

Establishing & Sustaining Law Enforcement - Researcher Partnerships



Guide for Law Enforcement Leaders



NIJ

Final Report

This is one of a set of two companion documents on law enforcement/researcher partnerships. The other document in this set is ***Establishing and Sustaining Law Enforcement – Researcher Partnerships: Guide for Researchers***

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A. Why Conduct Research?

Law enforcement leaders are increasingly recognizing the benefits of applying research findings in their work. As more researchers direct their efforts toward producing practical knowledge about effective police policies and practices, law enforcement agencies are better able to use that information to maximize their capacity to protect the public and bring lawbreakers to justice. In this era of shrinking budgets, research that points to what works best can help law enforcement leaders do more with less.¹

Evidence-based policing (EBP) is an approach to testing and validating all facets of policing that encourages law enforcement agencies to develop their policy and program guidelines based on knowledge of best practices, and to carefully define and monitor outcomes that are achieved through their actions.² Policymakers, funders and even community members have come to expect publicly-funded agencies to demonstrate that their policies and practices are proven to be cost-effective. EBP is not an all-or-nothing approach that results in discarding “failed” programs, but rather a way for law enforcement agencies to continuously refine and update their policies and practices. By working with researchers, police departments can contribute to the continuing development of evidence-based policies, programs and practices.

Since law enforcement personnel are trained in investigative techniques, they have a natural appreciation for well-done research, i.e., research efforts that ask meaningful questions, assemble relevant evidence, and make a convincing case for recommended actions. Police departments that have implemented community and problem-oriented policing are familiar with the problem-solving process that is the foundation of action research: problem identification and analysis, response development and implementation, ongoing monitoring and

¹ Carl Jensen III. “Consuming and Applying Research Evidence-Based Policing”, *The Police Chief*. <http://policechiefmagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm>

² Lawrence W. Sherman. *Evidence-Based Policing*. Washington, DC: Police Foundation, 1998.

refinement, and impact assessment. Many police staff members find that they can become critical consumers of research, able to discern which studies or findings are valid and understand how best to apply them in their own agencies.

This guide outlines ways that law enforcement leaders can move from being consumers of research to working with researchers to generate useful knowledge about what works in their own agencies and for policing in general. The guidelines in this document are grounded in the experience of a number of law enforcement agencies that have already partnered with researchers to continuously improve police performance. Many of these agencies have been able to use the results of research on the effectiveness of their policies and practices to successfully advocate for needed resources or policy changes. A few have contributed significantly to the general body of knowledge about what works best in policing.

B. Why Partner?

Police departments that have developed partnerships with researchers affirm that there are many benefits to be gained from these collaborations. These partnerships exist along a continuum, from cooperation (short-term and informal) through coordination (longer-term, more formal, focused on a particular goal) to collaboration (a durable and structured commitment to a range of common goals).³

Partnership Continuum

Cooperation-----→Coordination-----→Collaboration

Police departments wishing to maximize the benefits of partnerships with researchers should strive to formalize long-term, collaborative relationships.

Researchers can assist police leaders with sorting through pertinent research findings as they select the best course of action to ensure their departments' effectiveness and legitimacy. Researchers are well-equipped to assist police

³ Michael Winer and Karen Ray. *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey*. St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2000. p. 23.

leaders in scanning local and national literature for relevant evidence-based program models that police agencies may wish to consider adapting for their own use. If there are no evidence-based models available to address a police department's targeted problem areas, researchers can still help their police partners by identifying or designing promising policies, programs and practices that are most likely to achieve desired results.

Law enforcement agencies that actively partner with researchers will help determine the issues that will be studied at the local level, and may contribute to shaping the national research agenda. Researchers can work with their law enforcement partners to analyze information and frame issues in ways that will help police leaders identify courses of action likely to achieve their goals.

Through working with researchers, law enforcement personnel at all organizational levels can learn new ways to analyze and prioritize the issues they face by looking for patterns rather than simply responding to individual incidents. Action researchers willing to partner with police departments can help them refine their understanding of problems worth solving and test the efficacy of evidence-based or promising strategies for solving these problems at the local level.

Police who become active partners in research initiatives will most likely enjoy the chance to reflect on the larger context of their concerns rather than simply responding to specific crises and incidents. Research partnerships offer police partners the opportunity to participate in strategic thinking and to develop long-range, broad-based solutions to pressing issues.

