Officer-per-thousand formulas & other policing myths:
A leadership model for better police resource management

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Officer-per-thousand formulas and other policing myths

*"We added 200 more officers and, to be honest, I can't really tell you
that anything changed in the community at all."*

— An assistant chief from a major city

How often have you heard statements like these:

➢ We need more officers.

➢ Police can't impact the crime rate.

➢ Another city has more officers-per-thousand. We should be equal to it.

➢ It's the rest of the criminal justice system that's broken — if we arrest, they are on the street before the paperwork is done. We chase them all day, and it doesn't make a difference.

➢ Crime is not a police issue. It's a community issue.

➢ The job of citizens is to be eyes and ears and call 9-1-1. They shouldn't get involved beyond that because they shouldn't take the law into their own hands.

➢ Citizens are too afraid to get involved.

➢ Citizens are too apathetic to get involved.

➢ We couldn't possibly do more with what we have. We are already overworked, going from call to call.

➢ We are a full-service agency committed to showing up for every single call whether or not it is an emergency — our department philosophy is 'if you call for a police officer, you'll get one.'

We have worked with departments with as many as five officers per thousand population and fewer than 1.5 officers per thousand. We have worked in some of the largest cities in the nation and in the smallest villages. We have worked where gangs, drugs, and an entrenched crime culture have torn apart neighborhoods for generations. We have worked in areas where fear is so low that residents routinely leave keys in the ignition and car doors unlocked. We have worked with chiefs who require two officers-per-thousand before they can begin community policing and for managers with 3.6 officers-per-thousand who declared they could not do "proactive" policing without more cops. What's going on?

In the midst of it all are city managers, county managers, and elected leaders trying to figure out how to allocate increasingly scarce resources among competing needs of crime, safety, water, parks, potholes, and more. Making matters worse, police departments are often seen as mysteriously different from other departments — somehow more difficult to manage and responsible for results that are harder to measure. It doesn't have to be that way. This article is about how to get it back on track by improving accountability for results.

STOP THE ENDLESS DEBATE: ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

City managers and mayors, facing a complexity of needs, search for equitable ways to address these issues. Off-the-shelf methods for counting officers (calculating officer-per-thousand ratios and setting staff levels based on "comparable" cities) lead only to more debate. Since our department/town is different, what is the best method to use? Should our "population" include those who commute to work here? Go to the university in town? Visit as tourists? How many officers do we count? Which cities should we compare to?

The debate continues. Other ratios are suggested. How about officers per young males (age 15-25 — the higher crime years) in the population? How about officers per "Part I" crime reported?

With a little effort, officer-per-thousand ratios and similar counting methods can support almost any position, with few arguments meaningfully connected to the outcome citizens want: less crime and better public safety.

We suggest it is time to ask a different question. The question isn't "Do we have as many officers as the next town?" The question also isn't "How busy are we?" The question is, *"What will it take for us, in this community, to achieve our public safety goals?"*

Ask that question and a new conversation can begin regarding the type of policing your community requires and the impact expected from good police work. To describe the decision-making model we are suggesting, we begin by discussing, briefly, types of policing and their expected impacts.

THE NUMBER ONE MYTH ABOUT POLICING

"Police can't impact the crime rate." You've probably heard it said a number of ways, but it adds up to the same thing: the belief that police cannot influence the level of crime[1] in a community. Taken to its logical conclusion, this is an argument for having no police. Yet we have worked with departments whose managers argue for more officers while insisting that officers cannot impact the level of crime.

The decision-making process we describe here will work only for those who understand this elemental point: Effective police departments have a substantial impact on the level of community crime, fear, and disorder and, by doing so, make a tremendous difference to community livability.

