An Evaluation of Community Policing in the Las Cruces Police Department

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings from an independent evaluation of the Las Cruces Police Department's (LCPD) commitment to community policing. Employing informal interviews with officers in management/supervisory positions using the Community Policing Self-Assessment Tool (CP-SAT) as well as an anonymous survey of front-line staff, the department was evaluated on their strengths and weaknesses in three broad areas: community partnerships, problem-solving, and organizational transformation. While the LCPD shows promise in certain areas of community policing (e.g., leadership; transparency), there are, however, some areas that can be improved upon.

An important finding from the interviews and surveys is that select units/officers appear to perform the majority of the community policing activities. Most front-line staff in the Patrol and Traffic Units had not indicated much engagement in partnering with the community or the problem-solving process. This is not unique to the LCPD; in fact, it is a common pattern found across departments in the country. Practical constraints, such as limited time and opportunity, prohibit most officers from performing community activities. However, there are number changes that can be made at the organizational level in order to better facilitate the degree of community policing – department-wide.

Those recommendations are provided here. The LCPD should place more of an emphasis on community policing, specifically problem solving and using the SARA model, through continuing/in-service training to officers. Additionally, performance evaluations for front-line staff, supervisors/mid-level managers, and those officers seeking promotion could incorporate measures of the commitment to community policing. With slight adaptations to training, policy, and performance measures, the department could more effectively "institutionalize" the practice of community policing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

Starting in 2015, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) awarded the Las Cruces Police Department (LCPD) with a grant (2015UMWX0052) to hire an additional nine police officers. Contingent on funding, COPS Office awards must be used to reorient the mission and activities of law enforcement agencies toward the community policing philosophy or enhance their involvement in community policing. The department deployed experienced officers to expand the size and scope of its community-policing unit, referred to as the Targeting Neighborhood Threats (TNT) Unit, as opposed to placing the newly hired officers from COPS-funded positions directly into the TNT Unit. As part of the grant award's progress report, the department indicated a desire to conduct an organizational assessment of community policing in order to evaluate its progress toward implementing its community policing plan and specific community policing activities. With the access granted by Chief Patrick Gallagher and the coordination provided primarily by Sergeant Roberto Gutierrez, the Las Cruces Police Department has collaborated with research partners from the University of Texas at El Paso's (UTEP) Department of Criminal Justice, specifically John A. Shjarback, Ph.D.

This report details the independent, third party evaluation of the current status of the Las Cruces Police Department's commitment to community policing. The conclusions are based on two primary data collection methodologies: 1) informal meetings and interviews with officers in management/supervisory positions and the aforementioned TNT unit with the purpose of understanding what the department is presently doing in its effort toward community policing, and 2) an anonymous survey of front-line staff in order to gauge officer receptivity and attitudes toward community policing. In terms of the former, the informal meetings and interviews

utilized the COPS Office's "Community Policing Self-Assessment Tool" (CP-SAT), which is an instrument developed to help agencies more objectively assess the extent to which the community policing philosophy and practices have been implemented throughout a respective department. The COPS Office consulted with hundreds of police practitioners and subject-matter experts in the development of the CP-SAT. The CP-SAT, which is presented in its full form in Appendix A, measures three key areas in community policing: 1) Community Partnerships, 2) Problem Solving, and 3) Organizational Transformation. These three broad topics will be discussed in greater detail later on in this section.

Research has uncovered that one of the largest impediments to the successful adoption and implementation of community policing is resistance and the lack of "buy-in" among front-line officers (Mastrofski, 2006). If, for example, the majority or a non-trivial portion of officers see little value in community policing philosophies – such as being disinterested in addressing "non-crime problems" or viewing community policing activities as increasing workload and placing a greater demand on their services – the degree of community policing in that agency will be limited. It is imperative, therefore, to hear from officers at the ground level who are regularly interacting with citizens. As such, the evaluation sought to measure front-line, uniformed officers through an anonymous survey, which included questions regarding the number of community policing activities regularly performed, the duration that officers have been assigned to their current districts, and perceptions of citizens and the communities they work in.

The report proceeds in the following stages. First, it elaborates on the various components of community policing – describing what the innovative strategy should, theoretically, look like in practice. Next, it provides an assessment of how the Las Cruces Police

Department currently measures up to achieving community partnerships, problem solving, and organizational transformation. It concludes with a set of recommendations for how the agency could continue to improve and work towards its goal of engaging in true community policing.

What is Community Policing?

Implementing and then assessing whether community policing is effective or not has proven difficult over the years due to the fact that it is more of a philosophy than a tactic(s) (National Research Council, 2004; Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Whereas problem-oriented policing (POP) offers departments and their officers a tangible, step-by-step process (Eck & Spelman, 1987; Goldstein, 1979) of following the "SARA" model of scanning, analysis, response, and assessment, community policing is abstract, multi-faceted, and diverse. In fact, one chief's definition or description of community policing might vary significantly from another (Mastrofski, Worden, Snipes, & 1995). Over time, however, influential police executives and policing scholars have reached somewhat of a consensus about what elements community policing should include. According to the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) (1996), community policing consists of five different perspectives: 1) the deployment perspective, 2) community revitalization, 3) an emphasis on problem solving, 4) the importance of the "customer", and 5) legitimacy.