As a police department implements a program or strategy, researchers can apply their skills to design ways to evaluate its short-term and long-range effectiveness. By participating in research design and data collection efforts, police record-keepers and analysts often discover creative ways to redesign their information system to enable more efficient collection, recording and retrieval of data useful for multiple purposes.

Research partners can provide police agencies with ongoing feedback they can use to make mid-course corrections in policy and practice. Instead of waiting to see the ultimate results of a program or intervention, research partners can help implement ongoing monitoring systems that will provide police departments with feedback useful for continuously refining their strategies.

Although federal funding for police research has declined significantly in recent years, many researchers, policymakers and law enforcement leaders continue to advocate for federal and state funding to support research on policing policies and practices. Previous federal investments in research helped to create a community of researchers interested in policing research and police departments that appreciate the value of partnering with researchers. Seattle Chief of Police Gil Kerlikowske observed that researchers can provide police with “critical information on what works to impact crime. . .and help ensure that police departments do not waste shrinking local resources on ill-advised approaches.”⁴ Summarizing the impacts of more than 30 years of police research, Lawrence Sherman, President of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (AAPSS), emphasized that “social science has helped police focus on high-risk places and high-risk times as the key strategy for crime prevention”⁵ This has helped propel dramatic declines in national crime rates, and he urged that Congress restore and expand funding for policing research.

C. Initiating Police-Researcher Partnerships

Law enforcement agencies interested in establishing partnerships with researchers have many potential avenues they can use to explore productive partnering. The eventual success of partnerships between police and researchers depends on a number of interrelated activities, including selecting compatible partners, building working relationships based on trust, structuring

⁴ Chief Gil Kerlikowske, April 2004 news conference, National Press Club, Washington, DC.
<http://www.scienceblog.com/community/older/2004/10/20049057.shtml>

⁵ Lawrence Sherman, April 2004 news conference, National Press Club, Washington, DC.
<http://www.scienceblog.com/community/older/2004/10/20049057.shtml>

the partnership and carefully defining roles and responsibilities of the partners. By attending to these concerns early on, police agencies and their research partners can ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of their collaboration.

Selecting Compatible Partners

Most researchers work at colleges or universities, within research agencies, or offer their services as private consultants. Researchers, particularly those employed by colleges/universities, are strongly motivated to publish articles in professional (“peer reviewed”) journals, to obtain grants to fund their research work, and to provide a public service. Researchers who believe that their professional goals can be achieved through collaborating with police agencies will be most open to establishing research partnerships.

Viable partnerships between police and researchers sometimes get their start when police personnel take classes at colleges or universities or when police leaders connect with researchers at multidisciplinary professional conferences such as those hosted by the IACP and its state-level counterparts. Police leaders and researchers may also get to know one another through serving on the same community advisory or policy boards. Police leaders who invite researchers to provide training at workshops or other events sponsored by their departments will learn about interests shared by their organizations and the researchers. All of these informal contacts provide opportunities for police leaders to assess the compatibility of individual researchers with themselves and their organizations.

Those police departments that lack informal connections to researchers but want to explore possibilities for a research partnership may contact a local college, university or research organization, or get a referral from another police organization. Police departments may also discover individuals with expertise in policing research and outcome measurement by first retaining them as consultants to policy development or planning initiatives that naturally evolve into programs or projects requiring evaluation.

No matter how the initial contact is made, police leaders should assess whether there is likely to be a good fit between their organization and potential research partners before making a more formal commitment to collaborate in research endeavors. In addition to obtaining referrals from other police departments, police agencies should take a look at researchers' past publications, particularly those targeted to practitioner and public audiences. A researcher is more likely to be a good partner if s/he has worked with multidisciplinary teams comprised of both researchers and practitioners and has written research reports that are practical and "user-friendly". Experienced researchers, particularly those who have achieved tenured status at a college or university, may be better situated to obtain funding and other resources (such as graduate student research assistants) to support long-term research initiatives. On the other hand, researchers newer to the field and eager to gain research experience and publications may be more inclined to harmonize their investigative priorities with law enforcement needs and to devote more of their time and energy to partnering with law enforcement agencies.