HOW TO RUN A DYSFUNCTIONAL POLICING DEPARTMENT

Across the nation, a debate on policing has raged for decades, complete with competing terminology, philosophy, and habits. While the debate is not over, there is a growing consensus that three elements are common to dysfunctional departments. Whether one calls it "traditional" policing or not, these elements include:

➢ **A dominant focus on apprehension of major crime suspects, to the point of excluding or limiting other strategies.** When police departments narrow activities to the single tool of determining whether a suspect can be arrested, they discard many useful crime reduction tools.

In this model police are purely reactive. The job is to arrive after the crime and attempt to determine who committed it. Further, because police cannot investigate every crime, only the most serious crimes are investigated. Regarding less serious crime, under this model, in the absence of a lucky break (such as observing a crime in progress), police function as armed report-takers for the benefit of collecting crime statistics and assisting with insurance claims. While reactive police work should be a part of any policing model (the fact of being caught, along with the perceived potential of being caught, helps prevent crime), use of this approach to the exclusion of others is an incomplete solution.

➢ **A sharp division of responsibility for crime response, where police react and citizens watch.** Traditionally, police organizations ask citizens to limit their role to that of "eyes and ears." This approach benefits only the most self-serving departments. It reinforces the idea that citizens have little role in reducing crime and improving community livability. It generates a sense of helplessness and encourages the popular notion that adding officers is the only way to reduce crime.

An analogy with fire fighting shows the danger in this approach. Most citizens understand they have a responsibility to prevent fire. That is why we do more than report after a fire starts. Most of us can recognize a "fire hazard" when we see it. We often remove or reduce such risks on our own. Parents teach their children about these responsibilities as well. In contrast, few of us can recognize a "crime hazard" in our neighborhood and fewer still understand the importance of citizens cleaning up such hazards. We do not suggest that citizens arrest suspects, but the traditional role as eyes and ears only is a poor formula for effective crime reduction.

➢ **A belief that police work does not influence the level of crime.** What happens when citizen involvement is limited to reporting and police work to report taking and investigating only very serious offenses? Police work has surprisingly little impact on crime and community livability. Institutionalize this approach over time and something else occurs: pundits and researchers "discover" that police cannot impact crime and begin teaching that to police managers. While it is true that factors outside the control of police impact crime, it is equally true that police can and do have a significant effect. Again, if police had no influence on crime, there would be no reason to have a police department.

Combine these three factors: Reliance on arrest alone, limiting citizen involvement to calling 9-1-1, and believing the level of crime is unrelated to police work and the formula for dysfunction is complete. If this describes your police department and citizens and department members are asking for more resources, the logical question to ask in return is: "Why?"

THREE ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE POLICING

Whether labeled community policing, problem oriented policing, neighborhood-based policing or another name, certain approaches have been shown to work. At the core is one mission: Attend to the security and safety of all people in a community in a manner consistent with the values and concerns of the citizens who live there. Different departments emphasize different aspects of effective policing, and many emphasize one approach to the exclusion of others. But the combination of the following three key elements holds the greatest potential. They include:

➢ **To solve problems, orient toward crime, not just criminals.** Traditional policing focuses on whether a perpetrator can be identified and arrested. Effective policing focuses on how to elevate community livability by reducing crime, fear, and disorder. This includes making arrests as well as working to change the proximate factors that enable crime. The question is not simply, "Can we catch the criminal?" It is also, "What can we do so there is less crime?"

This could be as simple as determining that poor lighting gives drug dealers cover. It might involve a new strategy for first time offenders on the theory that some are less likely to graduate to more serious crime if better approaches can be used (one variant on the highly successful *Broken Window Theory*[2]). It could be as complex as confronting the fact that neighbors, friends, landlords, and family members of perpetrators have unintentionally collaborated to enable crime in an area regardless of whether specific individuals are arrested. Those who emphasize this approach often consider themselves proponents of *Problem Oriented Policing*.

➢ **Ask citizens to reassert their role in crime reduction and community livability**. An involved citizenry is the "sleeping giant" of effective policing. It is only a slight caricature to say that, under traditional policing, responsible citizens are seen as naïve noncombatants whose job is to stay out of the way. Effective policing recognizes that when citizens understand, and practice, their role in keeping a neighborhood safe, community safety and livability improve.

