

Community Problem-Oriented Policing Strategy

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Executive Summary

The third report for the Collaborative Agreement (the Agreement) refresh process has been completed by the Cincinnati Police Department (CPD). This report outlines progress and challenges related to the Community Problem-Oriented Policing (CPOP) provisions contained in the Agreement. Paragraphs 20 - 23 of the Agreement define the guiding principles of CPOP:

20. *Community problem-oriented policing is one form of police work that seeks resolution of troublesome circumstances in the community. These troublesome circumstances are framed as problems to solve. They usually reveal themselves as a form of repeat pattern of offending, victimization, or locations. First, problems need to be carefully defined. A useable problem definition requires a description of harmful behaviors and the environments where these behaviors occur.*
21. *The second principle guiding community problem-oriented policing is that problems are carefully analyzed prior to developing a solution. Community problem-oriented policing is an information intensive strategy that places a premium on data, intelligence, community input, and analysis. The analysis is designed to reveal critical aspects of the problem that can be altered to effect a reduction in the problem.*
22. *The third principle is that the police and their partners engage in a broad search for solutions based on the analysis of information. A law enforcement response is always a possibility, but may not be required. Rather, a range of options is explored, often drawing from the field of "situational crime prevention" that block opportunities to commit crimes and disorder. Effective solutions to problems may require the active participation of and partnership with other City agencies, community members, and the private sector. This implies that for a community problem-oriented policing strategy to be effective there must be close police-community relations and the City must support this approach.*

23. *The fourth principle is that problem-solving efforts are evaluated to determine if the problem has been reduced. Here again, the use of information technology and analysis is critical to assure continuous improvement. If the problem has been successfully addressed, the police can move on to other problems. If it has not, then more work needs to be done, including a re-analysis of the problem or a search for alternative solutions.*

Problem solving in large police agencies has clearly evolved in recent decades. As the industry began to understand the value of abhorrent public behaviors as they relate to crime and disorder, regular interaction with various stakeholders has steadily increased. In its infancy, *community policing* merely involved a handful of officers assigned to crime prevention activities on behalf of the agency. Increased walking patrols and neighborhood storefronts or substations were yet another level of this progression. And most recently, most large departments have since adopted units or specialized officers to address a myriad of community issues and concerns.

In the current climate, however, society has far more demands and expectations of the policing function. It's clear many of the inequities associated with our society have manifested themselves in behaviors that fall into the police domain:

- Mental Health
- Addiction and dependency
- Poverty
- Access to education opportunities
- Employment
- Community investment and anchors
- Community guardians and mentors

To effectively conduct problem solving in this environment, police agencies must not only be mindful of these behavioral drivers but also must be afforded adequate training and given dedicated resources specifically for this mission. At the same time, it is necessary for community stakeholders to step up and be a formidable, active partner in this process. The community must have the capacity and ambition to do more than just attend meetings

or merely engage in rudimentary problem solving activities or training. Rather, the community must put together competent leadership who can work with both private and government agencies to carry out strategic community building and planning.

Capacity of the Police Agency

It is our perception many of those who criticize the police efforts relative to problem solving do so with the belief problem solving should be aggressively pursued throughout the entire agency and conventional policing tactics should be minimized to the extent possible, or at least utilized only as a last resort. The police agency, however, cannot simply ignore its core business demands, which require a major portion of the Department's sworn personnel just to accommodate these functions:

- Calls for Service
- Crime (investigation, response, reporting and solving)
- Traffic (flow and congestion, enforcement, accident investigation)

To conduct problem solving activities to the current expectation level necessary to rebuild our communities will certainly require more Department resources and the active support of many more agencies and stakeholders.

Introduction and Overview

As demonstrated in the *Mutual Accountability* report, the City of Cincinnati embraced the directives of the Collaborative Agreement (CA) and incorporated its principles into most City departments and services. Many positive projects, programs and reforms have resulted from the adoption of these values, and the City continues to support the spirit of the CA through its efforts to review progress and update its pivotal provisions. “*Community Problem-Oriented Policing Strategy*” is the third and final evaluation report in this quest to refresh the Parties’ commitment to the Collaborative Agreement. This report summarizes the City’s review of the Problem Solving process, both internal and external to the Cincinnati Police Department (CPD), including:

- Status of problem solving as the principal strategy for addressing crime, disorder and quality of life issues in Cincinnati neighborhoods
 - Participation of CA Parties, other City departments / related organizations, and community stakeholders
 - Challenges hindering participation
 - Problem solving training and education efforts
 - Review of CPD Procedure 12.370, Problem Solving Project Process
 - Review of CPD Problem Solving Tracking System (PSTS)
- Accountability assessment – PSTS audit results
- Sustainability and long-term effectiveness of the problem solving process

Evolution and Status of Problem Solving

Introduction

Because society traditionally viewed law enforcement as the only entity to tackle crime and disorder, the CA was designed to encourage the Parties to commit to help the police and community work together to address these problems and quality of life issues. While this commitment was accepted as a responsibility of all of the Parties – the City, plaintiffs and the FOP – the Cincinnati Police Department became the primary agency who developed, tested, evaluated and revised the problem solving process through trial and error. Other City agencies and the Parties initially participated in more supportive roles, including community engagement and education, and project response efforts.