More specifically, the deployment perspective refers to the idea that officers should be closer and more available/accessible to citizens, such as having more sub-stations across a jurisdiction rather than one centralized headquarters and that officers should be getting out of their cars and engaging in more foot patrol, bike patrol, and door-to-door visits of local businesses. Community revitalization stresses a collaborative relationship between police and citizens working together; officers viewing the public as "co-producers" of crime control and

safety as opposed to perceiving themselves as the experts and, therefore, not needing the community's help. Problem solving shifts from the reactive, triage-style approach of clearing calls that was (and still is in many cases) popular for decades in American policing. Instead, it relies on identifying and solving specific problems – often with community partnerships – by addressing the root causes of said problems through utilizing the aforementioned SARA model. The importance of the customer emphasizes listening to citizens and valuing/incorporating their input, and legitimacy refers to a greater departmental commitment to increase credibility and public trust in police.

In addition to PERF's five perspectives, Dr. Gary Cordner – a former officer and police chief turned academic – identified four principal dimensions of community policing: philosophical, strategic, tactical, and organizational. According to Cordner (1997), the philosophical dimension includes the ideas/beliefs surrounding a new paradigm of policing, such as increased citizen input and a broadened police function (i.e., performing order maintenance and public service tasks rather than an exclusive focus on crime control). Strategically, community policing should reorient operations, including incorporating foot and bike patrol as well as the geographical permanency of officers being assigned to the same areas for extended periods of time. The tactical dimension can be viewed as the culmination of the first and second dimensions – essentially translating philosophies and strategies into concrete programs, practices, and behaviors. For example, it means tangible, constructive interactions between law and the public (e.g., regularly scheduled community/beat meetings), improved partnerships, and problem solving. Finally, the organizational dimension reflects how the department restructures itself in order to facilitate community policing; elements of the organizational dimension include decentralization, strategic planning, and program evaluation.

All told, the five perspectives (PERF, 1996) and four dimensions (Cordner, 1997) fit neatly in three broad categories – community partnerships, problem solving, and organizational transformation (see also Maguire & Wells, 2009) – which are capable of being measured and, subsequently, analyzed to determine if and how well a department is engaging in community policing.

Community Partnerships

According to the COPS Office, community partnerships are defined as collaborative working relationships between law enforcement agencies and the individuals and organizations they serve in order to develop solutions to problems and increase public trust in police. This organizational philosophy of engaging with the local community in order to identify problems, and subsequently develop and implement interventions in order to solve them, stands in stark contrast to the mentality of most in law enforcement during the Reform Era of Policing (1890s-1960s; Kelling & Moore, 1988) – when officers did not seek out input from non-law enforcement entities. For example, officers can partner with codes enforcement agencies by working together to identify, inspect, and impose sanctions on – such as monetary fines and even shutting down – nuisance properties where landlords, motels, and different bars/establishments are habitually violating municipal ordinances, including trash/litter, vagrancy, noise, etc. Partnerships exist on a number of different levels: with other law enforcement organizations (e.g., task forces), other components of the criminal and juvenile justice systems (e.g., prosecutor's offices; probation/parole), other government agencies (e.g., parks; public works; schools; municipal code enforcement), local businesses and non-profit organizations (e.g., faith-based groups; clubs for youth), neighborhood associations and block watch groups, the local media, and researchers.

There are many ways to facilitate the abovementioned partnerships, specifically through increasing the level of two-way communication with other groups and individuals. Police departments can coordinate and host monthly or bimonthly community meetings to provide a forum for other governments agencies, community stakeholders/groups, and citizens to engage in productive dialogue. In addition, police can have a presence at other community and group meetings. These meetings, which improve the amount of positive face time with community partners, serve to share information, jointly determine which problems to prioritize and how to address them, and allow police the ability to form alliances with groups/individuals that bring distinct resources to the proverbial table. After all, the underlying causes of crime/disorder are diverse and multifaceted, which require interventions beyond the traditional law enforcement approach. Another byproduct of such collaborative relationships may be citizen empowerment, which could reduce community over-reliance on police to solve problems.

Aside from the creation of working groups and regularly scheduled community meetings, police departments could host citizen police academies, engage in more foot and bike patrol as well as knock-and-talks, and roll out community and/or citizen contact surveys (i.e., post-interaction with an officer) with residents. Citizen and youth police academies can educate the public about the job and its challenges while teaching people about crime prevention techniques, and research suggests that they are effective in improving public perception of law enforcement among participants (Cohn, 1996; Palmiotto & Unninthan, 2002; Shafer & Bonello, 2001). The majority of studies indicate that foot patrol produces crime-reduction effects (see National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018), while a moderate level of research suggests that citizens are more satisfied with police following the implementation of the tactic (e.g., Kelling, 1987).

Problem Solving

According to the COPS Office, problem solving is defined as the process of engaging in the proactive and systematic examination of identified problems in order to develop effective responses. Problem solving for law enforcement means engaging in true "problem-oriented policing" or POP. Originated by Herman Goldstein (1979), who is known as the "father of POP", POP was a paradigm shift with the mentality that law enforcement could be most effective in responding to crime by thinking about whether and how seemingly unrelated calls for service/crimes/incidents arise from a common problem(s). More specifically, police will be in the best possible position to reduce crime if they can identify and respond to the underlying conditions contributing to a problem – rather than simply respond to crime, calls for service, etc. in a reactive fashion. The SARA model provides departments and their officers with a step-by-step tool to problem solve:

Scanning (S): The extent to which departments and officers identify specific problems by drawing upon a variety of police and community information (e.g., calls for service; citizen complaints/tips; officer observations).