As a member of our team has written previously, the first step for any neighbor is to understand that a decent neighborhood is not a right, but a responsibility.[3] The concept is hardly new. When Sir Robert Peel founded the London Metropolitan Police Department — often credited with being the first example of a modern police department — he wrote, in 1829, the following:

> The police are the public; the public are the police. The police are only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties that are incumbent on every citizen in the interest of community welfare and existence.

In too many American cities today, the concept that police and citizens are part of one continuum, each sharing a common set of duties in the interest of community welfare has become a dim, fading memory. However, what was true almost two centuries ago remains valid today. The idea of asserting this shared responsibility and moving away from the myth of 9-1-1 as a cure-all has taken root in many places.

Those who emphasize this policing strategy often consider themselves proponents of *Neighborhood Watch* and *Community Partnerships*. Some also use the term *Community Policing* to describe community-partnering efforts, while we would use the term to encompasses a more comprehensive definition of effective policing.

➢ **Be accountable: Take responsibility for the level of crime**. Effective policing hinges on understanding that the job is to use all available tools to improve livability by reducing crime, fear, and disorder. This renewed emphasis on community-oriented results can be found in a range of models. One example is *Geo-based* policing, where managers, supervisors and officers assume responsibility for a specific area, such as a neighborhood, rather than for a specific time of day, such as the afternoon shift.

One oft-cited example in police accountability is the *CompStat* model introduced by the New York City Police Department. The approach makes use of crime analysis, examining precinct crime

trends and requiring commanders to develop strategies tailored to combat those trends. One of the simplest strategies used in New York is one of the most powerful: Applied use of the Broken Window Theory changes the traditional model of investigating only the most serious crimes to targeting crimes, large or small, that are seen to have the greatest potential for impacting whether future crimes occur. In our view, however, the core innovation in New York City was not any one technique, but rather the level of commitment made to establishing an accountable mindset for results.

In most communities debate continues about the value of these three elements. Confusion about the role of citizens and skepticism about problem solving can still be found, but the arguments in favor are gaining ground. Curiously, it is the third element, accountability, that has met the most resistance. Importantly, *this third element must be in place before the power of the other two can be realized.*

While implementing these innovations is never easy, results are evident across the nation. While we do not suggest that changes in policing alone account for all changes, consider the following: In Portland, Oregon, where the effort to implement "community policing" has entered its second decade, the Part I crime rate[4] dropped 35% between 1995 and 2000. In San Diego, where the effort to implement "problem oriented policing" has been showcased, the crime rate dropped 34% during the same period. In New York City, which has bet on its "CompStat" model, the crime rate during the same period dropped by 39%. There are many other examples gaining recognition across the country – in communities large and small.

Again, we doubt that changes in policing alone account fully for these reductions, and equally, as crime has begun to increase in some cities since substantial declines in the late 90s, that policing alone account for such increases. Nevertheless, the data support the finding that changes in policing have had an impact. Although many cities in the nation experienced crime reductions during the same period we examined, rates of decline were far from consistent, with many cities experiencing more mild declines during the same time frame.

Running a highly effective police department requires accountability, problem solving, and the ability to ensure citizen involvement. Does it have to cost more? Absolutely not. Does it require officers and community members to reconsider their roles in ensuring public safety? Definitely. If this is the direction your community wants for its police department, then read on for a discussion of how to make effective resource decisions for such a department.

AN ACCOUNTABLE RESOURCE DECISION-MAKING MODEL

Ideally, the decision to add resources to a city department should hinge on three questions:

➢ **Current results and desired outcomes.** Are we achieving the results desired in the community with the status quo? If *yes*, make no change or consider reducing resources. If *no*…

➢ **Accountability for current resources.** Are we using our current resources efficiently to achieve the desired community result? If no, improve resource management first. Adding resources to an ineffective system will cause little change; much like the popular definition of

insanity: doing the same thing over and over while expecting a different result. Once current resources are better optimized...

