



COPS

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Guidelines for Starting and Operating a New Police Department

by
Deborah Spence
Barbara Webster
Edward Connors



Prepared for the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vii
Purpose and Overview: Guide at a Glance.....	ix
Chapter 1: Should We Have Our Own Police Department?.....	1
This Could Get Complicated	1
Doing It for the Right Reasons	2
Options for Meeting Your Community's Policing Needs	4
Chapter 2: Conducting a Strategic Analysis	9
Overview of the Task	9
Who Will Conduct the Analysis?	12
Involving the Community.....	13
Assessing Current Services and Demand	14
<i>Current Services: Staffing, Deployment, Style, and Response Times</i>	14
<i>Crimes and Calls for Service</i>	15
Projecting the Impact of Future Growth.....	17
Getting a Handle on Costs	18
Summary.....	20
Chapter 3: Laying the Groundwork	21
Deciding to Go Forward	21
Setting the Scope of Services.....	21
Negotiating the Transition Period.....	22
Hiring a Chief.....	23
First Steps for the New Chief	25
Promoting the New Department.....	26
Chapter 4: Handling the Details	27
Administrative Decisions	27
Hiring	31
<i>Before You Hire</i>	31
<i>Recruiting and Selecting Officers</i>	32
<i>Other Considerations</i>	33
Facility Decisions	33
Equipment.....	34
Training	35
Operational Plans.....	35
Support Functions	37
<i>Lock-ups</i>	37
<i>Communications and Dispatch</i>	38
<i>Records Management</i>	39
Chapter 5: Summary Checklist	41
Reference and Resources for Law Enforcement	45

Acknowledgements

This project received extensive support and guidance from Carl R. Peed, director of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS); Pam Cammarata, assistant director; and Rob Chapman, senior policy analyst. We especially appreciated Rob's extensive time and effort on the project.

Project team members included the following Institute for Law and Justice staff: Deborah Spence, Barbara Webster, and Edward Connors.

The project was also assisted by an excellent group of knowledgeable consultants whose participation included reviewing the draft guide in detail and providing valuable comments for improving it:

- Dr. Gary Cordner, Department of Criminal Justice and Police Studies, Eastern Kentucky University (former police chief, St. Michaels, Maryland)
- Dale Hamilton, chief of police, Duck, North Carolina (founded the department)
- Michael Scott, clinical assistant professor, University of Wisconsin Law School (founding police chief, Lauderhill, Florida, Police Department).

In addition, we thank all the professionals who gave of their time and expertise to provide information for this guide.

Purpose and Overview: Guide at a Glance

This guide will help public officials and citizens decide whether to start their own police departments and—if they decide to go forward—to offer guidance on how to do it efficiently and effectively. The guide is relevant for rural, suburban, and urban communities of all sizes. It is not meant to be a manual for managing and operating all aspects of a police agency because the decisions and issues discussed require a great deal of additional consideration and work. But the guide can be a valuable tool to assist communities in thoughtfully considering the major issues involved in starting a police department.

Although starting a new police agency is a complex and expensive undertaking, very little has been written about it. In creating this guide, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office), U. S. Department of Justice, wanted to help fill the void by providing practical advice from communities that have navigated the process successfully. The planning tips and lessons learned included in this guide come from several sources:

- One hundred sixty-five police and other community leaders who responded to a national survey of jurisdictions that recently started new police departments with support from COPS grant funding
- An advisory group that included experienced police officials who have led start-up agencies, as well as researchers and consultants who had experience as police chiefs and officers
- Publications and resources that can help communities work through the critical issues involved—strategic planning, contracting options, policies and procedures, staffing, training, and facilities planning, to name a few. Selected resources appear in the References and Resources section at the end of the guide.

We recognize that each local jurisdiction has different needs, legal requirements, potential funding sources, and political environments. In fact, individuals within the community may well have different visions at this stage for what police

services ought to be like. But despite these differences, there are certain major decisions, as well as many details, that every community will need to address to be successful. The guide focuses on this common ground.

- Chapter 1, “Should We Have Our Own Police Department?” begins by examining the pros and cons of forming a department. For example:
 - Are you interested for the right reasons in having a police department?
 - What are some other options for achieving your goals?
- Chapter 2, “Conducting a Strategic Assessment,” assumes there is still a strong enough interest—although not necessarily community-wide agreement—to more closely examine the issues involved in starting a department. For example:
 - What kind of information do you need to make an informed decision?
 - Who should gather and analyze the information?
 - Why is it so important to involve citizens in the process, and what are some effective ways to do that?
- Chapter 3, “Laying the Groundwork,” is for communities that have completed their assessments and have decided to move forward with starting a new department. At this stage, some of the questions to answer include the following:
 - What types of services can the department reasonably be expected to provide?
 - Can you afford enough officers to schedule them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to respond to calls and provide patrol coverage? If not, who will provide these basic services in the off hours?
 - How will you handle complex investigations and other police functions? How will you respond to critical incidents and provide public safety at special events?
 - Will your officers have time to do proactive work with youth and other community members to prevent crime and solve problems?
 - Are you ready to hire a police chief? Are you prepared to give the chief enough time—usually at least 6 months—to get ready to open the doors?



- Chapter 4, “Handling the Details,” covers the transition period between hiring the chief and starting patrol operations. It reviews many of the details the chief will need to address—from major policy and hiring decisions to relatively minor ones like where to purchase office supplies. It also suggests continuing roles for legal, financial, and other experts, as well as citizens. For example:
 - Which policies and procedures must the chief develop before patrol service can begin (e.g., a use-of-force policy)? Which ones can wait until later?
 - Will citizens be involved in the policy development process? In the officer hiring process? If so, how?
- Chapter 5, “Summary Checklist,” highlights the critical action steps discussed in the guide, along with some final thoughts from several jurisdictions about the obstacles they have encountered and the benefits they have enjoyed. You might want to read this chapter before you read the entire guide.



Should We Have Our Own Police Department?

If you are reading this guide, most likely some local government and community leaders have already answered this question affirmatively. You may be just starting to investigate the possibility, or you may feel you are well on the way toward making a decision. In either case, you will want to be sure you have conducted a thorough, objective review of three critical factors discussed in this chapter:

1. Rational and cost-effective reasons for having your own police department.
2. Current level of citizen support (not just political support) for operating the department. This includes a willingness to devote time to supporting the department, a commitment to seeing the process through, and funding.
3. All available options for meeting the community's policing needs, including alternative ways to provide all or selected policing services, as well as resources available to the jurisdiction that might be converted for use by a new police department (e.g., cars, equipment, buildings).

This Could Get Complicated

As you may have discovered by now, operating a police department is definitely complicated, whether you employ one officer or a chief and many officers. This is simply a fact and is not meant to be discouraging because the benefits can be substantial: you can gain greater control over the way in which basic policing services are provided. But with this control comes greater responsibility:

- ***It will be time-consuming.*** The planning and transition phases alone can easily take a year. And the time commitment does not end when the department opens its doors. The department will need not only oversight but also ongoing support from the local government and community as a whole.

- ***It may be more expensive than other options.*** Even if you can manage the start-up costs, can you sustain the department over the long term? A number of communities that received COPS grants for police department start-up costs could not find a way to continue once the grant period ended. Policing costs draw significantly from a municipal budget, and creating a department could seriously affect funding for other services.
- ***The end result may not be substantially better than what you have now. It's about money, but it isn't all about money.*** What unique value will the department bring to the community? Will you be able to attract a highly qualified chief and police personnel to work in your community? Can you offer benefits that will encourage them to stay?

Doing It for the Right Reasons

The first step toward starting a new department is to examine the justifications: Why does this option seem attractive? Some of the main reasons given by other communities are listed below. Consider which of these apply in your community.

Dissatisfaction with Current Services or Costs

- Slow response times to calls for service
- Unsatisfactory quality of personnel or services
- Frequent rotation of different sworn personnel in and out of the community
- Lack of police visibility (e.g., seldom seen on patrol, don't walk a beat)
- Unacceptable style of policing (e.g., impersonal, bureaucratic)
- Dissatisfaction with increasing costs of services (e.g., sheriff has raised fees)
- Local government wants more control over the officers
- Local government and community want more services
- Local government and community want unique services (e.g., officer in school, bike patrol)
- Local government and community want more personalized services (e.g., problem solving, community policing).

Recent and Continuing Population Growth

- Growing suburb of a growing city
- Increase in tourism bringing more people and more traffic
- Annexation
- New incorporation planned, provision of municipal police services required.

In analyzing current service levels, it is important to use a data-driven, decision-making model. Does the community have reliable data about the actual level of services provided, crime, crime trends, and noncall for service activity? Does it have a context for interpreting the data? For example, are response times to nonemergencies extraordinarily slow, or are they acceptable compared with most efficient and effective agencies?

There is no single correct justification for having your own department, but if you have checked one or more items under “population growth,” then it may be a realistic option for your local jurisdiction. Community desires for more services, more personalized services, or lower costs are legitimate reasons for change as well, but the bottom line is this: the community will need a growing tax base to support its own police department. If you cannot identify solid indicators of development and growth, give serious consideration to the police service alternatives discussed in the next section.

Finally, while there is no one right reason for starting a department, there are several *wrong* reasons. For example:

- Elected official has a personal issue with the sheriff.
- Current police service provider has mishandled a single event.
- Existing sheriff has arrested, investigated, or enforced the law against an influential local person.
- A major crime, such as a kidnapping or homicide, has elevated fear of crime among residents.
- A new police department is the pet project of a single, influential community member.