Analysis (A): Once a problem(s) has been identified, the police collect information/data on said problem. From there, they analyze: who are the offenders and victims? Where, geographically, are they occurring?

Response (R): The extent to which police develop and implement a strategy to reduce/eliminate the problem(s). This could feature any number of specific tactics, including both law enforcement and non-law enforcement actions.

Assessment (A): Finally, the department must conduct an evaluation to determine whether the response was effective or not. If not, the response may need to be adjusted.

One example of the successful implementation of problem solving comes from Glendale Police Department (GPD) in Arizona (see White & Katz, 2013). The GPD, partnering with researchers from School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Arizona State University, was interested is narrowing their focus and solving a specific problem as opposed to trying to reduce crime in general. The department began step #1 (scanning) by reviewing the city's recent calls for services (CFS). Upon their scanning, they identified CFS from convenience stores as being a problem worthy of attention due to the sheer volume of calls that the department was receiving; it placed a significant burden on police resources.

Next, GPD examined their CFS involving convenience stores more closely (step #2: analysis). Attention was placed on where the CFS were originating from: the specific stores, the specific locations, the specific types of calls, etc. Upon their analysis, the department concluded that CFS from "Circle Ks" were disproportionately represented compared to any another franchise (e.g., 7/11; QuikTrip). Although there were only 15 Circle K stores in Glendale at the time of study, which represented 23% of all convenience stores in the city, they generated 79% of all CFS at convenience stores in 2010 (White & Katz, 2013). Moreover, a common CFS-type coming from the Circle Ks was convenience store thefts of beer. Not coincidentally, Circle Ks in Glendale, AZ had a practice of stacking cases of beer either outside or right next to the front doors of stores – in what was believed by the department to be an advertising ploy.

Based on the data gathered and analyzed, GPD and their research partners developed a three-pronged response plan that included intervention with Circle K leadership, suppression, and prevention. The team presented Circle K leadership with more than 200 CPTED (i.e., Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) recommendations, such as moving beer from the floor/front door areas and removing cluttered advertising posters from storefront windows that

seemed to impede natural surveillance. Suppression comprised of intensive surveillance and enforcement operations, including the use of undercover and marked cars, at six targeted Circle K stores. After 9 consecutive weekends, GPD made 57 arrests (15 of them for felonies). In terms of prevention, the Glendale mayor's Youth Advisory Council created a public service announcement geared toward middle and high school students, which displayed the consequences of engaging in theft – particularly "beer runs".

The team performed an evaluation to assess the success of the response. Calls for service at the six targeted Circle K locations were compared to all other convenience stores in Glendale, including the 9 remaining Circle Ks that did not receive the intervention. Results indicated that calls for service at the target stores declined by more than 40% after the intervention, which was statistically significant and different from call patterns generated from other convenience stores in the city (White & Katz, 2013).

Problem solving should involve residents and other community partners, when possible, in identifying problems and selecting/implementing solutions. It should represent a change in mindset at a number of different levels: individual officers, sub-units, and the organization as a whole.

Organizational Transformation

Leadership/management and organizational characteristics shape agency behavior (Stojkovic, Kalinich, & Klofas, 2012). Police departments, therefore, can affect change by creating and/or adapting policies, practices, training, and performance measures. On the other hand, agencies may face an uphill battle to sustain organizational transformation if they fail to institutionalize such policies, practices, training, and performance measures. Departments can equip and encourage their officers to engage in more community policing by incorporating

concepts (e.g., community partnerships; using POP and the SARA model) into training (both academy and in-service), officer evaluations, and personnel/staffing decisions (e.g., semi-permanent geographic assignments; exempting groups of officers from responding to calls for service). Increases in community policing-related training, modifying performance measures to reflect community policing activities (e.g., attending meetings; engaging in problem solving), and rewarding officers for doing so should signal to personnel that such a mindset is valued. But if a department fails to reward community policing, then such principles will not be reinforced throughout the organization.

In terms of personnel and staffing, an organization's decisions can either facilitate or hinder its degree of community policing. Extended, semi-permanent geographic assignments (e.g., districts; beats) could expedite closer contact between officers and an area's residents – allowing those officers to attain a better understanding of community issues, not to mention an awareness of local resources available to be incorporated in problem solving decisions. Additionally, officers' time and resources are limited. If they are too busy responding to call after call, they will never have the opportunity or autonomy needed to engage in problem solving efforts. For these reasons, departments must exempt segments of mid-level managers and their officers (e.g., specialty units; sub-sets of patrol) from responding to calls for service in order to adequately follow the SARA model to address the underlying causes of certain crimes/problems.

It is important to keep in mind that these three broad categories – community partnerships, problem solving, and organizational transformation – are not mutually exclusive. In fact, all three tend to be closely related. Community partners, for example, could help officers in problem solving efforts by identifying or even assisting in the response phase of the SARA model. The next section focuses attention on the LCPD and each of the three categories.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

One theme that emerged from the evaluation – in both the informal interviews and the front-line officer surveys – is that certain units in department shoulder the burden of community policing responsibilities. Stated differently, select units and their officers engage in more community policing (e.g., forming partnerships; communicating with groups; working on problem solving), whereas the department, more broadly, has room for improvement. This is not unique to the LCPD; in fact, it is a pattern that has been found in a number of community policing evaluations. Maguire and Gantley (2012) describe this differentiation as the specialist versus generalist models. A specialist model exists when an agency assigns community-policing responsibilities to a select group/unit, while the rest of the agency continues as before (i.e., "business as usual"). This is one of the drawbacks of creating community policing units: most officers assume that such activities are already being addressed/covered by the specified unit. As a result, community policing principles/activities remain isolated in the organization without changing how the agency as a whole conducts business.