➤ **Cost/benefit of adding resources.** Given the goal we wish to achieve and an organization using its resources well, how much closer to the goal can we move with a given amount of added resources, and is that benefit worth the cost (which might include the need to trim from other budgets or defer other tasks)?

These questions must be asked, and answered, in order. Specifically, we have de-coupled the assumptive connection between numbers of officers and the level of crime (i.e., that more officers will always mean less crime). We do this because correlations between the number of officers and the crime rate are difficult to establish. Choosing the appropriate number of officers by looking at per-thousand ratios is a poor method for determining optimal officer strength — one that is only dimly related to crime reduction impacts. Consider the three cities cited earlier:[5]

➤ New York City enjoys comparatively low crime rates and saw substantial drops in crime during the latter half of the 1990s. New York's police department has a ratio of about five officers-per-thousand — the second highest in the nation among the 30 largest cities.

➤ San Diego, whose overall crime index and rate of crime reduction closely matched New York's in the late 1990s, has a ratio of 1.7 officers-per-thousand, one of the three lowest ratios of the 30 largest cities. Approximately equal success to New York with fewer than half the officers-per-thousand.

➤ Portland, Oregon, where the overall crime rate is higher than both San Diego's and New York's, saw large crime reductions in the late 1990s, with an officer-per-thousand ratio close to 2.0.

These changes are not simply a byproduct of generalized national trends. Unfortunately, it is easy to find other big cities with staffing levels similar to New York's, Portland's, or San Diego's that have seen comparatively smaller changes in their crime rates during the same time period.

Similar issues can be seen in smaller towns as well. In one review we conducted of cities that are home to "Big 12" conference universities, we found the following: In 2000, Waco, Texas had 1.9 officers-per-thousand and the highest crime rate of the Big 12 for which statistics were readily available. Norman, Oklahoma had the lowest officer ratio (1.3) and one of the lowest crime rates as well. Lubbock, Texas had the worst crime trends (lower than Waco's but trending upward while Waco's had been trending down) and a ratio of 1.5 per thousand. Two of the better performers, in terms of crime reduction trends, Boulder, Colorado and Columbia, Missouri, are listed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics as having 1.7 and 1.6 officers-per-thousand respectively. Big city or small, we find no meaningful correlation between the number of officers and the crime rate.

What do more successful cities have in common? Certainly not the relative size of their police force. The data strongly suggest that adding officers to engage in additional reactive policing will not make a lasting impact on the level of crime. If a city wishes to reduce crime, additional officers can help only when added to an effective, mission-focus department — one that has

instilled accountability for community livability and the level of crime throughout the organization.

Therefore, to decide on staffing size, the steps include:

1. Define the police department's mission, vision, and goals. Decide what the leadership and the community served want the department to accomplish with its resources. And then…

2. The department continually assesses the integration of the mission and vision within the organization and ensures that current resources are used effectively for achievement of goals. And then…

3. The department makes recommendations to city leadership regarding crime reduction outcomes that can be expected as a result of each increment of staffing change. And then…

4. The city leadership holds the department accountable for those expected impacts at whichever level of staffing is agreed upon.

The following describes in more detail how these concepts can be used to guide staffing choices.

STEP ONE: SET COMMUNITY GOALS
Define policing mission, vision, and goals

Pop quiz: Name the top three community goals your police department intends to achieve by year end. Now name the top three longer-term community goals — those your department plans to accomplish within five years. Full marks awarded to those who can readily name community goals, regardless of the number.

The answers to these questions should be automatic. Effective organizational management begins with a clear focus — a shared mission and a concrete set of goals.

Without a clear set of *measurable*, community-oriented goals, to which each unit within a department is expected to respond, a sort of mission drift sets in. Activities within units and divisions develop around diverse agenda. Coordination among different units becomes difficult and intra-department communication becomes increasingly ineffective as the hallmarks of institutional dysfunction settle in. Frustrations with department management, by both officers and citizens, climb.