Political support for change is essential, but this is not the same as one or two public figures seeking to “punish” the current police service provider. Another political factor to consider is whether policing services provided by an elected sheriff may change after a new election. Concern over the mishandling of incidents is a different matter, but one mishandled incident does not necessarily mean the agency has widespread problems. It will be important to consider what is being done to correct the wrong (e.g., developing new policies, disciplining the involved personnel, intensifying training).

Survey Results: Reasons for Starting a Department

Among communities responding to the national survey on start-up police departments, the major reasons cited for forming a department were desire for quicker response times (68 percent), dissatisfaction with current services (65 percent), and desire for more local accountability (45 percent).



In short, if one of the justifications above is the only or primary impetus for change, you may not have a strong enough foundation to sustain a police department. An objective, independent analysis would be useful in preventing personal agendas or inexperience from clouding the final recommendation.

Options for Meeting Your Community's Policing Needs

Whether or not you anticipate the type of economic stability and growth that might support operating a police department, the next step should be to carefully review all available options for police services. These are discussed briefly below, but with a note of caution: become familiar with the relevant laws in your own state, as well as any opinions the state attorney general may have published about interpreting the laws governing jurisdiction of law enforcement agencies. The general information provided below does not constitute legal advice.

Continue to rely on current services (not a contract). In most jurisdictions, the county sheriff, county police, or state police have a general duty to enforce criminal laws in local jurisdictions. Some legal distinctions depend on whether the local jurisdiction is in an incorporated or unincorporated area. This service is supported by taxes that citizens already pay and in all likelihood will continue to pay. The sheriff or other agency, however, is not obligated to provide cities and towns with a specific number of sworn officers or a specific type or quality of service. As a result, limited services may be a key source of your community's dissatisfaction with the status quo. Even so, you may be able to improve on the situation. Consider the following questions:

- Have you exhausted all means to negotiate changes in the amount, quality, or type of services you currently receive?
- Is there room for compromise? For example, can you offer office space (storefront), equipment (vehicles, computers), or supplies as a tradeoff to help the current provider dedicate more deputy or officer time to your community?

Contract with an existing agency (sheriff, county police, state police). Some local jurisdictions enter into contracts with existing law enforcement agencies to receive dedicated policing services; for example, a specific number of officers assigned to work in their communities for a stated number of hours. These arrangements can provide the advantages of greater police coverage for crime prevention and more rapid response times to emergency calls. The drawback is that local government control over the assigned officers is limited. Various departments, however, are able to offer a variety of contracting options. Two of the most experienced in this matter are the Los Angeles County (California) Sheriff's Department (LASD) and the King County (Washington) Sheriff's Office (KCSO).

The LASD, for example, began providing contract police services in 1954 to the city of Lakewood. State law mandated that Lakewood provide municipal law enforcement services upon incorporation, but the city wanted an alternative to the cost of operating its own department. Today, 40 of Los Angeles County's 88 cities contract with the LASD for local police services. The cities range in population from 700 to 150,000. The KCSO offers three contract models, which are described in terms of both cost effectiveness and degree of local control. The KCSO's "shared supervision model," for example, is characterized as "very cost effective, excellent local control" and the "most popular model." In contrast, the "city model," which comes closest to having a stand-alone department, is described as offering the most control but as being only "reasonably" cost effective. Although your police service provider may not have the same contracting capabilities as these large sheriff's departments, you may be able to adapt arrangements you discover in other counties and states to fit local needs and resources. Key questions for your community to address include the following:

- Is it possible to negotiate a contract with the county sheriff, county police, or state police to obtain the services your local government now desires or anticipates needing soon?
- How would the costs of such an arrangement compare to those of starting and operating your own agency?
- Is the control you may gain through one of the more expensive contracting options worth the tradeoff in costs?

Consolidate police services or agencies. Pooling police resources with other cities or towns can be a complex undertaking, but some communities have been able to take advantage of the economies of scale that various consolidation options provide without sacrificing too much local identity and control. Although consolidation is most relevant if your community already operates its own department and is concerned about sustaining it, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) looks at consolidation as "a matter of degree" in its guide, *Consolidating Police Services: An IACP Planning Approach*. The IACP discusses the pros and cons of seven consolidation options, ranging from

For more information on these examples, see the LASD web site: www.lasd.org/divisions/hqtrs/contract_law.html and the KCSO web site: www.metrokc.gov/sheriff/partners/contract_program/details.aspx

One community that consolidated two small police departments described these advantages:

By combining forces into one, we have been able to provide 24-hour coverage 7 days a week, provide more training, and obtain better equipment. Two officers are on at all times, which provides a back-up unit.

National Survey Respondent

combining only certain functions (e.g., dispatch, records management), or cross-deputizing city and county officers, to the most complex options of combining entire city and county police departments.

Public Safety Departments: One Form of Consolidation

A concept that gained some popularity in the 1970s was to combine police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS) under the umbrella of a public safety agency, with police officers cross-trained as firefighters and EMS technicians. One community that responded to the national survey—Marco Island, Florida—originally planned to do that but then decided in favor of creating a police department. It became clear that the extensive training needed to acquire and maintain certifications in all three specialties would have meant taking police officers off the streets for extended periods. About 30 percent of their work time would have been devoted to training. Jurisdictions that have public safety departments typically have either modified the original concept, or they have the funds and personnel needed to provide for extensive training, retraining, and recertification without short-changing patrol coverage.

Contract with private security. This may be an option for your community if one of your main concerns is a need for heightened security in the downtown business district, at an industrial park, or at a local school. The Woodlands in

Start with the bare minimum services. It is easy to overextend your resources on technology and equipment. People are your most valuable asset.

National Survey Respondent

Texas, for example, is an unincorporated, master-planned community whose resident population exceeds 50,000. Public safety and law enforcement services are provided by the Montgomery County Sheriff's Department through a combination of assigned and contracted deputies, private security firms, and other arrangements.

Create a new limited-service agency. This is often the only workable and affordable option for communities that do not wish to pursue any of the options described above and, instead, want to create their own stand-alone agency. Basic call response and crime prevention include responding to calls for police service, handling other patrol responsibilities, conducting follow-up investigations of minor crimes, and providing other specialized services of importance to the community (for example, crime-prevention programs, community policing activities). Reliance on other law enforcement agencies will still be critical for such functions as the 911 call center and dispatching, complex investigations, specialized tactical units, crime lab services, and others (see Chapter 4).

Most respondents to the survey of COPS-supported start-up agencies depend on other departments for specialized support, although some are now expanding their in-house capabilities in various areas. Consultations with newer departments, including site visits if possible, provide valuable opportunities to learn from other jurisdictions. The COPS Office can assist in identifying departments that are willing to share information about their experiences.

Create a new full-service agency. For the majority of communities, it is not practical or economically feasible to begin with a full-service agency. The staffing and equipment costs of operating a call dispatch center alone would exceed some local governments' entire policing budgets. Of course, in high-growth communities, a successful new local police department may evolve to take on more responsibilities as it increases staffing and expertise. Some growing communities have imposed public safety developers' fees to fund services or facilities (an example is Brentwood, California); and it may be possible to require specific public safety enhancements with all new development (e.g., wireless access points, cameras linked to wireless access points). But few departments can afford to start out with full-service operations. Neither the expertise nor the money is likely to be in place at start-up.



Conducting a Strategic Analysis

This chapter will help community decisionmakers who want to invest more time in analyzing whether the jurisdiction should have its own police department. Conducting a strategic analysis is the next essential step toward determining the best police service option for a community. To assist with the process, this chapter addresses the following questions:

- What does a strategic analysis entail?
- Who should conduct the analysis?
- What information is needed, and where can it be found?
- What role should the community play in this process?

Overview of the Task

The purpose of conducting a strategic analysis is straightforward: to prepare officials and the community to make an informed decision. Areas to examine more closely include the following:

- Current police services
- Demand for police services (crime trends, calls for service)
- Plans and projections for future growth
- Community needs, desires, expectations, and support for various options
- Fiscal resources and the impact of funding a new department on other city/county services
- Existing resources (e.g., facilities, vehicles) that might be made available to a new department.

The assessment is essentially a three-stage process: (1) gather as much information and data as possible from a variety of sources, (2) analyze and interpret the information, and (3) translate the findings into decisions about the nature and scope of police services the community needs. Jurisdictions responding to the national survey on start-up police agencies offered several key pieces of advice to consider before setting up a police department.

A priority for communities is to implement a needs assessment and a strategic plan of how they are going to absorb salaries once the COPS funding runs out. My city is now saying they cannot afford a police department because the funding is gone. They knew before they started the funding was only for three years and did nothing to prepare for the adjustment.

National Survey Respondent

Work through the assessment process. Only about one-fourth of survey respondents said that their jurisdiction had conducted a **formal** needs assessment before moving forward with start-up plans. Some realized this was a mistake when they found themselves short of funds to continue the department after their seed money had been spent. Be leery of claims that “we already know” what’s needed. Most people have never paid much attention to what it takes to operate a police department.

The assessment will be time-consuming, but it does not have to be an overwhelming task. As one survey respondent stated, it comes down to this: “Research and ask questions to find out what you don’t know.”