In a generalist model, there are expectations to engage in community policing principles/activities for *all* officers – the practice is more institutionalized. Of course, the inability of departments to foster a generalist model of community policing is both expected and understandable. Most officers in patrol and traffic units have other demands and limited time. However, there are a number of methods that can be incorporated – through training, policy, performance measures, etc. (which will be discussed in detail in the "Recommendations" section) – to make community policing more of a priority for all officers – department-wide.

Engagement With A Wide Rage of Partners

The LCPD does an adequate job of actively participating with select community partners,

11

but there is certainly room for improvement in forming working relationships with other groups.

Officers indicated an adequate degree of partnering with law enforcement agencies (e.g., Federal, State; and/or other jurisdictions) and other components of the criminal justice system (e.g., probation/parole; courts). LCPD has shown a commitment to fostering a collaborative relationship with research partners, particularly the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of Texas at El Paso. Although the Traffic and TNT Units do an adequate job of partnering with other government agencies (e.g., Parks; Public Works; Code Enforcement; Schools), this is an area of community engagement that the department, as a whole, can build upon.

Officers indicated a lower level of community partnering with non-profit/community-based organizations, businesses operating in the community, and the local media compared to some of the other aforementioned groups. Officers suggested that one of the areas most deficient/lacking is the extent to which individuals in the community actively participate as partners with the LCPD. Moreover, it appears that community organizations and local businesses do not share much accountability for partnership activities. For example, out of 31 different neighborhood watch groups, only a handful are active and meet regularly.

General Engagement in the Community

As such, general engagement with the community could be improved upon by more officers in the department as well as greater participation from other government agencies (non-law enforcement), local businesses, and citizen groups. Both sides must make more of an effort for the purposes of involving community members in assessing community problems and arriving at potential solutions. The LCPD sponsors a number of community events, such as "Coffee with a Cop", K-9 demonstrations, and presentations to schools and other groups. Yet,

there are few more events that could expand the level of engagement with the community. These include reestablishing a citizen's police academy (and running it frequently), a junior/youth explorer program (which could also used for recruitment purposes), etc. Officers can also engage in more foot patrol, bike patrol, and door-to-door canvassing/knock-and-talks for the purposes of increasing face time and positive interactions with citizens.

During the officer survey portion of the evaluation, front-line staff was asked, "In the last 3 months, did you participate in the following community policing activities?" A total of nine activities were listed: meetings with community advocacy groups, meetings with neighborhood crime watch groups, meetings with immigrant advocacy groups, public hearings associated with citizen concerns/complaints, community advisory boards, visits to churches, schools, or community organizations, speaking with citizens' groups/schools or appearing at community events, engaging in foot patrol, and engaging in bike patrol. Officers answered "Yes" or "No" for each of the 9 activities; therefore, it is possible to calculate how many total community policing activities each officer performed recently (i.e., within the past 3 months). Table 1 below illustrates the average/mean number of community policing activities performed – comparing the TNT unit to the rest of the department's officers surveyed (Patrol and Traffic). TNT Unit officers averaged performing over 5 (mean = 5.63; standard deviation = 2.01) different types of community policing activities, whereas the rest of the officers reporting performing a little over 1 (but less than 2).

Table 1: "In the last 3 months, how many of the following activities did you participate in?"

Unit	Mean (Standard Deviation)
TNT Unit (11 Officers)	5.63 (2.01)
Rest of Department (54 Officers)	1.37 (1.35)

Examining these figures even further, Tables 2 and 3 provide a breakdown of the total number of community policing activities, including the frequencies, percentages, and cumulative percentages, for officers in the TNT Unit versus officers in the rest of the department, respectively.

Table 2: Community Policing Activities Within the Last 3 Months – TNT Unit

Number of CP Activities	Frequency (%)	Cumulative Percent
1	1 (9.1%)	9.1%
4	2 (18.2%)	27.3%
5	1 (9.1%)	36.4%
6	2 (18.2%)	54.5%
7	4 (36.4%)	90.9%
8	1 (9.1%)	100%

Table 3: Community Policing Activities Within the Last 3 Months – Rest of Department

Number of CP Activities	Frequency (%)	Cumulative Percent
0	14 (25.9%)	25.9%
1	22 (40.7)	66.7%
2	9 (16.7%)	83.3%
3	6 (11.1%)	94.4%
5	2 (3.7%)	98.1%
6	1 (1.9%)	100%

As displayed in Table 2, officers in the TNT Unit have recently performed many different community policing activities. However, according to Table 3, there is much room for improvement for the rest of the officers in the department (i.e., those in Patrol and Traffic). Approximately one-quarter of those officers did not participate in any of the aforementioned 9 community policing activities, and approximately two-thirds of them either performed zero or only one activity.

PROBLEM SOLVING

As previously discussed, the same generalist versus specialist issue presented itself in the realm of problem solving. Officers indicated a great level of awareness of the SARA model (i.e., scanning, analysis, response, assessment) and discussed how it was heavily encouraged; however, they raised concerns in carrying out problem solving techniques due to a number of practical constraints. Perhaps most notably, officers do not have adequate shift time to engage in the problem-solving process – largely due to high call volume and the need to respond to those calls. Such issues are particularly challenging for the Patrol and Traffic Units. It appears that the TNT Unit has more time and opportunity during their shifts to dedicate to problem solving. In fact, the TNT Unit is currently in the process of writing a report, which details their use of the SARA model for a problem solving project, for the "Herman Goldstein Award" for the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing; the Goldstein Award recognizes innovative and effective problem-oriented policing (POP) projects that have achieved measurable success in resolving recurring specific crime, disorder or public safety problems faced by police and the community.