If police agencies are interested in forging long-term partnerships, they should aim to partner with researchers located relatively near their community. Proximity enables researchers to become more familiar with their police partner's concerns and makes it easier for the partners to develop working relationships based on mutual trust and accountability. This mutual understanding is one of the key foundations of a productive and sustainable partnership.

Police leaders should consider all of these factors in determining whether potential research partnerships are likely to be productive. If researchers' interests and capabilities are not congruent with police problem-solving priorities, then the partnership will probably not be fruitful or long-lived.

Building Working Relationships

Effective police-researcher collaborations are founded on mutual trust and respect. To establish trust, police and researchers must continuously work to

understand each other's values and priorities, recognize commonalities and respect differences. This requires police and research partners to develop a common language and listen carefully to one another.

Police agencies that have witnessed research results being used to justify resource cutbacks or personnel changes in their or other departments may find it particularly challenging to develop collaborative working relationships with researchers. To begin more fruitful police-research partnerships requires that police leaders and their staff be willing to:

- share with researchers their past experiences, voice their misgivings and offer their honest perspectives on the problems with and promise of law enforcement research;
- work with researchers to frame police departments' immediate concerns and issues within a strategic problem-solving framework;
- develop an understanding of each other's vocabulary/language that will enable the partners to clearly communicate about shared priorities and concerns; and
- collaborate with researchers to develop a data collection and analysis plan that offers both police and researchers the promise of useful results while also limiting the potential for misunderstanding or misuse of information.

Police agencies wanting researchers to have a better understanding of the demands of police work have offered researchers opportunities to go on ride-alongs with police officers; to sit in on roll calls or observe shift changes; to participate in training events; to conduct individual interviews and/or discussion groups with key staff, including union representatives; and to utilize office space in police department buildings. Some police departments have also out-stationed police personnel for limited-term "internships" in research organizations that can help police personnel become more familiar with the research enterprise.

Police departments should develop with their research partners a mutual understanding about when and how research results will be shared, establish protocols that ensure appropriate credit will be given to police partners in written

products and public presentations, and agree on the best ways to provide police leaders and staff with information, reports and/or technical assistance. Police departments are more likely to successfully partner with researchers who consistently follow through on these commitments.⁶

Building mutually respectful, trusting working relationships takes a concerted effort, but it is absolutely essential to sustaining police-researcher partnerships. Police departments should seek out those researchers who are able to recognize the value of police professionals' knowledge and experience. Police leaders should consider that researchers may be taking professional risks by choosing to engage in action research rather than more traditional experimental investigations, and that in the long run, their partnership's success depends on acting in good faith and with professionalism at all times.

D. Organizing the Partnership

Establishing a productive research partnership requires that police leaders work with researchers to carefully define goals, expectations, roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms. This is especially important if the partnership involves multiple agencies and/or if the partners want it to be sustainable for a long period of time.

Types of Partnerships

There is no single partnership model that will be effective and sustainable across all police departments. Larger police agencies with internal crime analysis or research units are positioned differently from smaller police departments in developing partnerships with researchers.

Multi-agency partnerships, in which one research organization works with several police departments, can provide smaller police departments with opportunities to participate in the research enterprise. Small to mid-size police departments can

⁶ Tom McEwan. *Evaluation of the Locally Initiated Research Program*. Alexandria, VA: Institute for Law and Justice, September 2003, p. 160-161.

explore potentials for working with other law enforcement agencies in their region to determine whether their research agendas and organizational priorities are compatible, and if they are, to together recruit suitable research partners. Police departments should make it clear to their research partners that they expect them to act as “matchmakers”⁷, recruiting other researchers as needed to accomplish evolving research goals.

Defining Roles and Responsibilities

Many research partnerships have been founded based on personal connections between police leaders and researchers. While that may be a powerful impetus for forming the partnership, if these individuals leave their organizations, the partnership between the organizations may not be sustainable. To avoid this eventuality, research-related roles and duties should be assigned to *positions* rather than individuals in both the police department and the research organization.⁸ Then when turnover occurs (as is common in both police agencies and research teams), the continuity of the partnership between the organizations can be assured.

“Job descriptions” for police and their research partners should specify not only who (by position) will be involved, but also the specific research tasks and products for which they will be responsible or to which they will contribute, and the ways in which they will accomplish these responsibilities. This is important not only for clarifying mutual expectations, but also for communicating to incoming members of the research team what their role in the project will be. These job descriptions will likely change over time, as initial objectives are achieved and new goals evolve.