The problem solving process envisioned by the CA was innovative and progressive, requiring numerous changes in both policy and perspective. The development of this formalized process was an experimental work in progress; in the early stages, very few “best practices” were available to reference, and other law enforcement agencies attempting similar programs were also doing so by trial and error. The City and CPD rose to the challenge by creating a specialized “Project Coordination” unit within CPD’s Community Relations Section, a Problem Solving procedure and a project tracking system. Extensive training was developed and provided to CPD employees and community stakeholders. Processes were tried, reviewed and revised several times to improve efficiency, increase buy-in from police officers and community members, and comply with the provisions outlined in the CA.

This section examines the contributions made by the Parties to promote and support the integration of problem solving throughout City agencies and neighborhoods, efforts made to engage and educate stakeholders about community problem-oriented policing, and information regarding challenges they faced.

CA Parties Participation

Cincinnati Police Department

As mentioned previously, the Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) took the lead for the City in adopting problem solving as its principal strategy for addressing crime and disorder problems. The concept of working with the community to solve problems was not foreign to the agency; CPD has been an active and successful participant in some form of Community-Oriented Policing (COP) for decades. However, efforts to integrate problem solving throughout the police department were initially met with skepticism and resistance. Traditional law enforcement values, skills and responsibilities were engrained in CPD personnel, and unconventional, progressive ideas were not easily adopted. After much perseverance and diligence, department personnel accepted the adoption of the problem solving methodology as standard practice.

However, CPD found that operating and sustaining this type of system was much more time consuming and labor intensive than previous COP processes, and required academic skills and thought processes not possessed by or associated with law enforcement. An additional challenge was the mandate by CPD administration that a specific number of projects be completed within a particular timeframe (e.g., each Patrol Lieutenant was required to have a project in progress at all times; projects should be closed within 30 – 90 days). This type of directive proved to be detrimental to the legitimacy of projects and indicates a lack of understanding of the basic premises of problem solving. Subsequently, many of the identified “problems” worked on and documented by CPD personnel did not follow the SARA process exactly as envisioned and/or should not have been entered into the database at all. Lesson learned – problem solving must be driven from community needs, not solely prescribed by law enforcement.

In spite of these issues, CPD did develop several large-scale initiatives which successfully utilized the problem solving methodology:

Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) – This effort was initiated in 2007 and was designed to quickly and dramatically reduce gun violence and associated homicides. CIRV is a focused deterrence strategy which involves a partnership between local, state

and federal law enforcement agencies, social service providers and community stakeholders. Extensive information about this initiative can be obtained on the City of Cincinnati's website: <https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/police/community-involvement/cincinnati-initiative-to-reduce-violence/>

Place-Based Investigations of Violent Offender Territories (PIVOT) – The PIVOT initiative was covered extensively in our previous “Mutual Accountability” report. In that report, the PIVOT team was recognized as an international finalist for the 2017 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing Submissions, and has since won the prestigious award. Additional information about PIVOT initiatives and community engagement can be viewed in this documentary: [The PivotPoint](#).

Although the Department's PIVOT program has proven to be a valuable component to our problem solving response, its application has constraints. While CPD may have the limited capacity to conduct multiple PIVOT operations, in many instances our City and community partners do not. As with CPD, other City Departments also have to be mindful of their primary core responsibilities. Hence, PIVOT can only progress in relation to the availability of all members of the team.

Citizen Complaint Authority

The Citizen Complaint Authority (CCA) provided the following response:

Implementation of a Policing Strategy of Community Problem Oriented Policing

CCA attends the City Manager's Advisory Group (MAG) meetings, and is a City member of the MAG, which includes stakeholders like the Friends of the Collaborative as well as community and criminal justice professionals. CCA's MAG PowerPoint presentations are attached (See Appendix A). CCA continues to offer input on topics and issues before the MAG as well as provide presentations upon request. CCA just recently met with the Office of Performance and Data Analytics staff to begin the creation of dashboards for information sharing to MAG periodically in order to implement further strategy of CPOP. (See Appendix I).