Scanning

The department appears to adequately perform the first stage of the SARA model. Locations and the geographic spaces where crimes occur seem to be used regularly to identify and prioritize the problems in the community. However, officers should also be taking "victims" and "offenders" into account when attempting to identify specific problems. Are there any identifiable patterns (e.g., activities engaged in; times during the day) in who or what is being victimized? Can similar patterns be found for offenders? More effort in the scanning phase could incorporate focuses on victims and offenders. Additionally, the department could expand the use of non-law enforcement partners (e.g., citizens; businesses; landlords) in helping to

15

identify and prioritize problems in the community.

Analysis

The department does examine a set of factors (e.g., location; day of week; time of day) from the records management system and utilizes the crime analyst while analyzing problems. However, the methods for engaging in the analysis phase of the SARA model are quite limited and could be expanded on. Information on reported burglaries are continuously distributed to officers by the crime analyst, but such intelligence should be shared for all types of crime that data is collected on. It also appears that the LCPD could do a better job analyzing the strengths and limitations of past/current responses, while incorporating a range of non-police data (e.g., government records; community surveys; school information) for analysis purposes.

Response

There appears to be some room for improvement in working with other stakeholders (i.e., non-law enforcement) in developing responses/interventions to problems. Additionally, officers indicated that they do not necessarily focus on long-term solutions that address the underlying conditions of problems. Instead, responses seem to be geared toward short-term solutions.

Assessment

The final phase of the SARA model might be the most important step of the problem solving process. Departments must evaluate whether their response/intervention is effective or not. In order to do so, data/measures must be collected to get an understanding of "baseline" (i.e., pre-response/intervention) levels of crime, calls for service, etc., which could then be compared to post-response levels. This is one thing, in particular, that does not always occur. The department, as a whole, appears to be a bit deficient in the assessment phase, despite higher levels of evaluation taking place administratively and among the Traffic and TNT Units.

During the officer survey portion of the evaluation, front-line staff was asked, "In the last 3 months, did you work on a problem-solving project (e.g., used the SARA model)?" Officers answered "Yes" or "No", and, again, officers in the TNT Unit were compared to front-line staff in the rest of the department (e.g., Patrol and Traffic). Table 4 below highlights those comparative results. Most officers (over 90%) in the TNT Unit indicated that they had, indeed, recently worked on a problem-solving project as opposed to the majority of officers in the rest of the department (77.8%) who indicated that they had not.

Table 4: "In the last 3 months, did you work on a problem-solving project (e.g., used the SARA model?"

Unit	Yes (%)	No (%)
TNT Unit (11 Officers)	10 (90.9%)	1 (9.1%)
Rest of Department (54 Officers)	12 (22.2%)	42 (77.8%)

ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Department policies/practices and organization characteristics can either facilitate or impede the level of community policing. The desire to foster more community partnerships and/or engage in more problem solving efforts might be meaningless without the proper changes that occur at the department level. For these reasons, it is possible can examine whether community policing has become institutionalized by studying changes in organizational structure.

Agency Management

Officers indicated being able to access relevant information to support problem solving. More specifically, the agency does an adequate job of providing the data (e.g., reports; intranet access) and tools (e.g., crime mapping and analysis) necessary for officers to engage in the SARA model if they choose to do so. There are, however, a few steps that could be taken to ensure that officers are in the best possible position to problem solve; they relate to the records management system and the crime analyst. These will be discussed in further detail in the "Recommendations" section. The department, as well as the city as a whole, appears to be moving towards better articulating goals/objectives that support community policing through the PEAK (i.e., **P**erform Mission, **E**valuation Measures, **A**ssess Outcomes, **K**eep Climbing) Performance initiative. For example, the TNT Unit is devising a plan to survey community residents' perceptions of trust in the LCPD as well as uncover the percentage of residents who say they feel safe in the city.

Personnel Management

The agency appears to be somewhat deficient in this category. Based on the information collected, the department does not seem to require officers to demonstrate competency in

community policing principles/activities (e.g., ability to form productive partnerships; completion of a successful problem-solving project) for promotion or for officers' performance evaluations. Additionally, the department could more clearly/explicitly articulate officer expectations for their role in community policing. Despite indicating that recruits/cadets receive training on problem solving and building community partnerships in the academy, such efforts appear to fade out and lose importance shortly thereafter. Besides the academy, field- and continuing/in-service training components dedicated to community policing does not appear to be strongly reinforced. With the exception of the TNT Unit, officers are not given adequate uncommitted time to proactively work with the community, which undoubtedly is due to practical constraints (e.g., call volume) and limited time during shifts.

However, the department does do an adequate job with the longevity of geographic district assignments – providing officers with the ability/opportunity to form relationships with the community. Officers were asked how long they have been assigned to their current districts, with response modes including: "less than 6 months", "6 months to 1 year", "between 1 and 2 years", and "more than 2 years". Table 5 below presents the results to that question. Despite the fact that personnel first "bids" for hours/shifts followed by "bidding" for geographic assignments (i.e., districts), a little less than one-half (41%) of the front-line officers who were surveyed indicated that they had been working in their assigned district for 2+ years.