Obtain legal advice. Before proceeding, you will need legal advice about the conditions under which a community in your state and county can start its own police department and the jurisdiction that such a police department would have. Legal advice (e.g., provided by your jurisdiction’s attorney) will be critical at other points along the way regarding liability, employment law, and other issues. It is important at an early stage for elected officials to understand that taking responsibility for the actions of police officers carries the potential of costly liability. Beyond interactions of officers with citizens, liability can reach to the adequacy of their hiring, training, retention, and supervision, as well as to departmental policies.

Expect potential difficulties obtaining some of the data. Ideally, the current provider of police services will be able to generate useful data about crimes and calls for service in your community. Nevertheless, you may encounter obstacles related either to politics or to records management systems.

- **Political obstacles.** What is the working/political relationship between local government and county leaders? Does the sheriff or county want to maintain a current contract or oppose formation of a new local police department for other reasons? If so, getting cooperation with your data-collection efforts may require some negotiations. If you do start your own department, you will still be dependent on call-taking, investigative, and other services from current providers. While most of the information required for analysis should be readily accessible public information, the existing service providers should be included as stakeholders in the planning process. This will encourage a more cooperative atmosphere.

- **Records management.** The current police service provider may be cooperative but may not have an information management system that can easily produce breakdowns on crime, arrests, or calls for the jurisdiction(s) that would be covered by a new agency. In situations like this, you can do the following:
 - Review breakdowns for the smallest geographic area that includes your jurisdiction.
 - Create a small sample of ongoing calls for service, arrests, etc. Ask the existing provider to track data applying to your jurisdiction for a specified time for use in your future decision-making.
 - Have someone on your assessment team manually extract data on your jurisdiction from available records.
 - Obtain estimates based on interviews with experienced personnel or similar communities.

Not all demands for police services are captured in official logs of calls for service or crime reports. An accurate assessment of the public demand for police service must extend beyond the review of public records.

Involve the community. A recurring theme among national survey respondents was the importance of grassroots community support. This support—critical once a department begins operation—is much more likely to be forthcoming if the community is involved in the assessment and planning phases. Community engagement activities such as town hall meetings and focus groups also present strategic opportunities for local government to inform and educate the public.

Get help from people who know police work. This is particularly important when it comes to interpreting the data you collect on crime, calls for service, and officer workloads. Consulting with nearby police chiefs—individually or by involving them on an expert panel or steering committee—will help ensure that cost estimates take into consideration the less obvious administrative, operational, and equipment costs as well as the “big ticket” items such as salaries and benefits or vehicles and maintenance. Other options include contracting with an association of policing professionals, experienced policing consultants or academics, or a retired police chief for assistance with assessment and planning.

Consider the impact on other components of the criminal justice system. Establishing a police department will require changes in relationships and, potentially, changes in procedures with the courts, prosecutor’s office, jail, community corrections (probation, parole), and defense attorneys (e.g., public defenders). In some jurisdictions, the new officers’ work may significantly affect the workloads of these other agencies (e.g., the community wants greater



enforcement of drug laws). You'll also need to consider how the department will work with programs that serve people who come to police attention but are not arrested (e.g., delinquent youth, victims of domestic violence, people who are intoxicated in public).

Who Will Conduct the Analysis?

There are several possibilities for who would conduct the analysis, depending on the jurisdiction's government structure and resources. Whoever leads the assessment should maintain a broad and objective perspective of the community's public safety needs and economic interests. For example, any of the following might take the lead:

- City or town manager
- Mayor and city/town council
- Council public safety committee
- Consultant (e.g., a local college professor)
- Volunteers from the community.

Most incorporated jurisdictions will probably turn to the city/town manager (or an incorporation committee if the change is still in progress). Outside consultants were retained by only about 10 percent of communities responding

Survey Results: Conducting the Strategic Analysis

In addition to the city/town manager and council members/committees, respondents to the national survey on start-up police departments mentioned the following people or organizations as leaders in the assessment process:

- State or regional development and planning commission
- Retired state police official
- Former mayor
- Tribal council administration
- Sheriff
- School superintendent/board (for school system police departments)
- Special assessment committee.

Community leaders interested in having a retired law enforcement officer lead the strategic analysis should look to those with at least 5 years of management-level experience. A law enforcement background alone does not necessarily mean an individual will have acquired the special skills needed for such an analysis.

to the national survey, but this could be money well spent because, for example, community leaders cannot devote the time, or the effort would benefit from a knowledgeable neutral party. The least likely of these options would be an entirely citizen-volunteer effort, although individual citizens can make important contributions.

Involving the Community

Key to conducting a productive assessment is determining the political and community desire for improved police services and the level of support for the options under consideration. Deliberate efforts to involve the community should be made in one or more of the following ways:

- Council input (e.g., direct the assessment and/or actively participate in data collection and analysis, review the findings)
- Public hearings
- City/town hall meetings
- Surveys of residents and businesses
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Formal referendum.

Survey Tips

- A survey of citizens and businesses can be done by mail, door-to-door, telephone, or e-mail, but the objective is to be as inclusive as possible.
- Check with other police departments for sample citizen questionnaires. Many departments publish these on their web sites.
- Mail or paper surveys offer the advantage of letting people respond anonymously, but the response rate may be low. Boost the return rate by emphasizing the importance of participating; wording the questions clearly; making the questionnaire brief; offering multiple choice, rating scales, or other nonnarrative response options; and including stamped, addressed return envelopes.
- The questionnaire should ask about crimes and problems of concern, experience and satisfaction with current services, changes desired, and level/type of support the respondent might provide for a new department or other contemplated change. Citizens can also be asked about their willingness to spend more money (raise taxes) for enhanced police services.
- Enlist an organization or person who is widely perceived as objective to conduct the survey. The local community college might provide survey assistance.

Town hall-style meetings, although structured less formally than public hearings, still need to be well planned and managed to encourage attendance and to allow all participants a fair opportunity to be heard. Here are some tips for making these meetings productive:

- Enlist a skilled, neutral facilitator
- Hold meetings in the evening or on a Saturday
- Provide hospitality (food/beverages, child care, transportation)
- Encourage diverse participation.

Assessing Current Services and Demand

Two objectives are part of the assessment:

1. Accurately describe the police services currently provided.
2. Identify trends in the demand for police services.

Current Services: Staffing, Deployment, Style, and Response Times

Staffing and Deployment. For the purpose of this assessment, main staffing and deployment questions will be related to call response, patrol, and crime-prevention services:

- How many patrol deputies or officers are currently assigned to cover your local jurisdiction? How large are their beats (geographic area they are assigned to cover)?
- When are the officers present in your local jurisdiction (days of the week, hours of the day)? How is coverage of your jurisdiction provided at other times?
- Are the same deputies/officers regularly assigned to your jurisdiction, or do many different officers frequently rotate in and out of this duty? What happens when an assigned officer is sick, on vacation, or in training?
- How does the current provider handle large events (e.g., annual art festival), both planned and unplanned?
- Do any deputies/officers walk a beat in your jurisdiction? Do they have bicycles, motorcycles, horses, boats, or other means of transportation?
- What public services do the deputies/officers provide in addition to handling calls and patrolling (e.g., attend community meetings, work with youth, conduct crime-prevention or public-education activities)?

Compare your findings to your current vision. If your local jurisdiction had its own department, would you want an officer on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week? If so, you would need to hire at least six to eight officers to allow for regular days off, vacation and sick leave, and training. Special events and specialized enforcement situations must also be considered. For example, does your community host large festivals or other public events that require additional coverage to ensure public safety? Unplanned events (e.g., a hostage situation, a methamphetamine lab discovery) will also affect current and planned service levels and your department's mutual-aid agreements with other agencies.

Style of Policing. Assessing a policing style is more subjective than counting the number of hours on duty. Even so, the concept can be clarified and defined at both a department and an individual officer level. Is the current sheriff or county police chief an advocate of community policing? If so, how does that translate into action in your local jurisdiction—do deputies or officers have time for crime-prevention work? Is the community prepared to do its part to prevent crime and disorder, or is it looking for the police to do it all? Does the department place a priority on training and physical fitness? Are managers and supervisors approachable, responsive, and knowledgeable? What do citizens typically say about their encounters with officers (e.g., officers were helpful, informative, decisive, fair versus abrupt, bureaucratic, rude)? The next chapters discuss policing style in the context of hiring a chief whose style—philosophy, personality, priorities, approach to the job—is in line with community desires and expectations.

Response Times. One tragic incident resulting in injury or death is all that most communities need to begin calling police response times into question. Providing rapid response times to emergencies is a major logistical issue when departments must cover broad geographic areas with a limited number of officers.

Obtaining information about response times is discussed in the next section on crimes and calls for service. The important thing to remember, though, is to analyze response times by ***type of call***. True emergencies, of course, require a rapid response (e.g., crimes in progress, accidents with injury). But citizens must also understand that few police agencies today can afford to dispatch an officer immediately to every call, or even to every crime-related call. For example, a resident comes home from vacation to discover her shed has been burglarized, possibly 2 weeks earlier. Police need to follow up and take a report, but there is little to be gained by a "lights-and-siren" response. The police should handle this example with an appropriate response and good communication. Few citizens will be upset about a delayed response to a nonemergency if they feel their situation is being taken seriously and are informed of what response to expect and why.



Crimes and Calls for Service

To identify patterns and trends in crime incidents and calls to the police, you will need to obtain data going back at least 3 years. Key information sources include the following:

- Reported crime (Uniform Crime Reports submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation)
- Arrest records (number of arrests by type of charge)
- Calls-for-service records
- Interviews with experienced police personnel.