If undergraduate or graduate students are slated to be utilized, police departments should work with lead researchers to clarify training and supervision

⁷ McEwan, Op. cit., p. 193-197.

⁸ McEwan, op. cit., p. 154.

expectations for these research assistants. This can help defuse law enforcement partners' concerns about students' inexperience.

Written partnership agreements are another way that police departments can ensure the stability of their working relationships with researchers. Many police departments familiar with memoranda of understanding already utilize them to structure their collaborative agreements with various community partners.

Whatever they are called, written partnership agreements serve to:

- indicate that overall responsibility and accountability for research are shared by the partners
- state shared values and goals and
- describe the nature and extent of operational cooperation/collaboration.

The least formal agreements might simply be statements of shared accountability and general research goals, while more formal agreements usually detail the roles and responsibilities of the partners and spell out clearly the operational, staffing and funding commitments of research and police organizations. By formalizing partnerships through written partnership agreements or memoranda of understanding, police leaders and researchers can create a reference point to guide the decisions and activities of all those who participate in the research partnership. Police and research partners should take care to craft agreements that do not constrain their flexibility to respond to changing policy situations and research priorities.

E. Implementing Partnerships

Police leaders must actively partner with researchers to guide the development and implementation of a research agenda. This requires that police collaborate in defining research goals and objectives, establishing an action plan and timeline, putting in place a communications protocol, and planning for sustainability.

Engaging Police Personnel in Research

Initially, police leaders, particularly the Chief and command staff, must work closely with researchers in order to organize the partnership and set the research agenda. Once the structure and guidelines are established, successful implementation of a research partnership rests on the participation of police personnel, both sworn and civilian, in devising tools and strategies to collect information, and helping to collect relevant data. Although researchers may be primarily responsible for data analysis and report preparation, police personnel should also participate in these essential steps.

Police leaders must commit to engaging their front-line staff in the research initiative, affirming that this is an important part of their police work and reassuring them that research results will not be used against them, but rather will provide guides for improvement. By helping their staff see how they can benefit from research, police leaders can help to defuse their suspicions and engage them in the research process.

Some of the benefits that law enforcement staff members are likely to experience from participating in action research are:

- Enhanced problem-solving skills
- Information about policies and practices that have proven effective in other departments in promoting public safety
- Opportunities to test their innovative ideas in controlled settings
- Increased capacity to fine-tune long-standing procedures and practices

Police personnel will learn most effectively about these and other benefits through hands-on participation in research involving their agencies.

Setting the Research Agenda

Police and research partners will define relevant research topics together. In some instances, police departments will have specific questions that they want answered and turn to the researcher for assistance. Alternatively, the partnership may form without specific research questions in mind. Police

leaders can encourage and support researchers in identifying viable research questions that can be answered with social science (i.e., there is sufficient reliable data to address the issues). It is important, as well, to identify research projects the results of which will provide helpful guidance to the police department (e.g., the potential solutions are feasible given current resources and policy factors). Police practitioners have insights into a range of issues that can become a productive focus of research partnerships, and they must establish a mechanism to share their perspectives with researchers as agendas are set and as new knowledge leads to redefining the questions of interest.

Defining Research Goals and Objectives

Partners must together define short-term and long-range research goals related to the problems and issues on which they choose to focus. If the partnership is intended to be long-term, then it is particularly important to define interim goals and objectives that will help the partners document that they are making steady progress toward longer-term partnership goals.

Researchers will work with police to highlight the underlying factors that may be contributing to problems identified by police so that these factors can be more precisely targeted for change. Police should also highlight effective practices that already achieve good results, so that knowledge of the factors that foster these positive outcomes can contribute to problem-solving. This practice of “appreciative inquiry” has become a widely accepted method of discerning the key contributors to successful outcomes and applying them to promote positive organizational change.⁹

Researchers familiar with logic modeling techniques can help their police partners develop “road maps” linking resources to be invested in solving a problem to the desired short and long-range outcomes of a policy or program initiative. The process of defining goals and objectives for action research efforts

⁹ David L. Cooperrider and Diana Whitney. *A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005.

should encourage partners' creativity and flexibility. Learning from mistakes is as important as is applying lessons derived from successful programs or practices. Research goals and objectives will evolve over time as the issues of concern to police and the local justice system change.