CCA initiated and was permitted by CPD to provide trainings to the 2016 and 2017 CPD new recruits, to the 2015-2017 newly promoted CPD supervisors and to the 2016 and 2017 CPD Citizen Police Academy classes. CCA co-partnered with CPD's IIS to provide training to the 2017 CPD Citizen Police Academy class as well as to Region IV NOBLE in 2016 (See Appendix B).

While CCA attempts to offer recommendations, both formally and informally, to CPD to problem solve citizen complaints, there is a concern that CPD may not value CCA's information and recommendations. CCA continues to proactively address concerns or potential patterns of complaints. Unfortunately, CCA has found that concerns by police personnel may not be addressed directly with CCA. This is a major roadblock. One example is the recent issue that has come to light. It was implied that CPD personnel were concerned with CCA conducting interviews of police officers when there were pending charges against citizens who filed complaints against police officers. To date, no concern was brought directly to CCA; however, CCA was recently issued a court order to delay officer interviews in a case investigated by both CPD's IIS and CCA, until complainants' criminal cases were finalized. Such a precedent could impact the tenet of the Collaborative Agreement regarding the creation of CCA as well as cause CCA to be out of compliance with Article 28 of the Cincinnati Municipal Code, which was a codification in part of the Collaborative Agreement. Additionally, CCA is unaware of any prior investigations in past citizen complaints that caused prejudice in pending criminal cases. CCA believes there continues to be a to problem solve this matter, but it appears that CPD personnel were not in support of such a collaborative effort.

CCA may need to begin to track cases specifically in which complainants have been charged via a query. CCA also will begin to benchmark other organizations like CCA throughout the country to determine how they handle such matters. CCA is a member of NACOLE, IACP and NOBLE and will review any relevant information these organizations may have to offer best practices.

Further Roadblocks Hindering Progress

While investigations remain one of CCA's primary responsibilities, CCA has several other requirements that it must meet effectively. CCA is tasked with the examination of all citizen complaints against police officers in an effort of reducing or eliminating the root causes for complaints. This includes all cases received by CPD, which may or may not be investigated by CCA. CCA requires more resources and/or buy-in from CPD. One of CCA's goals through its engagement is to educate the citizens as well as develop problem solving solutions. CCA cannot problem solve solely on its own as well as proactively research and benchmark policy and procedure. It's challenging for CCA to focus on goals such as maintaining and strengthening community partnerships without collaboration and resources. CCA desires to collectively and proactively examine policies, procedures and complaint patterns. CPD must also be willing to engage CCA in problem solving measures, including, but not limited to, Ride Along Program, Cincinnati Citizens Respect Our Witnesses (CCROW), Place Based Investigations of Violent Offender Territories (PIVOT), and Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence. Finally, while CPD has problem solving programs in place, many citizens may be aware of these programs, CCA can encourage community involvement by educating and informing citizens through its monthly community engagement.

Community Police Partnering Center

The Community Police Partnering Center provided the following response:

The Community Police Partnering Center (The Partnering Center) is a direct outgrowth of the Collaborative Agreement (CA), with the primary role of impartial facilitator working with community stakeholders and the police to teach and advance Community Problem Oriented Policing (CPOP), throughout Cincinnati's neighborhoods as a means of reducing crime and disorder and building community and police relations. The Partnering Center's role in "how to implement" CPOP is outlined in Paragraph 29 of the Collaborative Agreement. Attachment A-1 to the

Collaborative Agreement goes on to explain the goal, which is to enable the community to assume a leadership role in community based problem solving.

The Partnering Center has fulfilled this role of impartial facilitator by working with the Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) on macro level problem solving initiatives such as The Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence and serving as the Community Engagement Team Leader. The partnering Center has also worked on the micro level problem solving efforts assisting neighborhood CPOP teams to form a Block Watch or place-based problem solving responses such as PIVOT. Consistent with Attachment 1-A, our focus is community capacity building. We prepare citizens to be co-creators of problem solving responses sharing accountability and responsibility for making our communities safe. The Partnering Center's uses the Scan, Analysis, Response and Assessment (SARA) problem solving process as introduced by the Collaborative Agreement, strategies for crime prevention such as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design or how to use the crime triangle to name a few. We provide coaching and technical assistance to enable citizens to assume a leadership role in community based problem solving partnerships with the police.

Since its inception until today the Partnering Center has remained committed to continuing its role in the advancement of CPOP and problem-solving throughout Cincinnati. This report reflects a summary for each of the last nine years along with supporting documentation.