Table 5: "How long have you been assigned to your current district?"

Response Mode	Frequency	Percent
Less than 6 months	14	23.0%
6 months to 1 year	13	21.3%
Between 1 and 2 years	9	14.8%
More than 2 years	25	41.0%

*4 officers did not answer this question.

Leadership

Chief Gallagher as well as other mid-level managers and supervisors in the LCPD have expressed and shown an interest in working with academic research partners. That interest, specifically learning more about what the department is currently doing and what it can improve on regarding community policing, provided the impetus for this independent evaluation and its results (i.e., this report). Additionally, leadership in the department has contributed to a 40-page Strategic Business Plan, which can be found on the city's website. Strategic Results' topics include: *recruitment and retention of officers* (e.g., "By 2022, the percentage of female officers will be at or above the national average of 13.5%"), *communications* (e.g., "By 2019, the Las Cruces Police Department Citizen's Academy will be re-established"), and *mental health/people in crisis* (e.g., "By 2020, 70% of department personnel will successfully complete Advanced Crisis Intervention Training"). It is clear, based on the openness to independent evaluation and the explicitly articulated goals/objectives in the Strategic Business Plan, that leadership is communicating a vision for more community policing activities and principles moving forward.

Transparency

After interviewing officers as well as personally visiting the LCPD's website, "www.las-cruces.org/departments/police-department", and social media footprint (e.g., Facebook), the department exhibits a high degree of transparency. Community members can access a plethora of information on the department's website and Facebook page. The Facebook page, which appears to be updated more consistently and in real time, provides much information to community members who are interested. This content/information includes descriptions of crimes and updates when a suspect(s) has been arrested, monthly and year-to-date counts of Part I and Part II offenses reported to police, crime prevention tips, officer body-camera footage from

20

a recent officer-involved shooting, etc.

Moreover, the department website provides additional information as it relates to transparency. The "Police Data Initiative, Crime Stats & Annual Report" section is particularly helpful. Community members and other interested parties can access an excel database of the department's officer-involved shooting incidents from 2009 through 2017, including the date, case number, address/location, and the race/ethnicity, gender, and age of the victim. Additionally, this section of the website provides databases on various levels of citizen complaints, non-lethal force used against suspects for 2016, crime statistics, annual reports, Internal Affairs annual reports, reports from the city's Police Auditor, and up-to-date crime maps for where burglaries are occurring.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluation, the LCPD can make a number of changes – largely through organizational transformation – that will facilitate a higher degree of community policing for the department as a whole. The following list details those recommendations, and they are presented in no particular order. Most address institutionalizing the practice of community policing in order to move the department more towards a "generalist" model instead of a "specialist" model.

1) *Set aside or designate a portion of continuing/in-service training for officers that focuses on community policing, specifically how to engage in problem solving and utilizing the SARA model.*

While strategies to boost the level of partnering with community groups are more abstract and less established, there are tangible training regimens dedicated to teaching officers how to problem solve/follow the SARA model. For example, the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing provides a model curriculum for doing so on its website, which can be accessed at "www.popcenter.org/learning/model_curriculum/". The Model POP Curriculum comes complete with a detailed syllabus as well as Microsoft Powerpoint slides for teaching/presenting. An officer(s) in the department who is proficient in problem solving techniques and the SARA model can even facilitate the training. Or, the author of this report may be willing to volunteer time to teach the Model POP Curriculum to officers (as policing researchers/academics did in the case of the Glendale Police Department discussed earlier). The department can choose how to best carry out the training – tailoring it to fit the specific needs of the organization. For example, do all officers receive it or only "select" groups of officers? Is it delivered every year or every other year? Do half of the officers receive it one year and the next half the year later (i.e., a rotating basis)?

Such a training regimen, afforded to officers on a consistent basis, can be used to

reinforce the process of problem solving – thinking about, identifying, and responding to the underlying causes of crime more systematically.

2) *Amend front-line officer performance evaluations to include measures of community policing components.*

Most people, regardless of profession, are likely to perform duties that they know they are being judged/evaluated on. This is true for teachers/educators and it should also apply to police officers. A portion of front-line staff's performance evaluations should be dedicated to whether or not officers adequately and/or minimally perform various community policing activities. The structure and formatting of the amended evaluations are entirely up to departmental leadership, but they could include any number of different community policing activities: work on problem-solving projects (i.e., using the SARA model), appearances at citizen group meetings or community events, foot/bike patrol, etc.

3) *Amend supervisor (e.g., sergeants) and/or mid-level manager (e.g., lieutenants) performance evaluations to include measures of community policing components.*

Similar to front-line staff, supervisors and/or mid-level managers' performance evaluations could be amended to also include dedication to community policing principles and activities.

4) *Incorporate a new category of assessment for evaluating officers who are applying for promotions.*

Again, and related to Recommendations 2 and 3, officers seeking promotion could be evaluated on their past commitment to community policing. More specifically, they could be required to submit a packet on the value of problem solving/SARA model and evidence-based practices more broadly. This will likely be only 1 of many components, in addition to scores on promotional exams.

5) *Exempt a subset of officers in Patrol and Traffic Units from responding to calls for service for a few hours each week to engage in problem solving projects.*

One of the biggest impediments to officers engaging in proper problem solving techniques is practical constraints. Other demands from the job, such as continuously driving around from dispatched call to call, prohibit them from being able to engage in the necessary scanning, analysis, response, and assessment phases of problem solving. Such patterns were found in the LCPD with the majority of front-line staff (i.e., non-TNT Unit officers) indicating that they had not engaged in problem solving within the past 3 months. The department should find a way to alleviate the burden of responding to calls for service for a few hours per week for a select group of officers in order to free them up to conduct problem-solving projects.