It doesn't have to be that way. Such dysfunction in a public institution will continue until a strong leadership team re-ignites a community-oriented, mission-driven approach. The heavy lifting necessary to do this (requiring a balanced combination of cooperative planning and leadership directive) is the first step in transforming a department to more effective policing.

Success will hinge on the degree to which development of goals is done in partnership with the community served. In order to encourage citizens to reassert their central role in taking responsibility for their communities, police must model the approach. This requires dialogue, education, outreach, and give-and-take with political leadership, community groups, and interested citizens at a level that few departments have tried. In this respect, the process that

produces the goals — often short-changed for expediency's sake — can be as important as the goals themselves.

The process of engaging in a full dialogue with the community will pay other dividends as well. Goals developed at the stroke of a pen by a chief or city administrator are often changed that quickly as well. The result can be an almost unmanageable department dedicated only to addressing the crisis du jour. When goals are set through a process of extended dialogue with a community and political leadership, goals are less likely to change overnight, and a more consistent management approach is possible.

When we speak of clear, measurable goals, we refer to the end result, not the process used to achieve it. Therefore, "reducing crime and fear in a specific neighborhood by X amount" is a legitimate goal. "Do more problem solving" is a process statement — it may be part of the strategy that achieves the goal, but it is not the goal itself.

Significantly, the goal is also not the eradication of all crime. There is a point, well before zero crime, where a community consensus is reached that the marginal return is not worth the cost — that is, a community would rather spend money on other priorities, or enjoy lower taxes, than pay for an additional increment of public safety. The relevant questions, therefore, must be "What is acceptable?" and "What are we willing to do to achieve it?" Significantly, it is best to ask these questions *by neighborhood.* Otherwise, the needs of a high-impact neighborhood may be lost when averaged with safer adjacent communities.

Again, the question is not "How does our crime compare to other cities?" That common question, like its companion, "How does our officer-per-thousand ratio compare to other cities?" is not relevant to effective decisions. They are stand-ins — easier to answer than the core question: "What is the vision we have for our city, and what will it take to get there?"

STEP TWO: REVIEW EFFICIENCY
Ensure effective use of current resources

Too many of us can remember a time when we successfully championed added funding for a city agency and then didn't see a commensurate community benefit from doing so. That's what we're talking about.

If your law enforcement leaders tell you that, with added resources, they will improve livability and reduce crime and fear in specific neighborhoods by predicted amounts, you may have a department prepared to make great use of added resources. If police officials ask for more officers while insisting they are unable to improve livability, it is worth asking how the community would benefit from the expense.

The challenge for police managers is determining if resources are used well. Generally, this requires better use, and additional development, of management information. Because management information is often poorly aligned with department goals, assessing effectiveness is best done in phases. Those phases include *acting on what is already known, making better use of existing information*, and *developing additional critical measurements*. Here's how it works:

1. Act on what is already known.

This type of assessment can happen as soon as goals are clear. No new data are required. This is simply a frank, clear-eyed assessment of current practices and whether they work. For effective managers the territory is familiar. Examples of issues that can be seen at this level:

➢ Align tasks for greater accountability. For example, many agencies shift patrol priorities so that captains, lieutenants, sergeants, and officers no longer focus only on activities occurring during a shift, but assume ongoing responsibility for results in specific neighborhoods.

➢ Infuse a "mission focus" throughout the organization. We have spoken with chiefs and sheriffs who realize they had become so mired in administrative issues — personnel issues, department and city politics, and the daily crisis — that they long ago stopped asking commanders to account for crime trends and other public safety concerns. If leaders do not routinely ask subordinates to account for community safety, adding resources to the formula will not help.

➢ Review and improve all community contact points. The contact points between a department and the community (such as a call-for-service, a drug complaint, or an in-person call response) are critical opportunities to leverage community resources. To the degree such contacts leave citizens without a sense of what else they can do to influence neighborhood livability, the greatest crime fighting resource any community has will be left to atrophy further.