Today's computer-assisted dispatch (CAD) and records management systems (RMS) can capture a tremendous amount of data from calls for service. CAD/RMS can provide not only information about the types of calls received, but also a great deal of detail about time, including response times (time when call comes in, officer is dispatched, officer arrives on scene, officer clears scene) as well as time away from patrol duty because of court, meals, training, car maintenance, community meetings, and other self-initiated activities. The amount of detail is related to the sophistication of the CAD/RMS serving a particular area.

Analyzing these data is not simple, which is why the assessment team should include someone with a strong knowledge of police work. Some of the issues to keep in mind include the following:

- ***Not all 911 calls to the police are about crimes.*** Some calls (for example, burglary alarms) may be "false" and caused by human error or faulty equipment. But because the calls are placed to 911, they represent situations on which call takers and police officers must spend time responding in some way, whether by sending a patrol car, taking a report over the telephone, or simply answering a routine question or making a referral.
- ***Some types of crimes go unreported.*** Some domestic violence and sexual assault incidents, for example, never come to police attention. In addition, police computer call systems may not use a separate code for domestic violence and reported incidents may be included under "assault" or "simple assault".
- ***Calls listed on a CAD printout may not have been updated to reflect actual findings.*** For example, a call taker enters "burglary" based on available information, but the responding officer or a detective later determines that the incident was a minor theft, or that no crime occurred. The computer record may or may not reflect this new information.

These are just a few of the issues involved in analyzing CAD/RMS data. In addition, these data alone do not give a complete picture of what officers do (investigations, community policing activities, etc.). Policing experts can help you interpret the data.

Projecting the Impact of Future Growth

Certain signs of growth are obvious to almost everyone (visible new construction, increased traffic, new industry and jobs), but because a stable and growing tax base is critical for sustaining a police department, you will need additional data. Information sources include the following:

- Building permits issued
- New business incorporations
- Census data (including income, age, and other breakdowns)
- School enrollment data
- County/city, regional, and state planning and economic development reports
- Reports on recent annexation
- Chamber of commerce, real estate and other business associations, board of tourism, convention and visitors bureau.

If such reports and data show a downward trend, it raises questions about the jurisdiction's ability to *sustain* a police department, even if it could find the means to establish one.

If the community is in fact growing, the nature of the growth could influence both the number of officers needed and the types of police services to provide. For example, the following are some scenarios from the national survey:

- ***Jurisdiction or nearby area is becoming an increasingly popular recreational or tourist destination.*** For example, Ontario, Wisconsin has a year-round population of 500, which during the summer exceeds 2,000. Similarly, the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Police Department, also in Wisconsin, noted that while 3,000 people currently live on the reservation, "with tourism and non-Indians residing within the boundaries, population can triple in the summer months."
- ***Jurisdiction or area has become a desirable retirement destination.*** Marco Island, Florida, for example, has become home to many retirees from states where city and town police departments are common. It has a year-round population of 14,000 and more than 30,000 residents from January through March. Many of these residents were not accustomed to or comfortable with being served only by a large county sheriff's department. In this case, a healthy economic base and strong public sentiment combined to justify incorporation and creation of a municipal police department.



- **Nearby college or city is undergoing expansion.** If the surrounding area is growing there may be spillover into your jurisdiction. An example of this is in Prosper, Texas. Prosper, currently home to about 3,100 people, is not far from Frisco, one of the fastest growing towns in the country. The area expects 15 to 25 percent increases in population annually.
- **Jurisdiction or area is in the middle of a major commuter route.** Royalton, Minnesota has a population of 900 but estimates that roughly 20,000 vehicles pass through each day. The Elko Band Indian Colony has 2,000 residents; however, the tribal land is completely surrounded by the city of Elko, Nevada. Daily through-traffic of nonresidents is estimated at 7,000.

Be aware that your competitors for good officers are the big, higher paying agencies in your area. If you are not prepared to pay a good wage, do not expect to be able to hire qualified applicants.

National Survey Respondent

Future increases in population and traffic should be factored into your estimates for police staffing and services. Each of these types of growth raises questions for your assessment. For example, if you employ enough officers to handle huge seasonal differences in population, what kind of productive work would the officers do during the off-season?

Getting a Handle on Costs

Labor costs are the most significant part of a police department's budget. As a start toward projecting the costs of running a department, you'll need to examine the personnel costs of current services: What salaries are deputies/officers and supervisors paid? What are their "fully loaded" hourly rates (salary, fringe benefits, department overhead)? What benefits are provided (health care, disability insurance, life insurance, retirement pension, vacation time, sick leave, personal leave, and training)? If you are not able to match the salaries and benefits of surrounding agencies, you can anticipate problems attracting and retaining experienced personnel. If the state sponsors a regionwide pension system, officers may be able to transfer their pension rights to your agency. You will need some experienced police officers to staff your department right away; and while some officers will join a new agency because they want new opportunities or a better organizational culture, many will not leave their current agencies unless the wages and benefits are better.

Of course, costing out police services involves much more than simply calculating labor costs. Chapters 3 and 4 provide more detailed information about specific budget items for a police department and various alternatives for keeping costs under control. Review those chapters before making a final

decision about the affordability of starting and operating your own department. In addition to salaries and benefits, you are likely to incur costs in the following areas:

- Increased cost of liability insurance for the local jurisdiction
- Equipment costs: acquisition, maintenance, and replacement (vehicles, computers, radios, weapons, body armor)
- Facility, including potential remodeling costs of an existing facility to bring it up to code, ensure a suitable and safe working environment, and provide for public access
- Training costs
- Administrative costs, including background investigations
- Office equipment and supplies.

When asked what they would advise other communities about starting a new agency, a majority of survey respondents emphasized sufficient funding and a realistic budget. One noted how misjudging government revenue had caused drastic service reductions:

Be sure forecasts of future city/town revenue are accurate. We anticipated more revenue, did not get it, and the decrease in services and accountability is . . . acute.

Others respondents also emphasized careful budgeting:

Plan really well, budget, and find out what you will need for your cops.

Be prepared to spend money. Do each project right and do not shortchange it along the way.

You will need more money than you think.

Revenue sources in addition to the general fund may include federal and state grants, fees and forfeits, and private donations. The communities participating in the national survey had received COPS Universal Hiring Program grants to help pay salaries; however, there are no guarantees that these or any other grants will be forthcoming in the future. To help support their start-up agencies, about 18 percent of survey respondents raised taxes, 16 percent received state funds, 15 percent used private funds, and 7 percent issued special bonds.

Summary

Operating a police department affects the safety of residents, businesses, visitors, and the officers the jurisdiction employs. Start a new department for the right reasons. Conduct a strategic assessment and involve experienced law enforcement experts in the assessment process. Be sure you have both political and grassroots community support, and make sure your community can afford to sustain a department over the long term. The next chapter provides additional guidelines for translating the results of your strategic analysis into final decisions about starting a new department and the scope of services that the department realistically can offer.



Laying the Groundwork

Once a strategic analysis is complete and all the available options have been reviewed, a decision can be made about whether to start a new agency. But deciding yes or no is just the beginning of the decision-making process—the starting point for a whole new set of questions, some of which need to be answered by public officials, some by the citizens, and some by the chief of the new department. This chapter looks at the first steps to take after deciding to start a new police department, up through the hiring and installation of a police chief. Chapter 4 addresses the many additional details that must be handled by the new chief before a department can begin operations.

Deciding to Go Forward

Simply because the elected officials have the authority to create a new police department, the role of community members in the decision-making process should not be overlooked. Community support is essential for the long-term viability of the department, and citizens should feel they have a stake in the agency from the earliest planning phases. Chapter 2 discussed several ways in which citizens can participate in the strategic analysis process. In some communities, it may also be important to hold a referendum on the creation of the department so that citizens do not feel that the mayor or a few council members are imposing it on them. Other communities may not feel it is necessary to hold a formal vote outside of the council vote but will still need to solicit community opinion on the type of department that will be created.

Setting the Scope of Services

The strategic analysis you conduct (see Chapter 2) should enable you to determine the scope of services and style of police department the community needs, wants, and can afford. At the most basic level, this means deciding if the department should provide 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week patrol coverage. This may not be necessary in your community as long as peak times are covered and provisions are made for emergency response during off-duty hours.

It also means drafting a rough budget plan for both the start-up phase and projections for the first year or two of operations. While most decisions about department operations cannot be made until a chief is hired, guidelines for scope of services and budgeting should be ready to give to the chief, providing a framework within which the new chief will set the tone and work out the details.

It can be challenging to make these sorts of decisions if you do not have a law enforcement background. How many officers are necessary if the community wants 24-hour patrol? How much do patrol cars cost? What other equipment

Survey Results: Patrol Service Hours

Patrol service covering 24 hours a day, 7 days a week is not what defines a police department as an independent entity. Of the start-up agencies that participated in the survey, only 38 percent said they provide services in their community 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Calls for service that come in when the department is not on duty were handled in a variety of ways. Some departments have calls diverted to other agencies, and some have officers on call who can be reached by dispatchers or even directly by citizens.

is indispensable to police operations? Sometimes it may be necessary to make a best guess, but it helps to talk to other communities of a similar size in the region that have police departments. The chiefs and community leaders in these jurisdictions can advise you on potential costs associated with operating a department in your area. They will also have experience in coordinating services with various county and state police agencies.