Establishing Research Action Plan and Timeline

Police should work with their research partners to develop research designs that minimize intrusiveness while still producing the intended results. The partners should collaborate to develop appropriate tools and methods to collect necessary baseline and follow-up information, and decide which kinds of information should be collected by each of the partners.

The partners should clarify who will have access to any data collected for the research process, how the data will be used, and the ways individual privacy and confidentiality will be protected. Attending to these concerns will help ensure that the partnership's research plan is approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) that governs research which involves human subjects. Due to the complexity of this required IRB review process, startup of research efforts may be delayed if the IRB requires modifications in research design or data collection approaches in order to better protect research subjects' rights to privacy and confidentiality.

Because police agencies depend on timely feedback from research activities, they should work with researchers to set interim research goals, decide when interim reports of results will be written and disseminated, and celebrate joint accomplishments on the way to achieving long-range goals. Police leaders should ask researchers to provide them with detailed and up-to-date information about the availability of research funding and about the time it may take to pursue these funding sources, develop research designs and tools, collect and analyze data, and produce reports. Research timelines should build in periodic review of partnership agreements. As research agendas evolve, so should the

ways that researchers and police departments work together to achieve research goals.

Safeguarding Objectivity and Credibility of Research

It is in police agencies' best interest to preserve the objectivity of their researcher partners and thereby the credibility of their research. Although researchers must develop mutually respectful working relationships with police, they should also maintain appropriate professional boundaries. In particular, researchers cannot contribute to or participate directly in investigating or prosecuting individual perpetrators.

It is the researchers' "outsider" perspective on broad policing issues that is one of their most valuable contributions to law enforcement research. Efforts to familiarize research partners with the day-to-day challenges of policing must also honor their need to remain "outside of the fray." In a mutually respectful partnership, police and researchers will be able to "agree to disagree" in constructive ways to arrive at a research design that weaves practical experience together with analytic expertise to produce effective change strategies and meaningful performance measures.

Police personnel who work with researchers learn that their questions often clarify underlying issues and stimulate creative thinking that ultimately helps police agencies resolve real-world problems. Police can bolster their research partners' credibility by welcoming their constructive critiques as evidence that they are balancing their insights into police work with their objective observations of its effectiveness.

Attending to Political and Organizational Factors

For many police leaders and line staff, participating in research is a risk, and they may need to be reassured that the results will be worth putting their careers or reputations on the line. Police staff members who have achieved positive outcomes through partnering with researchers will be the best ambassadors to

their peers, helping to allay suspicions and focus energy on generating useful knowledge.

Police leaders should establish from the beginning of any partnership that researchers may offer guidance regarding changes in policies or procedures suggested by research findings, but that they will not be the final decision-makers regarding police responses to those findings. When positive outcomes of change efforts are documented through action research, police agencies should work with their research partners to ensure that appropriate credit is given to all who contributed to designing the change strategy, implementing the changes and evaluating their impacts.

Although partnership agreements structure and stabilize collaborations between police agencies and research organizations, it is important that individual police staff and researchers maintain working relationships based on mutual trust and respect. It is these relationships that will enable the partners to weather challenges and emerge with an even stronger commitment to learning together about what works in law enforcement.

Fostering Ongoing Communications

Police should collaborate with their research partners to develop a communications protocol that will both facilitate internal dialogue between the partners and prescribe the ways research results will be shared with others. This protocol should address the 'who', 'what' and 'when' of communications between the partners and with other agencies and the public.

Traditionally, researchers prefer to wait until all the evidence is in and analyses are completed before issuing a report on their findings. However, police departments should expect that researchers partnering with them will evaluate results of program changes and commit to providing interim analyses that allow police to adjust their policies and practices as initiatives are being implemented. Police departments should consider asking researchers to use "bottom up"

briefings¹⁰, sharing initial findings with groups of police line staff most closely associated with the research effort to ask for their input before sharing the results with police leaders. This is an excellent way to enhance the credibility of the research effort and improve the accuracy and utility of research reports.

