informal way that has enabled him to build strong community relationships. He also focuses on providing safety education to the students through gun safety classes and a forthcoming training on how to stay safe on social media. The officer staffs a Police Explorer program as a way to introduce high school age youth to policing careers. As a tribal member, he helps to inspire tribal youth about the value of serving and protecting their own tribe. The officer also visits the local schools that tribal and non-tribal students attend to further build relationships.

**Structured for Community Policing Success**

An important piece of PPD’s community policing framework is the dedicated Community Oriented Policing (COP) unit. The unit includes one sergeant and three officers who are assigned each district of the city. There is a dedicated building for COP activities to host community meetings and activities. These officers work together with community partners to identify and solve local safety and quality of life problems. COP officers attend numerous community meetings and events to give residents, students, business owners, and other city stakeholders the opportunity to share their concerns and engage in planning solutions. Based on these community identified concerns, Community Resource Officers can help work with patrol officers and city agencies to address code violations, licensing issues, and crime hot spots. The officers and the projects they support often take pressure off of patrol by solving community problems and reducing crime concerns.

**Preparing Future Leaders**

Hiring a staff that represents the community it serves is a priority for many law enforcement agencies, and this is especially true in tribal agencies where there is a strong desire to hire tribal members who understand the customs and traditions of their community. For many tribal agencies, including Poarch Creek, this can be challenging due to a small recruiting base and competition from other agencies. One way this is being addressed is through the Tribal Officer Cadet program. This program allows a tribal member approaching recruitment age to do ride alongs and other assignments in the police department in advance of any offer for employment or basic training. This gives both the cadet and the Department an opportunity to assess and determine if this is a good fit for both. If the cadet wishes to advance, the Department sponsors him or her to attend the police academy to become certified as a police officer. Upon completion of the academy, the cadet is hired full time into the Department. The program has already had one successful completion and hire, with another tribal member heading to the academy.

The department has made a strong commitment to training and professional development, with a particular focus on leadership skills, to ensure that officers are prepared for their current assignments and advancement through the ranks. Command staff take advantage of numerous free training opportunities through the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ Indian Police Academy, the Department of Justice National Advocacy Center, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, local universities, and local law enforcement partners.

**Provo, Utah, Police Department**

Provo, Utah, has a population of more than 116,000 people, making it the third largest city in the state. It is home to the Wasatch Mountain range and Brigham Young University. It achieves high national rankings for its business and residential opportunities and has a growing economic portfolio. The Provo Police Department (PPD) has an authorized staffing of 105 officers. While the spirit and philosophy of community policing can be seen throughout the department, PPD and other city agencies provide structured opportunities for community involvement in public safety.
Engaged Community Leaders

The Corporation for National and Community Service consistently ranks Utah as the nation’s most active state for volunteers, with the rate of individuals involved in some type of volunteer work exceeding 40 percent each year. Given this high percentage of active, civically involved residents, PPD supports numerous programs that give residents the opportunity to share their voice and participate in public safety processes, decisions, and activities. Through the city’s Neighborhood Program, Neighborhood Chairs are elected for each of Provo’s neighborhoods to be the voice of the residents in addressing concerns and needs. The Neighborhood Chairs have a direct channel of communication with city leadership, including law enforcement, to identify and solve community problems.

The department sponsors an active Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) program that is managed by the COPS Unit. The VIPS program includes a uniformed volunteer mobile patrol, as well as administrative volunteer, internship, Explorer, and victim services programs. Highly trained reserve police officers support PPD patrol during special events and other times when additional manpower is needed. The popular Citizens Police Academy is held twice a year to give community members an inside look at the department.

Recognizing that these programs may not be reaching all segments of the community, the Chief’s Advisory Board (CAB) was created as another important avenue through which community members have a voice within the PPD. CAB members represent a broad mix of community stakeholders, and they serve as a two-way channel of information between PPD and their community groups. Beyond their monthly meetings, CAB members help the department facilitate outreach in multi-cultural communities and presented an introduction to cultural awareness for officers.