The community needs to be well informed about the size and scope of the future department. If residents and businesses are expecting highly visible, 24-hour-a-day patrol coverage, but the council is budgeting for one chief and one or two additional officers with ongoing support from your current service provider, the community may be disappointed in the new department. Make sure that everyone understands and buys into the same plan now to prevent these misunderstandings.

Negotiating the Transition Period

You will also need to develop a timeline for the planning phase and begin negotiations for police services during the transition. If the existing service provider is not enthusiastic about the prospect of the new department (maybe because it is losing a contract), try to cultivate cooperation by emphasizing your vision for a working relationship that can benefit everyone in the long run. If your local jurisdiction is incorporating, and the incorporation will take effect before the police department is operational, be sure that current police services will continue until the new department is ready. It is possible that the county's responsibility to provide police services may end the day the local jurisdiction is formally incorporated.

In calculating a timeline for transition, remember that most of the detailed planning will not be possible until after a chief is hired. Time must be allotted up front for recruiting, screening, and selecting the chief. The new chief should also be allowed adequate time between his or her starting date and the date the agency is expected to be operational. Successful start-up departments advise that this should be 6 months at the minimum.

Hiring a Chief

Selecting the department's first chief is perhaps the most critical decision your local government will make. Resources are available to help guide communities through the selection of a chief, and several aspects of the process (discussed below) are of particular importance to new agencies.

Form a search committee. In addition to the city, town, or county manager and other officials, someone with substantial law enforcement experience, such as a local police chief or sheriff, should be included on the search committee. His or her experience will be extremely valuable both for recruiting candidates and evaluating their credentials. (Some jurisdictions use a professional executive search firm to conduct the initial advertising and screening and present a list of candidates to the search committee.) Also consider including on the search committee representatives of the local business community and citizens groups. This will help create a sense of ownership of the new department in the community.

One resource for helping communities choose the right police chief is ***Selecting a Police Chief: A Handbook for Local Government***. Published in 1999, this handbook was part of a joint effort of the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) and the International City/County Management Association. It can be purchased through the PERF web site: www.policeforum.org.

Decide what kind of experience is needed. The selection process should place high importance on the individual's management experience and style of policing. Consider how those qualities match with your community, the proposed scope of the agency, and the environment in which it will operate (rural, suburban, urban). It is possible that candidates from large city departments (with lots of support personnel) would be overwhelmed in a smaller department where the chief needs to personally take on tasks that would be delegated in larger organizations.

The new chief needs to have not only police management experience but also the aptitude and energy to develop a new department from the ground up. The chief will be making decisions about everything for the first few months, from

policies to equipment purchases to the color of uniforms. Not everyone is good at making these sorts of detailed decisions; some people prefer to work within an existing structure while others thrive on the opportunity to create something new.

The prospective chief candidates should also know to whom they will report in the city or town organization. This relationship will be a major factor in a candidate's decision to accept the job.

Conduct a background investigation. Choose the candidate the committee feels is going to develop the right department for the community. Make a provisional, confidential verbal offer to your best choice—contingent on a successful negotiation, background check, and medical examination. Make sure the offer is confidential so that the other finalists remain interested in the position in case your first selection doesn't work out. Once the individual indicates that he or she will accept your offer, conduct a thorough medical and psychological examination (most agencies don't impose a polygraph examination on an experienced police manager) and a background investigation. The state police, sheriff, or police agency in a neighboring jurisdiction, a city or town attorney, or a reputable private investigator might handle the background investigation. The investigation should be more thorough than just reviewing historical records; the investigator should interview officials and review in person applicable personnel files from the candidate's previous agency and city or county. So much authority and trust will be placed in the chief's hands that it is critical to know the person you are hiring.

Review training credentials. The chosen candidate's training credentials should be reviewed against state standards, especially if the candidate is coming from another state. One chief in our study noted that because he was hired from out of state, he had to complete 95 hours of training and pass a 300-question exam in the new state before he could start working. Even if the candidate is hired from within the state, there still may be mandatory training or some other requirement, and your community should be prepared to cover related expenses. Another chief transferring from within state, for example, was required by state law to retake a personality test before the hiring process could be completed.

Negotiate terms of a contract. Jurisdictions in some states have a practice of hiring top city or town officials, such as a police chief, to work "at will;" other jurisdictions prefer using contracts. If the local jurisdiction's laws and policies permit, it is helpful to hire the chief for an established period of years with specified terms—and put it all in writing. Some of the important terms include salary, benefits, severance package, and performance expectations. Let the chief get to work. The new chief should be provided with a basic plan outlining the desired scope of the department, available budget, decision-making authority to hire officers and staff, a timeline to establish the department, and

the trust of local government leadership that he or she can get the job done. This is the time to step back and let the chief assume leadership in creating the new department. The city/town manager should expect open communication and provide support but should also give the chief the freedom to exercise authority and handle responsibilities.

First Steps for the New Chief

Armed with the community's vision, the chief is now responsible for creating a detailed implementation plan for the new department. A recurring theme among many survey respondents was not to underestimate the variety and complexity of the many administrative tasks that need to be done before operations can begin. Along with the implementation plan, a detailed budget is needed for the transition phase as well as for the first few years of operation. Three-year budget forecasting is recommended. If grant funds are being used to start the department, the council and finance officer must work with the chief to identify funding sources that will replace the grants in the future. In addition to anticipating increases in the cost of salaries and benefits, fuel costs, equipment replacement, and other operating expenses, budget forecasts may also need to account for capital outlays for facility expansion or acquisition.

Budgeting Resources

Police Executive Research Forum:
Police Department Budgeting: Guide for Law Enforcement Chief Executives.

International Association of Chiefs of Police: ***Police Chiefs Desk Reference: Guide for Newly Appointed Police Leaders.***

If your local government planned for a police department with more than one officer, the new chief will need time to recruit and hire additional officers and nonsworn staff. A phased approach is recommended over trying to hire the entire staff at once. It will be important to the chief to get at least one additional person on board as quickly as possible to help with the planning process and initial administrative tasks. Additional staff could be brought on incrementally as training schedules and workload permit.



Promoting the New Department

Marketing Ideas

Ideas for promoting a police department are discussed in the September 2004 issue of *Police Chief*. The article, "Marketing the Smaller Agency," addresses the ability of agencies to maintain good public relations through ongoing marketing efforts.

From the beginning, local government leaders and the chief should promote the new department to the community. It should not come as a surprise to anyone the first time a new patrol car drives through the community. Once the new chief is in place, marketing the new department can begin to ramp up in intensity as the countdown to the start of patrol operations begins.

Keep the community informed throughout the planning and implementation phases. Newsletters,

articles in local papers, community meetings, briefings of government and community leaders, and web sites are excellent ways of letting the community know about completed and remaining tasks. The COPS-funded communities that responded to the national survey on start-up agencies used a variety of promotional techniques, from hosting crime-prevention seminars to conducting fundraisers for equipment purchases. The common theme was that the agencies constantly worked to introduce their staff and their services to the community. This is important so that on the day the "lights are turned on" in the new department, citizens are aware that services have begun.

Finding full support from local city councils and communities is essential. Keeping everybody informed on progress and upcoming events is also very important. Inform the community about programs and services the police department is providing and the benefits of each.

Steps should be taken to involve the public from the beginning of the planning phase, through the funding and to actual start-up. Early community involvement helps to ensure community support.

National Survey Respondent

Handling the Details

There are hundreds of details to address during the transition phase—the time between when the chief is hired and when the department begins patrol operations. This chapter does not cover them all or tell what decisions to make, but it does point out critical areas for decision-making, with the goal of helping the community and the new agency ask the right questions. References to other guides that analyze various options are included to further aid in the decision-making process.

The order in which tasks should be undertaken will not be the same for every department. Once you know what decisions must be made before starting operations, key personnel can create an implementation timeline identifying when each item should be addressed.

Administrative Decisions

Vision/Mission Statements. This is the time to translate the community's vision for the new department into a mission statement that reflects the department's philosophy and values. It should not state how the department will

Creating a Mission Statement

A mission statement might broadly address the following:

- Department's constituencies
- Department's responsibilities to its constituencies and their responsibilities
- to the department
- Department's role in the criminal justice system
- Department's role in the community.

The mission statement used by the Marco Island Police Department:

The mission for each member of the Marco Island Police Department is to consistently seek and find ways to affirmatively promote, preserve, and deliver a feeling of security, safety, and quality services to all persons within the City of Marco Island.

function or even its goals and objectives, but it is more than a framed piece of paper hanging on the wall. It should convey a commitment to the community's desire for a certain style of policing. When it captures both the department's and community's visions, it serves as a constant reminder of that vision and provides a framework for developing goals, policies, and strategies.

Strategic plan. It also is important to develop a strategic plan for the department. It does not have to be overly complex, but it should be developed with community input, committed to writing, state how and when major milestones are expected to be achieved, and reflect the values and priorities implicit in the vision and mission statements. Even a very basic strategic plan will help all new department members better understand their roles and responsibilities. In addition, an organization chart will clarify lines of supervision and accountability for agency personnel and the community. The International Association of Law Enforcement Planners (www.ialep.org) can provide examples of strategic plans and job descriptions.

Job descriptions. Recruitment and hiring cannot be done effectively without written job descriptions. The chief will need to determine the key duties, responsibilities, expectations, and minimum qualifications for each position in the department. Related to this, written rules of conduct should be developed that clearly state the expected behavior of all personnel.