Researchers will sometimes have to say things that police would rather not hear, and police leaders should provide for ways that researchers can report “bad news” that will promote positive change rather than defensiveness. If research findings suggest that a particular police policy or program is not having its desired impact, police agencies should request that their research partners inform them as soon as possible, and that they offer plausible alternatives to current practices. There should also be protocols in place to ensure that negative findings will not be prematurely published or publicized.

Police departments must clarify with their research partners the types of written research summaries that they will require throughout the research initiative, including any interim published reports or presentations of findings. Researchers should be willing and able to assist police with composing reports on the research process and results that are appropriate for a variety of audiences, including other justice system agencies, elected officials, the media, business and faith community leaders, and citizens.

Police agencies should expect that before submitting articles or final project reports for peer review or publication, researchers will submit drafts to their police partners for review. In addition to building trust between partners, this practice can help ensure that the reports are factually accurate, and will enable researchers to incorporate practitioners’ perspectives in published findings and recommendations.

¹⁰ Wesley Skogan. The Challenge of Timeliness and Utility in Research and Evaluation. Northwestern University Institute for Policy Research, November 12, 2003, p. 4.

Planning for Sustainability

Police departments interested in establishing long-term partnerships with researchers must plan for their sustainability from the beginning. Sustainability considerations should be incorporated into partnership agreements, communications protocols and research agendas. The Finance Project, which studies the factors contributing to successful community-based partnerships, identifies eight key elements of sustainability, adapted here to focus on police-researcher partnerships:¹¹

Vision: Developing a shared vision, goals and objectives for policing research.

Results orientation: Demonstrating success through measurable outcomes, especially interim indicators of progress.

Strategic financing orientation: Identifying resources needed to sustain research activities and strategies to obtain them.

Adaptability to changing conditions: Adjusting to changes in crime trends, new evidence-based practices, and organizational and political contexts.

Broad base of support: Building a broad base of people within and outside of the research and police organizations who value the work of the research partnership.

Key champions: Obtaining the support of police, research and other leaders willing to use their influence to support and stabilize the research partnership.

Strong internal systems: Establishing a partnership agreement that specifies roles and responsibilities, and a communications protocol that supports clear and open internal and external communications.

Sustainability plan: Clarifying how the partners want the research partnership to evolve in the future.

¹¹ The Finance Project. Sustaining Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Key Elements for Success. Washington, DC. April 2002.
<http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/sustainability/default.asp>

Police and research leaders can refer to these sustainability factors as they periodically assess their partnership, and identify areas that need strengthening to ensure the longevity of the research initiative.

Not all police-researcher partnerships can or should be sustained indefinitely. If a partnership becomes non-productive and cannot be re-invigorated, or if personal or organizational incompatibilities become insurmountable, it is important for the partners to acknowledge this reality and devise a means to formally end the collaboration. Whatever the reasons for the ending, it is essential that the accomplishments of the partnership are documented and acknowledged, and that contributions of key individuals are recognized.

F. Assessing Partnerships

The sustainability factors summarized above provide one framework that can be used to assess the success of police-researcher partnerships. Police should also work with research partners to establish ways to regularly monitor the partnership's progress toward its specific goals. Research timelines should build in periodic review of partnership agreements. As research agendas evolve, so should the ways that police departments and researchers work together to achieve research goals.

Mechanisms to record the establishment, development and achievements of the partnership should be put in place early on and used to measure its success over time. The partners should measure their performance against expectations in both *process* (how they work together) and *results* (what the partnership accomplishes).

At the process level, partners should continuously assess the quality of their communications and the breadth of police participation in the research initiative. At a fundamental level, a process evaluation of the partnership should ask whether both partners are satisfied with quality and results of their working relationships, and offer feedback on which to base necessary improvements.

Police and researchers should also systematically assess whether policy and program changes instituted as a result of their research are having the desired results. The partners should define short-term, intermediate and long-range performance measures that will permit them to adjust their strategies over time to maximize success.

G. Action Agenda

Law enforcement agencies interested in forging and sustaining rewarding partnerships with researchers must cultivate openness, flexibility and creativity. There are several key steps that police leaders can take to develop and ensure the success of these partnerships.