➢ Evaluate efficiency and effectiveness such as false alarm response, dealing with repeat calls for service at the same location or involving the same parties, and identifying and addressing routine tasks that do not advance the mission.

➢ Assess training, recruitment, performance measures, and promotion standards. A simple example: The officer whose performance is measured on the number of tickets written is not motivated to make the intersection safer. We have seen multiple instances where officers reduce crime through problem solving, yet earn negative performance reviews because their arrest or citation counts are down.

2. Make better use of existing information.

The next part of the efficiency review involves better analysis of available data. For police, such key management information consists of calls-for-service, reported crime, and officer activity. Existing data can often be used more effectively to guide decisions on deployment and chronic crime problem solving. Examples:

➢ **Patrol deployment:** A key resource in any department is the amount of discretionary patrol time — time available for officers to make self-initiated stops, spend an extra minute telling a victim how to prevent the next crime, or make a phone call to property owners, neighbors, or local agencies to report problems or request assistance. Understanding the amount of discretionary time and how it is used is vital. Yet most departments do not track such time effectively. To be sure, it is not easy to do — sorting out the difference between dispatched time, discretionary time, and administrative demands (e.g. briefings, training, court time and

other non-dispatched activities) may require substantial improvements in management information systems.

With a better understanding of discretionary time, managers can more effectively answer such questions as:

- Do we ask officers to solve problems between calls rather than merely staying available to be dispatched?

- Do we aggregate some of the available time by going to a sort of "last call priority" model where, on any given shift, one regular patrol officer is exempt from radio calls unless all other officers are already on high priority calls?

- Or do we aggregate some of the available time differently, by removing officers from patrol and placing them in a special problem-solving unit (a "split force" model of policing that can have as many drawbacks as advantages)?

Each approach has its pros and cons. What is needed first, however, is an understanding of the time available.

➢ **Crime analysis.** A technique called crime analysis provides an essential ability for identifying crime patterns, hot spots, year-to-year trends, suspect information, and community concerns. Yet crime analysis is not routine work at many police agencies. Crime analysis helps remove the intuitive guesswork and shift-to-shift differences in perception that can inhibit effective strategies. It also allows commanders and supervisors to deploy patrol officers more effectively.

3. Create measurements for untracked goals.

The third part of the efficiency review involves finding out about performance on core goals for which data have not been collected. For example:

➢ We want to reduce the length of time that chronic problems impact a neighborhood, but how will we know? Do we have a method for counting "hotspots" and other chronic problems? Do we have a method for tracking how long they exist?

➢ We want to work more closely with citizens and encourage them to get involved in problem solving. But how do we know if we are effective? What indicators for citizen involvement help us track progress?

➢ We say we want to reduce crime as well as the kind of crime-enabling fear and disorder that harms communities. We can measure changes in reported crime, but what about the level of fear and disorder? Also, how can we verify that changes in "the crime rate" are not merely a function of changes in reporting habits by citizens — either from reporting more as they get involved or less because trust in police declined?