Policies and procedures. One of the major tasks to complete before the department becomes operational is the creation of certain critical policies and procedures. During the transition phase, the chief should take responsibility

Police Policies

The IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center helps develop and refine policies and has produced a wide variety of model policies. Each policy is created by experts, incorporates findings from research, and is written for practitioners.

For more information: www.theiacp.org/pubinfo/PolCtr.htm.

The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement (CALEA) administers a voluntary accreditation process that includes professionally recognized criteria for excellence in management and service delivery. For more information about developing the new agency within the framework of accreditation: www.calea.org.

for writing policies that involve high-risk operations and activities (where liability for improper actions can be costly), such as standards of professional conduct, use of force, vehicle pursuit, arrest processing, property and evidence control, internal investigations, and others. Additional policies and procedures more administrative in nature can be phased in during the first year with the participation of officers as they are hired.

A number of resources and model policies are available to help the chief in the drafting process, including the state's police standards and training commission, which can usually provide state-specific model policies. The policies and procedures of neighboring jurisdictions, as well as those developed by national police professional organizations, are also excellent resources.

Report forms. The department will also need to create or adopt a number of critical forms such as for reporting incidents, arrests, investigations, field contacts, and traffic citations and accidents. In some instances, common forms, such as traffic accident reports, may be available from the county or state. Depending on agreements made with county or state police for handling certain incidents, it may be necessary for your agency to create or adopt forms that are compatible with those of the other agencies. Report forms should be designed in conjunction with development of the agency's proposed records management system.

Interagency agreements. Effective policing requires the cooperation of many agencies. The new chief will need time to develop relationships with other departments within the jurisdiction and agencies in the region, and to establish policies and protocols for how incidents will be handled and which department will have primary responsibility. Mutual aid and voluntary cooperation agreements should be developed with neighboring police departments, the sheriff's office, the state police, and (if your community is near the state line) agencies in other states. These agreements will help ensure that assistance is readily available and that the lines of authority are clear in the event of emergencies and in other situations, such as vehicle pursuits across geographic borders, investigations of complex crimes, and public safety at large events. Issues relating to the jurisdictional authority of the new agency's officers in the county also should be resolved. Some sheriffs grant full law enforcement authority throughout the county to municipal officers; others may not.

Our biggest problem encountered is having a court system in place with court days two times per month. Prior to [our department's creation], 2 days a month might have been adequate, but we are currently 4 months behind in arraignments. Make sure your court system is ready to handle an increased load of criminal matters.

National Survey Respondent

Working relationships and agreements also need to be established between the new department and other criminal justice system agencies. How will incidents from the new department affect the prosecutor's office or court dockets? Is the county jail prepared to book and process suspects brought in by your officers? How will the new agency receive interjurisdictional teletypes or other forms of communication? Have the state and the Federal Bureau of Investigation formally

recognized the agency for purposes of filing or accessing criminal records? Are you planning special enforcement actions that potentially could increase the jail population or court docket (e.g., crackdown on underage drinking)?

Example: New Tribal Department Develops Agreements with Sheriff

Working relationships with neighboring jurisdictions can quickly become valuable for all involved agencies, not just the new department. The Pokagon Tribal Police Department (Michigan) is responsible for tribal lands spread over 10 counties in two states. With only six officers, coordination with county agencies is essential for providing services to those living on tribal lands, but the new agency has also proved beneficial to other communities. The officers are cross-deputized with county sheriff deputies in three Michigan counties and are regularly called to provide back-up for those agencies.

Pokagon noted that with the new police department, “the tribal community is definitely better off, and so are the surrounding counties...these agencies are thankful that we exist.” The department is also negotiating mutual-aid compacts with counties in Indiana.

Protocols are also needed for working with fire/EMS, animal control, and code enforcement. Occasions will also arise when police need to work with children and family services, probation and parole, and the local school system. Officers will need a list of the appropriate personnel at various agencies and contact information.

If parts of the community are located on private roads, arrangements must be made to give officers access so that they can enforce certain laws (e.g., issue parking citations); and geographical jurisdiction and boundaries need to be researched and verified. On roads that border other communities, is it important to know where your jurisdiction ends.

Developing an Identity

An emblem is a very identifiable part of a police department’s image and the symbol of the image the department wants the public to see. Creating this image starts with the mission statement, but it is an ongoing process that is discussed further in an ***April 2004 Police Chief*** magazine article, “Branding Your Agency: Creating the Police Department’s Image.”

Department identity. This also is the time to make decisions about the department’s badge and insignia or logo. This might seem minor, but the emblem will appear on officer uniforms, cars, and other identifying items. The police emblem will often include a preexisting city or town logo. It has to be unique so that it can be distinguished from that of the sheriff’s office or another local police department. Many

jurisdictions purposely choose to make their cars and uniforms look different from those of the past law enforcement providers for a sharper, obvious distinction. The emblem will be a source of pride for the officers and will help establish the department's identity within the community. Once the emblem has been adopted, use it in marketing the new department.

Keeping the public informed. To sustain community support beyond the transition phase, it is important to continue to communicate with the public. Here are some ideas for communication in the implementation phase:

- Create a department web site—usually a section on the local government's web site.
- Distribute information cards that include the department's telephone number.
- Hold community meetings to update citizens on progress and give them a chance to meet officers.
- Negotiate with the local newspaper for space for a monthly column. Until patrol operations begin, the column can be used to keep readers informed of how plans are progressing.

Hiring

Unless the plan calls for a one-person department, human resources activities will include recruiting and selecting additional personnel. Before operations begin, the chief should decide what positions must be filled and when the people should be hired. Phased-in hiring is recommended, rather than trying to fill all positions at once. Taking the time to carefully screen and select all candidates will benefit the department in the long term. A good fit between the officers and the community will result in longer lasting officer retention.

Before You Hire

As noted earlier, before recruiting new officers and civilian staff, the chief needs to develop position descriptions detailing the duties and responsibilities of each position, along with job titles, ranks, and pay grades. State mandates may require a civil service process. A fringe benefits package also needs to be developed, which alone could prove time-consuming unless there is an existing plan for local government employees that police officers can join. Another consideration is whether the department will assign take-home cars, which many officers consider an attractive benefit.

Decisions must also be made about shift work; for example, will officers work 4 days a week and 10 hours a day or 5 days a week and 8 hours a day? How will overtime be compensated consistent with Fair Labor Standards Act mandates? If the chief hires officers during the transition phase, funds for these salaries



must be accounted for in the transition budget, not just as part of the ongoing operational budget. Finally, background investigations will be needed for each new employee and, although they can cost a few thousand dollars per person, they are well worth it.

Give consideration to whether your jurisdiction will impose a residency requirement on new officers. While there are arguments both in favor of and against residency requirements, the requirement might restrict your potential applicant pool.

Recruiting and Selecting Officers

Recruiting officers for a new department may be more difficult than it would be for an established department, particularly in an environment where there are more positions than there are qualified candidates to fill them. Consider

Selecting Officers

Not sure how to select the best candidate for the job? A review of existing research on methods for selecting police personnel is in Law Enforcement Selection: Research, available at: www.policeforum.org.

why someone would want to join a new department. What opportunities will they have if they take a position? In joining a new department, new officers are being asked to risk whether that agency will still exist in a few years. They are also being asked to join an organization that is just developing its “corporate culture.” This can be an advantage, but potential candidates may conclude that working for an established department has fewer risks and will give them better experience. Be prepared to answer their

concerns and to highlight advantages, such as the chance to help create an organization from the ground up and work directly with the executive decision maker, rather than going through layers of supervisors.

For the department’s start up, it is desirable to focus recruiting efforts on

Survey Results: Hiring

The Marco Island (Florida) Police Department found that there were many benefits to hiring officers with previous experience. Budget limitations left little time or money for recruit training, so new hires had to be already trained. These experienced officers were also able to assist in drafting policies and procedures and in the selection of equipment and supplies.

individuals with prior law enforcement experience. In particular, your agency should try to target individuals who have current law enforcement certifications within the state. This will greatly reduce recruit training costs. Certain precautions should also be taken, however, in hiring veteran officers. Ask about reasons for leaving their current employer. Verify their responses with the employers and check their history of interpersonal relationships, performance, and other records related to the job.

Selecting candidates for a new department involves other unique considerations. There will be many tasks in starting a department that officers in long-established agencies never face, so qualities like initiative, flexibility, and problem-solving skills will be important. Like the chief, these initial officers will set the tone for the department. All hires should understand the community's expectations of the department and be willing to support the style of policing that the leadership has chosen to pursue.

Survey Results: Retention

Retention is a concern not just when it comes to line officers. The police departments surveyed for this guide had been in existence an average of 5 years and indicated that, on average, they had already had two chiefs.

Other Considerations

Officer retention should be a concern from the outset. Are the compensation packages reasonable compared to neighboring agencies? What sort of pay raise and promotional system will the department have? A great deal of time and money is needed to train and certify each new officer and orient him or her to the community. How will the department handle vacancies when hired officers leave the new agency? Keeping turnover to a minimum represents a significant cost savings to the department.

Depending on your state, it might also be necessary to work with an existing employees union during the implementation of the department.

Facility Decisions

Early in the planning stages, the department's facility needs and options for available space must be assessed. Most new departments start by sharing a facility with another government agency. Whether the department takes over a currently unused space or has budgeted for new construction, many of the same considerations need to be addressed. For example, the facility should do the following:

- Comply with building, health, and zoning codes.
- Be accessible and hospitable to the public. This includes compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act standards.