It is important to note that this process should be implemented cautiously. Officers selected to be partially exempt from their normal Patrol/Traffic duties need to be highly motived – having previously exhibited initiative and a desire to engage in problem solving. This group or series of groups should be directly responsible to a sergeant(s), who holds them accountable for following all phases of the SARA model and documenting whether responses/interventions are successful or not. Again, it would entail a few hours of reprieve each week from responding to calls for service.

6) *Update the records management system and have more consistent contact with the crime analyst(s).*

Having an up-to-date records management system and a proficient crime analyst(s) are tools for any police department, which can be used for problem solving (specifically the scanning, analysis, and assessment phases of the SARA model). The records management system should be accurate and updated more regularly, and leadership and those officers in management/supervisory positions should meet more consistently with the crime analyst in order

to stress what information/data they need in order to efficiently problem solve, what is helpful versus what is not, etc.

7) *The LCPD should petition the city (e.g., mayor; council members) to earmark/allocate specific funding in the public safety budget in order to prioritize community policing efforts.*

There are a number of items/costs that should be petitioned for in annual budgets, including providing work-related cell phones for members of the TNT Unit, funding for community events (e.g., "Coffee/Ice Cream with a Cop"; Citizen Police Academies), and funding to administer a community survey. The cell phones will allow for better contact and communication between residents and officers. Funding and resources for a community survey require some discussion. A community survey can be used to gauge public perceptions of trust/legitimacy in the LCPD. In fact, the city is making feedback from residents (e.g., perceptions of trust and safety) a priority in their new PEAK Performance Initiative. However, funding and resources are necessary to carry out that initiative. Who will be in change of surveying citizens: officers, civilian employees, or will the city contract such services out? Expanded community policing functions and activities must be reflected in budgeting and allocation on an annual basis.

8) *Continue to engage in self-reflection as an organization, evaluating strengths and weaknesses as they relate to community policing.*

The Community Policing Self-Assessment Tool (CP-SAT) is provided in its full form in Appendix A. The department can use the CP-SAT for future evaluations. This could be done to gauge the progress and growth of community policing functions/activities over time – perhaps once every few years.

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Appendix A: Community Policing Self-Assessment Tool (CP-SAT)

Community Partnerships
Engagement with a range of partners
To what extent do the following types of <u>organizations</u> actively participate as community partners with your law enforcement agency? ("actively participate" refers to information sharing, attending meetings, problem identification, and/or problem solving)
- 1 = not at all; 2 = a little; 3 = somewhat; 4 = a lot; 5 = to a great extent

      Law enforcement agencies (e.g., Federal, State, and/or other jurisdictions) who serve the community _____

      Other components of the criminal justice system (e.g., probation, parole, courts, prosecutors, and juvenile justice authorities) _____

      Other government agencies (e.g., Parks, Public Works, Traffic Engineering, Code Enforcement, Schools) _____

      Non-profit/community-based organizations that serve community members _____

      Businesses operating in the community _____

      The local media _____

      To what extent do individuals in the community actively participate as community partners with your law enforcement agency? _____

Government Partnerships (Non-law enforcement)
      To what extent does your agency provide sufficient resources (e.g., financial, staff time, personnel, equipment, political, and/or managerial support) to support the work of its government partnerships? _____

      To what extent are you involved in implementing problem-solving projects with government partners? _____

      To what extent do you collaborate in developing shared goals for problem-solving efforts with government partners? _____

To what extent do government partners share accountability for the partnership activities? _____

How often do you communicate with government partners? [1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very often] _____

Community Organization and Local Business Partnerships
      To what extent does your agency provide sufficient resources (e.g., financial, staff time, personnel, equipment, political, and/or managerial support) to support the work of its

non-government partnerships? _____

To what extent do non-government partners trust your law enforcement agency (e.g., share information, believe that the department takes accountability seriously, believe the agency follows through on commitments, believe the agency will be honest about problems)? _____

To what extent are you involved in implementing problem-solving projects with non-government partners? _____

To what extent do you collaborate in developing shared goals for problem-solving efforts with non-government partners? _____

To what extent do non-government partners share accountability for the partnership activities? _____

How often do you communicate with non- government partners? [1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very often] _____

General Engagement with the Community
To what extent do you…

Involve community members in solutions to community problems? _____

Make contact with a wide range of community members to assess community priorities?

Attend community events and meetings? _____

Sub-stations?____ foot patrol (door-to-door canvassing)?_____ bike patrol_____ citizen police academies? _____ community beat/neighborhood meetings? _____ Go into schools to make presentations?_____ citizen ride-along program _____

Problem Solving
(Please indicate your level of involvement with your agency's problem solving efforts. ("Problem Solving" is the process of engaging in the proactive and systematic examination of identified problems to develop effective responses.)
• 1 = not at all; 2 = a little; 3 = somewhat; 4 = a lot; 5 = to a great extent

General Problem Solving
How aware are you of the Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment (SARA) model? _____

To what extent are officers in your agency given the shift time to engage in the problem-solving process? _____

To what extent does your agency keep historical records (e.g., lessons learned; after

action report) of problem solving for future reference? _____

To what extent does your agency coordinate problem-solving efforts across the agency (e.g., separate police divisions and shifts)? _____