The CPPC's main "Summary Report 2009 – 2017" is included as Appendix C. CPPC also submitted a breakdown of each year (approximately 330 pages) which is available for review from CPD or CPPC, upon request.

Cincinnati Black United Front

The Cincinnati Black United Front (CBUF) did not submit a summary for this report.

Fraternal Order of Police

The Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) did not submit a summary for this report.

Project Documentation, Processes and Accountability

Introduction

One of the cornerstones of the Collaborative Agreement which defines its purpose is the operative provision: *The Parties Shall Implement a Policing Strategy of Community Problem Oriented Policing (CPOP)*. This provision specified several steps to promote the adoption of problem solving as the principal strategy for addressing crime and disorder problems:

- 1) Initiatives should be carefully defined, analyzed and a range of solutions examined prior to implementation;
- 2) The implemented solutions should be routinely evaluated by the City, regardless of which agency lead the effort;
- 3) The City should implement a plan to coordinate multi-agency problem solving efforts with community members to solidify it as a standard practice.

CPD and other City departments have supported and utilized the community policing philosophy for many years. A major difference between prior COP processes and CPOP is the requirement to use a more intricate and analytic process for identifying and responding to community problems. This process proved to be extremely challenging, especially the analysis, tracking and documentation of problem solving projects. Workload demands often competed with, and had to be prioritized over, these projects. This section will describe some of the efforts made and challenges experienced to integrate the system throughout CPD and the City.

Cincinnati Police Department

Review of CPD Procedure 12.370, Problem Solving Project Process

Since its inception in 2003, CPD's Problem Solving procedure has been tried, reviewed and revised at least four times. The current version has been in place since 2011, contains a considerable amount of outdated information, and is not used consistently or often by members of the department. The original "Problem Solving Process" procedure contained

fundamental, general guidelines. It defined SARA-related terminology, provided information regarding the CPOP philosophy and the Community Police Partnering Center (CPPC), and outlined mechanisms for addressing issues brought to the department's attention by citizens, police officers or outside agencies. Specialized forms, systems and a database were created to facilitate the management and tracking of problem solving projects. An extensive "Problem Solving Guide" was created, printed and distributed to department personnel, and is still available today as a reference on the department intranet (See Appendix D). Over time the procedure evolved, new processes were tried and additional forms were created in attempts to improve efficiency. A "Process Improvement Team" was assembled on at least three separate occasions (2008, 2014 and 2015) in an effort to update the practical application of problem solving and recommend innovative changes based on academic research and best practices.

Despite all of these efforts the department was unable to develop a pragmatic, credible procedure which integrated a formal problem solving process into the agency's daily routine. A copy of Procedure 12.370, Problem Solving Project Process, is located in Appendix E and contains additional notes highlighting procedural difficulties and issues.

CPD Problem Solving Tracking System (PSTS)

The original PSTS database developed by the CPD Technology and Systems Section was created with Microsoft Access. This version was revised and updated numerous times based upon experiences and feedback from end users, as well as suggestions from the Independent Monitor. Community Relations Section personnel conducted extensive training, provided periodic updates (See example in Appendix F) and made themselves available to assist officers with questions or entry problems. As previously stated, the documentation process was very time consuming for end users and not easily accepted. The process of keeping track and holding officers accountable for project progress was also cumbersome for district supervisors to manage.

In 2013 the tracking system was converted to a SQL database, which improved usability and allowed attachments to be included in the case file. This version is more easily maneuvered and searched, however the documentation process is still much too time consuming and impractical for a law enforcement agency.

Between 2007 and 2017, approximately four hundred thirty three (433) problem solving projects were entered into the Problem Solving Tracking System (PSTS). As previously mentioned, the “quantity over quality” mentality contributed to this number and many of these entries would not be considered legitimate problem solving projects. The number of projects entered each year is reflected in the table below:

PSTS Projects per Year

Year	# of Projects	Year	# of Projects
2007	52	2013	8
2008	64	2014	70
2009	50	2015	70
2010	20	2016	24
2011	31	2017	15
2012	29	TOTAL =	433

An additional breakdown regarding the number and types of problems addressed is provided in Appendix G. Due to technological limitations of the PSTS database, the department is unable to provide an in-depth, critical review of the results of these projects and their success/failure rate as the reader is likely expecting.

For purposes of comparison and to ascertain best practices, CPD conducted additional research regarding the problem solving processes and initiatives of other law enforcement agencies. In addition to requesting responses via IACP.net and the International Association of Law Enforcement Planners (IALEP), CPD directly contacted several agencies who have been recognized as active proponents of problem solving. The agencies were asked to provide the following information:

- 1) Has your department implemented a problem-solving process?
- 2) How does your department select, document, and assess your projects?
- 3) How does your department keep the community involved/informed?
- 4) Does your department have a problem solving procedure, directive, or SOP to use a guideline?
- 5) If your department had a system like this in the past but no longer does, why was it abandoned? What kind of challenges did it face?