The saying, "That which gets measured gets done" is apropos. A department that tracks only call-response time and clearance rates will have difficulty fulfilling a mission to reduce crime
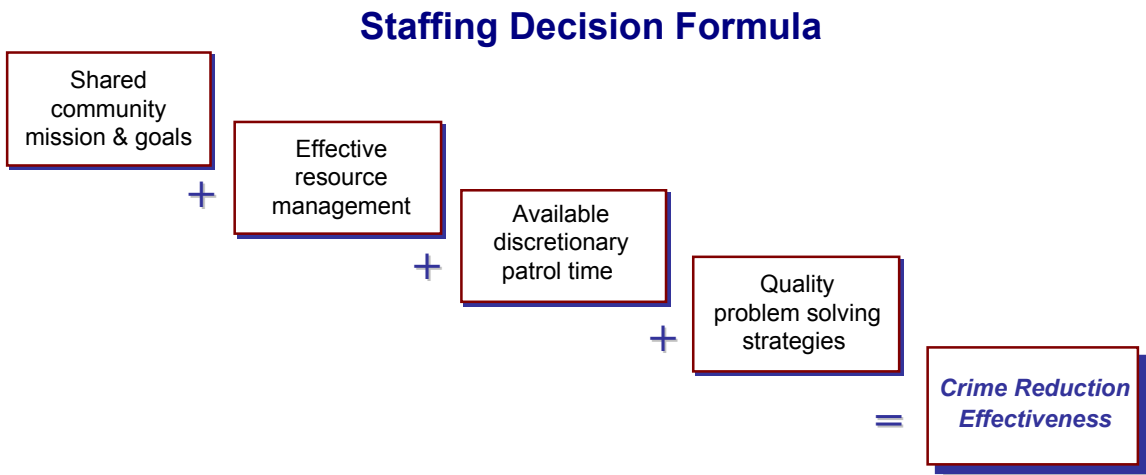
(reported or not) and increase livability. To make our communities safer, we must measure the complete picture of safety issues that matter to the community. While Uniform Crime Reporting statistics are one indicator, relying on these measures alone misses societal changes that have occurred since UCR standards were adopted many decades ago.

STEP THREE: TIE RECOMMENDATIONS TO RESULTS
Connect staffing changes to outcomes in the community

Once a department is aligned to the mission of public safety (and not just call response), staffing decisions can be made in light of this mission. With clear goals and an organization aligned to them, a department can make recommendations to city leadership regarding crime reduction and livability outcomes expected as a result of each level of staffing considered.

Graphically represented, the general formula looks like this:

Staffing Decision Formula

Shared community mission & goals

+

Effective resource management

+

Available discretionary patrol time

+

Quality problem solving strategies

=

Crime Reduction Effectiveness

Examples of key questions that police management might use to fill in the above formula and make optimal resource recommendations are shown in the next table.

KEY RESOURCE DECISION POINTS
CONNECTING OUTCOMES TO RESOURCES

Sample questions about current use of resources:

- Our current **response time to emergency calls-for-service** averages **X** minutes. Is this acceptable to our community? If not, what should it be? If it is, is a higher number also acceptable?

- Our current **response time to non-emergency,** lower priority calls-for-service averages **X** minutes. Is this acceptable to our community? If not, what should it be? If it is, could a higher number also be acceptable?

- The average percentage of **time spent per shift on false alarms and other calls not related to the police mission** calls is **X%**. Is this acceptable to our community? If not, what is?

- The average amount of **discretionary patrol time** available for problem solving is **X%**. Is this an acceptable range? If not, how much more time is needed? If acceptable, would a lower number work?

Sample questions about crime and livability:

- The **Part 1 & 2 index crime rate for our city** is **X**. Is this acceptable to our community?

- The **Part 1 & 2 crime rates for our most impacted neighborhoods** is **X**. Is this acceptable to our community?

- The number of **chronic call locations/blocks in our most impacted neighborhoods** is **X**. Is this acceptable to our community?

- The **fear level in our most impacted neighborhoods** is **X**. Is this acceptable to our community?

- The **number of injury and fatality traffic accidents** per year is **X**. Is this acceptable to our community?

- Our **clearance rate for major crimes** is **X%**. Is this acceptable to our community?

- **Confidence/trust levels** between our most impacted communities and our police department are at **X** level. Is this acceptable to our community?

- The percentage of **citizens** in our most impacted neighborhoods who are engaged in community policing and problem solving activities is **X%**. Is this acceptable?

If city goals call for improving certain unacceptable community conditions, it is police management's job to determine how to get the job done. For example, city and police management may wish to increase discretionary patrol time, decrease crime in a high-impact neighborhood, and increase citizen involvement. These become the outcomes that guide police resource decisions. Staffing increases should be considered only when management can say with reliability that such changes will positively impact these goals.