Facility Planning

For more information on police facilities, see the International Association of Chiefs of Police's Police Facility Planning Guidelines. The document can be found under "Research Reports" at: www.theiacp.org/pubinfo/researchcenterdox.htm.

- Be easy to secure.
- Provide suitable working space and furniture for all employees. A substandard working environment may have a negative effect on staff retention.
- Include appropriate space for interviews; secure, fireproof records storage; lockers for armory and equipment storage; and lunch or coffee breaks.
- Provide parking space for fleet vehicles, employees, and visitors.
- Provide a secure room for evidence storage. Within the secure room, there should be a locked safe for storing confiscated weapons, drugs, and money. Some states have legal mandates concerning evidence storage and evidence transport.
- Have sufficient infrastructure to support telephone lines, computer networks, electricity, and HVAC.
- Make arrangements for maintenance and cleaning.

Survey Results: Facilities

Most start-up police agencies that responded to the survey were not in a newly-built facility. More than 70 percent made use of existing office space shared with other local government departments, typically in the city or town hall, although other locations included the volunteer fire department, post office, and library.

Finally, there should be room to grow: factor into decision making the department's long-range plans for staffing and anticipated expansion.

Equipment

To be ready to begin operations, equipment must be procured during the planning phase. Vehicles, radios (including radio frequencies and coverage), uniforms, computers, gear (flashlights, belts, body armor, helmets), and weapons (guns and less lethal weapons such as chemical spray and tasers) must be acquired before the department can operate safely and efficiently. The types of guns and less lethal weapons must be consistent with community needs, officers must receive adequate training in their use, and technical support should be available (rangemasters/armorerers).

A number of decisions must be made before acquiring vehicles. Will the local government buy or lease the fleet vehicles? If buying, will the vehicles be new or used? Once acquired, an experienced mechanic must equip the vehicles for police use (prisoner restraints, mounts for special weapons, radios, computers, light bars). Can the local government save money by participating

in a multiagency purchasing plan? Will the cars be part of a pool, or will officers take their cars home? Does the jurisdiction's geographic setting require different kinds of transportation (boats, four-wheel drives, bicycles, motorcycles)? If the community experiences flooding or has many unpaved roads, for example, vehicles with higher ground clearance may be needed. In addition, timelines need to anticipate delays in the procurement process. Trade shows and conferences sponsored by state or national police associations provide opportunities to see available technologies and interview multiple vendors.

The budget must provide funds to replace consumables as they are used (office supplies, gasoline for the fleet, and ammunition [for practice required to maintain firearms certification]). The budget also must include calculations for ongoing fleet maintenance costs (engine maintenance, body and equipment repair, cleaning) and must differentiate among one-time expenses, yearly recurring expenses, and those with a fixed replacement time span.

Training

The department's training needs will affect both the budget and day-to-day operations. Often, police budgets do not adequately account for the time that officers need for the training that enables them to stay current with law changes, acquire specialized skills, or maintain certifications in areas such as firearms, CPR, impact weapons, and hazardous materials requirements. The time required for this training is time not spent on patrol; therefore, will training occur during scheduled work hours or on an overtime basis? Managing work schedules when officers are away at training is a challenge for any department. During start-up, hiring experienced veterans is an efficient way to reduce recruit training costs; but all officers, regardless of experience, will still require some level of in-service and specialized training. State-mandated in-service training requirements must be reviewed and plans developed for all officers to complete the necessary hours. At the beginning, the department may have to rely on outside resources, such as a regional police academy or sheriff's department, for in-service training. Cultivating relationships with other agencies in the area can help manage training costs. As department officers become certified trainers in specialized areas, more training needs can be met in house, reducing the time and financial burdens on the department.

Operating Plans

In addition to policies and procedures, the department needs operating plans that explicitly state how it will function day by day, and how adequate supervision will be provided—to prevent crime, respond to

Plans and Performance Measures

Information on developing community policing plans and performance measures can be found in the Community Policing Consortium's ***Strategic Planning for Community Policing: Implementation and the Policy Making Process***, available at: www.communitypolicing.org/strategic/index.html.

calls for service, assist crime victims, and address other public safety goals of the department. This includes emergency preparedness plans because a major emergency (flood, hurricane, tornado, terrorist attack) could occur at any time, and the public will expect a competent response from its police department.

Developing work schedules and shift assignments is only one part of creating an operating plan. For example, what will officers be doing when they are not responding to calls or fulfilling other obligations like court appearances? Residents and business managers appreciate police visibility, but patrolling *randomly* is seldom effective in preventing or solving crime. Questions related to developing operating plans include the following:

- In what areas should directed patrol and special enforcement efforts be concentrated?
- Will officers be required to “stop and walk” or “stop and talk” as part of their routine duties?
- What priority concerns were identified through community participation and data analysis during the assessment and planning processes and how should officers address those concerns each day or every week?
- Will officers be assigned to permanent geographic areas (i.e., beats) and be expected to identify and address the chronic crime and disorder problems on those beats?

In short, your operating plan should include a community policing plan, because community policing does not just happen, even when “everybody knows everybody.” It involves deliberate efforts on the part of police and residents to solve problems together. It does not have to involve creating special programs, but it does require planning, specific actions, and time. Thus, the chief’s operating plan will need to include (1) guidance and direction for officers in using community policing strategies to accomplish public safety goals, and (2) blocks of time in which officers can actually use those strategies.

The operating plan also needs to ensure that there is enough support for major incidents, such as traffic fatalities, chemical spills, or bomb threats; and that additional resources will be available to provide public safety at special events (festivals and fairs, sporting events, July 4th celebrations). Determine the procedure for calling in support from other agencies that have the appropriate resources (see discussion on mutual aid agreements). Creating operating plans also entails arranging support for complex cases, including cases that require specialized training and time-consuming follow-up investigations, such as homicide, arson, computer crimes, fatal traffic accidents, or serial sexual assaults. Procedures should be in place so that everyone knows when to call other agencies and which agencies to call under different circumstances.

Measuring performance. How will the department and community know if the operating plans are effective? An important part of operational planning includes documenting what has been done and with what results. This may include—but should go beyond—easy-to-count things that measure police activity such as the number of speeding tickets, number of arrests, and number of calls for service. Early on, the new chief should make every effort to develop baseline crime statistics for each neighborhood in the community to document improvements and trends.

If officers spend time working with community members to solve problems and prevent crimes, the department should document and describe those efforts and measure their effectiveness. Quantitative measures are valuable—number of block watch groups formed, number of school presentations, number of business security surveys—and so are success stories. If a community survey was conducted as part of the planning process, a follow-up survey could be administered (e.g., after a full year of operation) to help document changes in public perceptions of policing services, crime, and fear of crime.

The COPS Office offers many publications that address the development of performance measures for both enforcement and problem-solving work. Performance measures are an excellent way of continually assessing how well the department is meeting its goals. They provide accountability to the community and are essential for demonstrating the department's worth and effectiveness when the city or town council considers the department's budget.

Support Functions

This section discusses several essential functions that new or smaller departments may handle themselves but that are more frequently outsourced to other agencies, such as the county police or sheriff's department or a regional service. In some instances, it might be necessary to contract for these support functions.

Lock-ups

Even if the department's long-range plan includes maintaining a secure facility (a lock-up) to house arrested persons until they can be transported to the county jail, this function should not be included in the initial operating plan. Adequate and appropriate space is needed, which can further complicate the selection of space for the department's facility. Also, the numerous requirements and state mandates associated with maintaining a lock-up would be difficult for a new department to manage. In addition, maintaining a lock-up imposes significant liability concerns that otherwise would not be a factor for the local government (e.g., suicide in the lock-up). A major consideration is the strain that lock-up supervision requirements would place on the patrol schedule. The department



will need to consider the travel time required to process arrested persons into the county jail and factor this into scheduling arrangements. For example, if the only person on patrol at certain hours makes an arrest that requires booking at the county jail, the travel and processing time could result in a significant period when no officer is available to respond to calls for service.

Communications and Dispatch

Communications and dispatch equipment requires a significant capital

***Survey Results:
Communications and
Dispatch***

Sixty percent of the surveyed agencies said they participate in a regional 911 system for dispatch services, and that they do not pay a fee for this service. About 20 percent contract for dispatching services. The remaining 20 percent run their own dispatch, although not necessarily full time or with the help of a computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system.

investment that is out of reach for many local governments that are starting up police agencies. In addition to purchasing hardware equipment and software, staffing a dispatch center adds significantly to the total costs. Receiving services from an existing communications center run by the county police or sheriff or a regional service is the most efficient option. Often, the services are provided at no charge beyond the equipment purchases necessary to link to the existing system. In other instances, the dispatch services may be provided for a fee. Make these determinations early enough in the planning process so that any service fees can be properly accounted for in the operating budget.

Other issues, such as the following, also must be addressed before a new department can participate in an existing communications center:

- What kind of technology is required to link to the communications system (for radio, voice, and data communications)? Will you install laptop computers in the police vehicles?
- Will the communications center have an advisory board that will allow representation from your local government?
- Will your new chief have any input regarding dispatching policies?
- Can dispatching priorities and policies be customized for your police department?

Another critical communications issue is interoperability. The expectation in policing today is that radio and data systems will be able to talk to each other in real time in the field. Appropriate communications officials in the states and counties should work on these issues.