The results of this enquiry were enlightening. While there may be other national law enforcement agencies who utilize a formal problem-solving process and/or tracking system, CPD was unable to identify them. Per an email from Michael S. Scott, director of the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, there is no central repository of information about the existence of these types of tracking systems. He also advised, “These systems seem to appear and disappear in concert with the priorities of the police administration” and provided a list of some probable agencies to contact.

This study provided additional confirmation of how challenging the problem solving process can be for police agencies. The results of CPD’s research and the absence of “best practices” related to problem solving and tracking will not deter the department from continuing to support and apply this philosophy. A summary of the research results can be found in Appendix H.

Other City Departments

The City of Cincinnati utilizes the Citizen Service Requests system to manage and track public services requests. Community members can either request service via a website: www.5916000.com or by telephone. Citizens are also able to track the progress of an existing request by searching an address or their request number. Once received, requests are forwarded to the appropriate City department for completion. These requests may, or may not, be processed by the City department as “problem solving projects” depending upon the issue(s) involved.

This citywide Customer Service Call Center was created by the Cincinnati Area Geographic Information System (CAGIS) to provide a comprehensive report of properties and includes open and closed Code Enforcement cases, Vacant Licenses, and Foreclosed Property Information. The Customer Service Call Center offers readily accessible customer service professionals who are focused on facilitating and resolving citizen concerns as well as individual and community requests. Further information about CAGIS can be found at: <http://cagismaps.hamilton-co.org/cagisportal>.

Sustainability and Effectiveness of Problem Solving

The Cincinnati Police Department contends problem solving continues at a robust level. We are confident members of this Department are interacting with community stakeholders each day to identify issues that lend themselves to resolution through the SARA problem solving process. These issues come to the Department with varying degrees of complexity:

- Simple community issues – These are problems which need to be addressed by police or possibly just a few agencies. Although there may be a chronic history involved, the problem can be addressed through a coordinated approach, and resolution appears achievable.
- Complex community issues – These involve a chronic situation involving a number of social factors. Problem identification is usually more complex and the responses will usually require coordination across a number of agencies. In many instances, the analysis component will be utilized a number of times to measure success and make necessary adjustments.
- Macro events – These situations involve a significant portion of the community with many social factors serving as drivers. Problem identification in these matters often involves detailed community strategic definition and planning. Responses will undoubtedly involve coordination across many agencies for extended periods of time. Analysis usually requires coordinated outreach such as surveys or detailed statistical analysis.

While CPD is actively involved in all of these scenarios, it's no surprise the lower level complaints seem to be the greatest concern to community members. Issues involving prostitution, drugs, nuisance properties and litter are the most dominant complaints. In these cases, the community demands and expects an immediate remedy and abatement. Sadly, given the demands placed on the agency, these are the ones that receive the least amount of police attention.

Conclusion

The first two progress reports submitted by the Independent Contractor made it abundantly clear that the consensus is the City and CPD's problem solving efforts need to be more robust, substantial and extensively chronicled. In addition to operational expectations for police regarding its problem solving efforts, those serving in critic and/or expert roles frequently point out the need for the agency to document their problem solving activities in sufficient detail and conduct the corresponding complex analysis suitable for academic framing and scrutiny. Again, as CPD has suggested in previous reports, this may not be the most prudent use of scant police resources and a more desirable work product could be gained through the assistance of academic or contractor support.

We believe CPD is in the best position to opine the success of problem solving in our neighborhoods. CPD is currently, and for the foreseeable future will continue to be, the front line agency to assist our communities in navigating through these tough issues. In fact, the City of Cincinnati has integrated the problem solving philosophy into each of our City Departments so we can offer a higher functioning City government.

Problem solving in the CPD has taken on a number of iterations. In some instances the agency has attempted to quantify or mandate problem solving thresholds. In other cases, problem solving projects have been formulated in the upper ranks of the agency and forced down to the line levels to administer. In both cases, the results fell short of expectations and were short term.

Conversely, the Department has taken part in and witnessed extraordinary problem solving efforts. In some cases, entire communities have been transformed and their successes have been sustainable. But these initiatives were not created in a police commander's office or derived from a couple of community meetings or problem solving training. These events occurred organically when the community organized itself into committed teams to formulate impactful strategies. When this occurs stakeholder roles, including the police, become much more strategic and enduring. It is this environment where problem solving occurs and flourishes.