There is, of course, a similar set of acceptable/not acceptable decision points that relate directly to labor/management issues:

➢ Have we historically used the perverse motivator of "rewarding" our police department with more resources when crime has increased while "penalizing" it, by cutting the budget, when crime has dropped?

➢ Have staffing decisions and overtime expenditures historically been driven almost exclusively by the need to achieve minimum acceptable officer safety levels?

➢ Is the current city or police management convinced that community fear of crime is a prerequisite for an adequate police budget or does management understand that positive results and better police-community partnerships can lead to appropriate community support?

Key to addressing most labor-management issues in the context of the decision formula is to make sure that decisions are reconnected to the purpose for having a police department. The fundamentals remain the same — spend public funds to achieve a measurable improvement in community benefit.

At the conclusion of step three, city, county, or state leaders receive resource recommendations from police management that are *directly tied to anticipated results in the community* — results that police management are prepared to account for at given levels of funding.

STEP FOUR: MAKE DECISIONS AND HOLD ACCOUNTABLE
Elected leaders decide and hold police agencies accountable

With agreements reached on the results desired and the staff necessary to achieve it, budget realities must be weighed to determine the speed with which changes can be in place. That final trade-off is up to city leadership who, in the fourth step of this process, compare the relative priorities, expected results, and resource requirements of city agencies, allocate resources, and then hold those agencies accountable for the results predicted.

These decision points also become the measuring sticks for progress. If goals are not accomplished there is a mechanism to evaluate the application of resources to reduce crime:

➢ If the level of crime does not decrease, why?

➢ If the response times for emergency calls have not decreased, why?

➢ If problem-solving effectiveness has not increased, why?

➢ If awareness of the role neighbors have on crime reduction hasn't increased, why?

➢ If citizen satisfaction with police service is low, why?

The answers to these questions relate to the original decision points providing city leaders a tool for holding police accountable for results and resources. With this accountable, mission-driven approach, elected leaders, police administrators, and the communities they serve can work together more effectively to ensure an acceptable — even desirable — level of safety and livability for all.

CONCLUSION

Effective policing is more likely to be achieved when a police agency:

✓ Works to reduce crime rather than merely react to it.

✓ Dismantles the myth of the 9-1-1 cure-all and educates and encourages action by all citizens to help reduce crime and improve community livability.

✓ Takes responsibility for the level of crime in a community and commits all its resources to reducing it.

Many successful innovations have been tried in the last two decades and some impressive results have been seen. However, even the best performing cities in America today have only scratched the surface. It is time to leave officer-per-anything comparisons behind and take on a greater responsibility. What is possible to accomplish in our cities today cannot be determined by looking at our neighbors. It is time to break the traditional mold and become more effective problem solvers, fully engage our community partners, and be more accountable for our results.

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[1] We use the phrase "level of crime" to draw a distinction between the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) statistics that track reported Part I and Part II crimes in a community and the actual level of crime, of all types, reported or not.

[2] *Fixing Broken Windows* by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling. Originally published in March 1982 in the *Atlantic Monthly.* It is reprinted in: *Critical Issues in Policing: Contemporary Readings*, Third Edition, Edited by Roger G. Dunham and Geoffrey P. Alpert. © 1997 Waveland Press: Prospect Heights, IL

[3] *Neighbors band to oust drug house – and win*. Forum essay on citizen responsibility to crime prevention, *The Oregonian*, February 3, 1989. © 1989 John H. Campbell.

[4] Part I Crime Index (criminal homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson) reported to the FBI and standardized based on a rate per thousand population. In this case UCR statistics are used for comparability.

[5] These examples use the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) statistics to provide some level of comparability among jurisdictions. This is simply a means of comparison and should not be construed as an endorsement of the UCR standard as the optimal measure of crime and public safety in a community. Effective crime reduction and public safety goals should take into account more information than reported crime in the specific UCR categories.