A 911 communications center is not the only way in which citizens can contact

the police. For nonemergencies, your agency will need a general telephone number and a system to route calls to officers in the field when the office is not staffed. To prevent potential delays, especially in redirecting 911 calls to the appropriate agency, the chief will need to coordinate early on with the local telephone company and cell phone service providers. The chief and community leaders will also need to consider developing and advertising various alternative call response and reporting strategies (e.g., telephone or Internet reporting for certain kinds of nonemergencies) and consider staffing a reception desk for walk-in complaints, service requests, and queries.

Call Response Strategies

Discussions of alternative call response strategies—such as telephone and Internet reporting—are found in ***Call Management and Community Policing: Guidebook for Law Enforcement***, available from the COPS Office.

Records Management

The local government also must determine how the new police department will store and manage records—how officer incident reports will be entered into a computer system and accessed when needed. It would be more efficient to integrate the police department's records management into an existing local government computerized network, instead of purchasing a stand-alone system for the police. Certain information security considerations, however, may require that police have a separate records management system. A number of resources are available to help guide local governments in purchasing computer systems, as well as grant programs through both the COPS Office and the Department of Homeland Security that can assist in funding.

The local government may also consider interfacing records management with the county police, sheriff, or other regional system. Tying into existing records networks may be particularly advantageous for departments that will not have full-time patrol operations and will have to rely on assistance from other agencies during certain hours. In this case, be sure that the equipment and software purchased are compatible with the other systems and resolve data retrieval issues.

Resources on technology procurement:

SEARCH Group's ***Law Enforcement Technology Guide: How to Plan, Purchase and Manage Technology (Successfully!)***, available from the COPS Office.

Institute for Law and Justice's ***Managing the Risks: Guide for Improving RFP and Procurement Practices in Justice Technology Acquisitions***, available at www.ilj.org/publications.

Summary Checklist

This guide will assist communities in developing police departments by highlighting important considerations and providing guidance on how to accomplish the task efficiently and effectively. Because of the great variation among communities, their needs, and their resources, no single plan will apply to all, but certain principles and practices are relevant across the board. Key questions that communities need to answer are summarized here.

1. *Conduct a Strategic Assessment*

The process of carefully documenting community needs should be the first step in deciding whether to create a new department. What are the crime problems and public safety needs of the community? Are they changing? Has the local government experienced an increase in population, or is it planning to incorporate as a new city or town? The strategic assessment should also include citizen input through community meetings, focus groups, or surveys.

2. *Review the Existing Service Plan and Develop Options*

Most local governments currently receive police services from either a county or state agency. Given the findings of the needs assessment in step one, above, how is the current agency meeting or not meeting community needs? Your analyses should include assessing data on current service demand and delivery, including response times, style of policing, and other issues.

You need to review a range of options for policing your community. Perhaps meeting with the current police service provider to voice community concerns would be sufficient to start addressing those concerns. Establishing a contract for dedicated patrol services may be another feasible solution. If a service contract exists, perhaps it can be revised to meet changing needs. The advantage these county and state agencies have over a new, local police department is the availability of support services. After reviewing the options and discussing them with the existing service provider, you may decide that your best alternative is to start your own police department. Make sure you have community support for this decision.

3. Hire a Chief

If the decision is to create a new police department, one of the first steps will be to recruit and hire a chief. Throughout the planning phase, the chief will provide valuable assistance with the mission statement, policies, procedures, equipment procurement, officer hiring, and budgets. Having the chief on board early will help the community avoid major pitfalls in the planning process, particularly in how the police department should operate day to day and what is needed to ensure that the department can sustain itself.

4. Prepare a Budget

The local government should create the overall budget so the new chief knows what scope of services is expected for initial start-up and for the first years of operation. The chief, however, should review and refine this plan. A new department will not be able to do everything at once, but with a sound multiyear budget plan, it can set priorities and anticipate important issues.

5. Negotiate Agreements with Other Agencies

Negotiating agreements applies both to other police agencies and the rest of the criminal justice system because a new police department will have an impact on a number of agencies, such as the jail, courts, and various social services. The new department may provide comprehensive patrol services, for example, but agreements are needed for other services such as dispatching, investigative support, crime scene processing, and training. Many new departments may be unable to provide 24-hour service, 7 days a week; therefore, arrangements must be negotiated with other agencies to respond to calls for service during off-hours. In addition, it is essential for public and officer safety to have agreements in place that ensure appropriate coverage for both planned special events (e.g., large festivals) and unplanned events (e.g., hostage situations, natural disasters).

6. Establish Critical Policies and Procedures

Policies, procedures, and operating plans for daily operations are essential and must be in place at the outset so that the department and community understand exactly what the department's duties and responsibilities are. The chief is a valuable asset for drafting these policies and procedures and will also establish a style of policing for the department. Resources and examples from other departments can be used to assist in developing policy.

Related to this, and before recruitment and hiring can begin, the chief must create a job description for each position in the department, along with an organization chart and rules of conduct.

7. *Hire Officers and Support Staff*

All key personnel should be hired before operations officially begin to allow time for them to familiarize themselves with the department and community, complete required training, and obtain necessary certifications. The larger the department, the longer this recruitment process may take, and it may be prudent to hire in phases.

Departments need to carefully consider the qualifications that candidates should meet, including the particular skills needed to help ensure the new department's success. Adequate wages and benefits are essential to recruit quality personnel, and while inexperienced officers can be hired for lower wages, experienced officers require significantly less training time. Finally, thorough background checks of all candidates must be conducted.

8. *Acquire Office Space, Equipment, Vehicles, and Supplies*

Before a new department can start patrol services, the basics should be in place: office space, furniture, telephones, office supplies, radios, record-keeping systems, uniforms, weapons, computers, and patrol cars. Equipment and supplies are itemized budget items and should be clearly stated as one-time, start-up expenses or ongoing expenses.

9. *Promote the Department*

Once the department is ready for operations, the focus will turn to providing police services. It is not safe to assume, however, that all citizens either will know the department exists or support it. Promotion is important both before and after the department begins operation. Officers should be visible, accessible, and work to educate the community on the services the agency provides. Community support can be encouraged through talks at schools and community group meetings, bike and foot patrols, crime-prevention programs, and other events that provide for two-way communication. Many of the activities that generally are grouped together as community policing activities are also excellent promotional tools for a new department.



Conclusion

Regardless of the size of the community, creating a new police department will be a major undertaking. While most COPS-funded start-up agencies found that the effort was worthwhile, most of the agencies interviewed felt there is no such thing as too much planning.

As you prepare to create your police department, take the time to really think through all the steps before you start. Plan the budget carefully, talk to other local governments about how their departments operate, and work with community members throughout the process. Starting a new police department will likely take longer, be harder, and cost more than most people think, but it certainly is a way of ensuring that the policing needs of your community are met with the style and level of attention that the community desires.

Some final thoughts from chiefs who have started police departments:

Very expensive and time-consuming, but made a tremendous positive impact on the streets. Put a dent in drug activities. Made the town a more quiet and safe place.

Plan ahead for maintaining the operation past the supported years. Once established, nothing can beat it.

Keep the focus on the future and baby-step your way forward. And network. We all need help and our [network of police contacts] is always willing.

References and Resources for Law Enforcement

Many of the publications and web sites listed here are intended for law enforcement professionals, but community members should also find them valuable in understanding the issues involved in planning and operating a police agency.

Community Policing

Perkins, Matt, Scott Phillips, Tammy Rinehart, Karin Schmerler, and Meg Townsend. ***Problem-Solving Tips: A Guide to Reducing Crime and Disorder through Problem-Solving Partnerships***. Washington, D.C.: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, 1998.

Rinehart, Tammy, Anna T. Lazlo, and Gwen O. Briscoe, Ph.D. ***Collaboration Toolkit: How to Build, Fix, and Sustain Productive Partnerships***. Washington, D.C.: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, 2005.

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Scott, Michael S. ***Problem-Oriented Policing: Reflections on the First 20 Years***. Washington, D.C.: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, 2000.

Equipment and Facilities

Bulletproof Vest Partnership/Body Armor Safety Initiative, Office of Justice Programs, U. S. Department of Justice. www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bvpbasi

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Personnel, Leadership

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Scrivner, Ellen, Ph.D. *Innovations in Police Recruitment and Hiring: Hiring in the Spirit of Service*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, 2006.

Policing Organizations (Web Sites)

Commission on the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies: www.calea.org

Community Policing Consortium: www.communitypolicing.org

International Association of Chiefs of Police: www.theiacp.org

National Sheriffs' Association: www.sheriffs.org

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U. S. Department of Justice: www.cops.usdoj.gov

Police Executive Research Forum: www.policeforum.org

Technology

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Romesburg, William H. *Law Enforcement Tech Guide for Small and Rural Police Agencies: a Guide for Executives, Managers, and Technologists*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, 2005.

SEARCH: The National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics.
www.search.org

Strategic Planning, Policy Development

Contracting for police services. Examples noted in this guide:

Los Angeles Sheriff's Department: www.lasd.org/divisions/hqtrs/contract_law.html

King County Sheriff's Office: www.metrokc.gov/sheriff/partners/contract_program/details.aspx

International Association of Chiefs of Police. National Law Enforcement Policy Center: www.theiacp.org/pubinfo/PolCtr.htm

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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To obtain details on COPS programs, call the
COPS Office Response Center at 800.421.6770

Visit COPS Online at www.cops.usdoj.gov.

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