How often do you conduct problem solving in your daily work? [1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very often] _____

Problem Solving Processes: Scanning
In identifying and prioritizing the problems in your community, to what extent do you consider:

Locations? _____
Victims? _____
Offenders? _____

In identifying and prioritizing the problems in your community, how much do you use non-law enforcement information (e.g., community surveys, community partners, input from caregivers, parole officers, landlords or business managers)? _____

Problem Solving Processes: Analysis
When analyzing a problem, to what extent do you…

Examine a comprehensive set of factors, such as the location, day of week, time of day, season and environmental factors (e.g., street lighting and landscape)? _____

Analyze the strengths and limitations of past or current responses to the problem? _____

Examine a range of non-police data (e.g., government records, community surveys, school information)? _____

Research and conduct analyses based on best practices? _____

Gather information about the victims affected by a problem? _____

Gather information about offenders contributing to a problem? _____

Gather information about locations contributing to a problem? _____

Problem Solving Processes: Response
How much do you work with stakeholders in developing responses to problems? _____

In responding to problems, to what extent do you focus on long-term solutions that address underlying conditions of problems? _____

To what extent do you determine a response based on results of problem analysis? _____

To what extent do your problem-solving responses supplement enforcement activities with prevention-oriented strategies, such as situational crime prevention, nuisance abatement, zoning, and involving social services? _____

Problem Solving Processes: Assessment
When assessing your problem-solving efforts…

How much do you (or someone else) examine whether the response was implemented as planned? _____

To what extent do you (or someone else) determine if the response was effective, compared to baseline data? _____

To what extent do you (or someone else) analyze the nature of the problem further if a response does not work? _____

To what extent do you (or someone else) analyze the response further if a response does not work? _____

Organizational Transformation
Agency Management
To what extent are you readily able to access relevant information (e.g., police, community, and research data) to support problem solving? _____

To what extent are the problem-solving data available to you accurate? _____

To what extent does your agency provide the data (e.g., through reports or intranet access) that you need to engage in effective problem solving? _____

To what extent has your agency acquired the necessary information technology hardware and software (e.g., crime analysis, mapping) to support problem solving? _____

(Command only) To what degree has your agency included community policing values (e.g., empowerment, trust, accountability, problem solving, and community partnership) in its mission statement? _____

(Command only) To what degree does your agency's strategic plan (or similar document) include goals or objective statements that support community policing? _____

(Command only) To what extent are community partners represented in planning and policy activities (e.g., budgeting, citizen advisory panels)? _____

(Command only) To what extent does your agency prioritize community policing efforts in making budgetary decisions? _____

(Command only) Does your agency conduct a review of the performance of the organization regularly (e.g., at least once every year)? _____

- Yes, No (if no, skip next 3 questions)

(Command only) To what extent did your agency's most recent effort to evaluate organizational performance reflect overall impacts of your community policing efforts?

(Command only) In assessing your organization's community policing efforts, to what extent does your agency incorporate community assessment tools (e.g., surveys, citizen feedback letters, online input)? _____

(Command only) To what extent did your agency share the results from your most recent effort to evaluate community policing? _____

Personnel Management

To what extent does your agency require demonstrated competency in community policing (e.g., ability to form productive partnerships, completion of a successful problem-solving project) for promotion? _____

How well are expectations for your role in community policing defined by your law enforcement agency? _____

To what extent are officers in your agency training in…
Problem solving? _____
Building community partnerships? _____

To what extent is community policing an agency-wide effort involving all staff? _____

To what extent are officers in your agency given adequate uncommitted time to proactively work with the community? _____

To what extent are geographic, beat, or sector assignments long enough to allow officers in your agency to form strong relationships with the community? _____

To what extent does your agency give patrol officers decision-making authority to develop responses to community problems? _____

To what extent do performance evaluations hold you accountable for…
(Line Officers Only) Developing partnerships with external groups? _____

(Line Officers Only) Using problem solving? _____

To what extent does recruit field training in your agency include…
(Command only) Problem solving? _____

(Command only) Developing partnerships? _____

(Command only) How much does your agency involve the community in recruitment, selection, and hiring processes (e.g., the community might help identify competencies and participate in oral boards)? _____

(Command only) To what extent does your agency recruit officers who have strong general problem-solving skills? _____

(Command only) To what extent does your agency recruit officers who have an interest in working collaboratively with the community? _____

To what extent do performance evaluations hold managers and supervisors in your agency accountable for…
>   (First-Line Supervisor/Middle Management & Command only) Encouraging community policing among officers they supervise? _____
>
>   (First-Line Supervisor/Middle Management & Command only) Developing partnerships with external groups? _____
>
>   (First-Line Supervisor/Middle Management & Command only) Using innovative problem solving? _____

Leadership
To what extent does your Chief/Sheriff stress the importance of…
>   Community policing to personnel within your agency? _____
>
>   Community policing externally? _____

To what extent does top command staff at your agency…
>   Communicate a vision for community policing to personnel within your agency? _____
>
>   Advocate partnerships with the community? _____
>
>   Value officers' work in partnership activities? _____
>
>   Value officers' work in problem solving? _____

To what extent do first-line supervisors at your agency…
>   Establish clear direction for community policing activities? _____
>
>   empower officers to do community policing? _____

Transparency
To what extent does your agency provide community members with information on…

>   Agency activities? _____

Crime-prevention tips? _____

Crime maps? _____

To what extent does your agency communicate openly with community members? _____