Reach out to researchers in your locality and state. Develop working relationships with researchers by connecting with them at workshops or conferences on topics of mutual concern. Invite researchers active in your region to provide training to police employees about evidence-based policing practices or other topics of mutual interest. Encourage police employees to take advantage of relevant course offerings and degree programs at local colleges and universities, and offer faculty members the opportunity to involve experienced police officers as instructors or mentors for their students as appropriate. Contact local colleges and universities to determine whether there are appropriate researchers interested in partnering with your department.

If you want to sustain long-term research partnerships, commit to investigating broad program or issue areas, rather than focusing on specific projects or concerns that may have first motivated your interest in policing research. Although some police agencies and researchers may initially choose to form a research partnership to focus on pressing issues for a limited time period, to be sustainable in the long term, partnerships must have a research agenda that places urgent policing problems within a broader context. Police leaders can work with researchers to investigate

the underlying origins of these problems so that they can develop proactive solutions rather than simply reacting to the “crisis of the day.”

Engage police professionals at every level of the agency in all aspects of the research partnership. As with every other policing function, research partnerships can only succeed if front-line staff members have a sense of ownership in the process and results. When front-line police staff, both sworn and civilian, participate in setting the research agenda, collecting and analyzing data, and transforming raw data into useful information, the research partnership is much more likely to yield findings that lead to long-lasting improvements in police effectiveness.

Be specific about your police department’s need to be informed of interim findings as research initiatives are being implemented. Law enforcement leaders naturally want to use research findings to continuously enhance their effectiveness rather than waiting for researchers to complete their final analyses. Police leaders should work with their research partners to structure a process that incorporates periodic briefings in which police personnel are asked to provide feedback about researchers’ observations and tentative conclusions. When negative findings emerge, police and their research partners should view this as an opportunity to learn “about inaccurate pictures of current reality or about strategies that didn’t work as expected”¹², and to retool police practices and/or the research agenda as appropriate.

Clarify communication protocols and publication agreements early on in the research partnership, and revisit these assumptions as necessary. Although researchers will likely want to retain their rights to publish research findings in venues of their choosing, police agencies should establish agreements with research partners that specify the types of user-friendly summaries that will meet police needs to inform elected officials, justice system

¹² Peter M. Senge. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday, 1990, p. 154.

colleagues and the public about research efforts in which police have participated. Before submitting articles for peer review or publication, researchers should request that their police partners review and provide input on drafts. Police leaders should also clarify the ways in which they and their agencies should be credited for their contributions to research processes and outcomes.

Explore a variety of sources of funding for law enforcement research.

With federal funding for research on policing shrinking, it is imperative that police agencies and their research partners look to other public and private sector sources for sustainable support. State and local governments concerned with the cost-effectiveness of investments they are making in law enforcement may be persuaded to fund policing research that promises to improve outcomes with limited or no additional resources. Larger police agencies with their own crime analysis, planning or research units may be interested in contracting with external researchers to work on aspects of their overall research agenda. Small or mid-size police departments may choose to develop multi-agency partnerships in which each agency contributes resources (staff time, information, funds) to support a collective partnership with researchers.

Encourage the involvement of researchers from a variety of disciplines and organizations as the research partnership evolves.

Law enforcement research efforts can benefit from the perspectives of researchers trained in a wide range of fields, including criminology, economics, sociology, psychology, public policy analysis and urban planning. Policing research can also be enhanced by the participation of individuals trained in fields such as information technology, organizational development, management auditing, computer science, engineering and architecture. Although researchers may often be in the best position to know when other specialists' knowledge and skills are necessary to advance the partnership's law enforcement research agenda, police leaders

should advocate for the involvement of researchers with the experience and talents to meet the challenges of real-world research.

If students are to be used as research assistants, ensure that they receive relevant training and continuous supervision by both police and research professionals. Inexperienced students, no matter how knowledgeable they may be in their field of study, can inadvertently damage the trust between police staff and researchers and reduce the credibility of research results. Police leaders should work with senior researchers to devise training and supervision protocols that will help students meet the challenges of action research while they are learning to become trusted participants in law enforcement research partnerships.

Recognize when a partnership with researchers has run its course and take steps to end it that will preserve the potential for future research collaborations. Police and their research partners should be alert to signs that a partnership has achieved its full potential, and be prepared to work together to close out their work in an orderly and mutually respectful manner. Police departments that have experienced a successful research partnership which ended on a positive note will be more willing and able to enter into another collaborative venture with these or other researchers when the time is right.

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