Training for the 21st Century

PPD responds to the evolving challenges of modern policing by emphasizing proactive training opportunities for line officers to executives. Officers have been trained in implicit bias, and PPD houses the 300-degree simulator training system that is available to all officers in Utah County. Through the interactive, role play training sessions, officers can practice use of de-escalation, force, and other skills in a safe, realistic environment. PPD used the new training tool as an opportunity to educate the community about modern police training through media outreach and the CAB.

The department values career development and successive leadership and offers officers numerous opportunities for leadership training, including IACP’s Leadership in Police Organizations training program. As staffing allows, the department is open to sending officers to a variety of other trainings that match their interests. The department also offers patrol officers to participate in ride alongs with other agencies through which officers can experience policing in another jurisdiction. This unique, low-cost opportunity allows officers to learn about regional issues and new solutions and to build relationships with regional partners.

Springfield, Vermont, Police Department

Springfield, Vermont, is a small community of just over 9,300 people located in the southeastern part of the state. Like many small New England communities, Springfield has lost manufacturing jobs and faced economic challenges over the past decades. However, Springfield has made great strides in revitalizing its downtown area and providing new opportunities for its residents. The Springfield Police Department (SPD) has 19 sworn officers to serve the community’s safety needs. While policing in small communities can bring unique challenges of limited resources and manpower, it also can bring unique opportunities to connect with community members on a personal level. Many of the officers grew up in the community, still live there, and are engaged in a number of non-enforcement endeavors.

Police Social Worker Support

Facing growing challenges with mental health crises and drug addiction in the community, the department is putting a great amount of resources toward addressing them. Heroin use, in particular, is on the rise in the Upper Valley, resulting in an increase in the number of medical calls per shift, all of which consume a significant amount of time. Recognizing the need for treatment and services that address the root causes of these issues, the department partnered with a neighboring jurisdiction to share the services of a dedicated police social worker. This position is grant funded and splits its time between the two departments. When officers refer a case to the social worker, the social worker will work with the individuals to get them connected to treatment services and other resources that can improve their quality of life and keep them out of the justice system. The department is seeing a reduction in repeat calls for service from those served by the social worker.

Social Media

While many smaller departments find it challenging to maintain a social media presence due to limited staff availability, the Springfield Police Department makes social media outreach to community members a key priority. With more than 10,500 Facebook followers, the department has an impressive reach considering the population of Springfield is slightly over 9,300. SPD uses the site to share local and department news and public safety concerns, while engaging in two-way conversation with community members. SPD also maintains a comprehensive website with publicly available data about the department’s impartial policing policy, the citizen complaint process, and crime and demographic statistics. This shows the agency’s commitment to educating the community and being transparent in its operations.

Employee involvement in policy review

One of the most important components of the management structure of any police department is a set of written directives that guide and direct agency operations. In order to ensure that the SPD policies and procedures were aligned with current practices and community values, the SPD chief began the process of updating policies. Given the staffing limitations of a small agency, the chief used a phased approach to focus on the most critical, socially relevant policies and moved on through the manual. With this update process, the chief began giving supervisors an opportunity to review new and revised policies prior to them being put in place. This process allowed supervisors to explain the upcoming changes and note any potential concerns to the command staff. One of the advantages of a smaller agency is the ability for staff to engage on a more personal level, and this is a good way for the department to show officers that their voice is heard. Studies show that internal procedural justice is as important as external procedural justice3, thus getting officer input can be just as important as getting community input. Giving officers the opportunity to be heard is a vital component in raising officer satisfaction, which leads to better performance and officer retention.

Moving Forward

There is no one size fits all solution to building trust and community relations. Successful strategies are driven by the diverse ideas, needs, and priorities of the communities and law enforcement agencies that serve them. The agencies profiled above have made a commitment to finding out what works for their communities.

For more case studies and resources on how your community can implement policies, procedures, and programs that increase community trust by facilitating dialogue, increasing transparency, leveraging technology, training officers, and more, contact the IACP Institute for Community-Police Relations at icpr@theiacp.org or visit http://www.theiacp.org/icpr.
