CONCEPT PAPER

A Consortium to Build a New Policing Paradigm

Where We Are

Policing in the United States is at a critical juncture.

The National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences, in an exhaustive examination of four decades of policing research and practice, found that the public held two primary expectations of police: **to control crime and disorder and to act fairly and legitimately in carrying out this mission**. American law enforcement, the Research Council concluded, had been relatively successful in meeting the first expectation, but was doing poorly on the second. Incidents associated with use of force, police pursuits, biased policing and high risk encounters have emerged as significant issues threatening police legitimacy in communities across the country. Departments are being asked to respond quickly and effectively to such incidents and to do so in an era of increasing fiscal stress, ever-growing societal complexity and changing public expectations.

This time of questioning police authority and rectitude, however, also presents an unprecedented opportunity to spearhead the transformation necessary to ensure that American law enforcement will remain a vital and actively supported public institution for the 21st century. Police organizations, community groups, city leadership, research institutions, professional organizations, and other agencies in several jurisdictions are pledging to work together as a Consortium to seize this opportunity and in doing so, to develop a new paradigm for professional policing standards, innovative police practices and models of public engagement and collaboration around issues of public safety and police performance.

The proposed Consortium will use scientific inquiry, informed practice, and community involvement to advance the policing profession, to improve its effectiveness, legitimacy and fairness and to provide a laboratory and proving ground that can generate models for use by law enforcement agencies across the nation. The succeeding pages depict in more detail the essential elements of the proposed Consortium, describe its six main focus areas, and identify four “quick start” activities for 2012 that address current policing issues and lay the foundation for the Consortium’s collaborative framework.

It is time to bring key community stakeholders, a research driven agenda, and collaborative processes together to define the future of policing in the United States.

Why is this concept so important? Why now?

- **Practitioner Driven** – This Consortium moves the locus of scientific activity in policing to the needs of the practitioners. These practitioners will define the research agenda based on their most important research needs. In so doing, the Consortium will bring the best research to the everyday practice of policing.

- **Collaborative Not Competitive** – Current federal funding practices position police agencies against each other and against research institutions in competition for the limited federal dollars available for policing research. The current system does not ensure that federal funding is directed toward the most pressing research questions faced by practitioners. The Consortium, however, would bring the agencies and their research partners together in a collaborative rather than competitive framework. Together they will develop a menu of important research questions to be addressed to improve the practice of policing.

- **Includes City Leaders and Community Partners** – Important roles in the Consortium will be played by city leaders who support bringing research into practice in policing and by community stakeholders who will participate in assuring fair, equitable, and effective policing. This broad participation will lead to greater integration with other City services that affect crime (economic development, human services, etc.) and greater commitment to joint community/police problem-solving.

Background

The report noted earlier by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences [hereafter Research Council] was published in 2004[1], and if anything, its findings and conclusions are even more telling today than was true nearly a decade ago.

With respect to crime and disorder, the nation has experienced dramatic declines in both violent and property crimes, not only in the period studied by the Research Council, but also in recent years. Between 1991 and 2010, for example, the homicide rate fell 51% in the United States and was on a pace in 2011 to reach its lowest level in recent memory; and recommended a more systematic approach to policing research and more scientific rigor in the initiation and evaluation of enforcement innovations, the volumes of police research and practice they examined showed time and again how specific policing strategies had worked to reduce crime incidence and improve the safety and security of many Americans.

A recent Gallup poll underscores the public impact of both the national and local reductions in crime. In November 2011, when the Gallup organization asked about the most important issue facing the country, 1% of respondents mentioned crime. In 1994, 52% of those polled identified crime as the most important issue. Also in 2011, Gallup found 38% of Americans expressing fear about walking alone at night within a mile of their homes, down from 48% in 1981.[2]

Though crime may have diminished significantly as an issue for Americans, policing concerns have not. The Research Council concluded that over the last several decades the public's perception of the fairness and rectitude of police conduct has remained stagnant at best and at especially low levels of approval within minority communities[3]. Accordingly, two of the eight recommendations made by the Research Council for improving American law enforcement practice specifically address efforts to enhance the legitimacy of policing actions and behaviors, and a third recommendation calls for improvements in personnel practices (including recruitment, training and oversight) intended to enhance the lawfulness and effectiveness of police conduct.[4]

The signs of an eroding public confidence in law enforcement are seen in ways large and small. In many jurisdictions, lawsuits against the police have mushroomed, particularly in such areas as use of force (especially deadly force), police pursuits and high risk

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[1] National Research Council (2004). Fairness and Effectiveness in Policing: The Evidence. Committee to Review Research on Police Policy and Practices. Wesley Skogan and Kathleen Frydl, editors. Committee on Law and Justice, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
2 As cited in by Charles Lane in Washington Post, 1/3/12 and available at http://www.gallup.com/poll/pollsummaries/
3 See Gallup Poll News Service (1999). Available at http://www.gallup.com/poll/specialReports/pollsummaries/sr010711.asp
4 National Research Council, op.cit., pages 7-8.

encounters. These actions are evidence in part of the willingness of jurors not only to question the conduct of individual officers, but also to challenge the efficacy and propriety of agency policies and practices. Moreover, in the current economic downturn, many jurisdictions experienced for the first time the reality of reductions in police budgets and personnel, once thought sacrosanct.

For their part, American police organizations are hampered in their capacity to address challenges to their authority and legitimacy by a series of obstacles, many of which are beyond their control and all of which are highly complex. Instantaneous communication and 24x7 news streams, for example, too often result in incidents that happen across the country or the world having political impacts close to home. Budget and financial issues at all levels of government threaten the integrity and vitality of important programs and initiatives on which law enforcement agencies have come to rely. Internally, the institutional structures and working relationships of police organizations are rooted in civic and workplace reforms that took place decades ago, adding complexity to transitional and transformational efforts. The intensity of calls for change, however, does not diminish with the degree of difficulty associated with the task.

But if the public is frustrated with law enforcement, the perspective of those in the trenches of American policing is even more restive. Police officers have long enjoyed the status of unquestioned authority figures and experts on matters related to public safety, and, to their minds, they have the results to show for it. Enter the public in all manner of committees, oversight groups, advocates and blue ribbon panels, demanding a voice on matters of police misconduct and discipline, expecting to weigh in on strategies and tactics, recruitment and training and seeking broader and more intentional police interaction and engagement. For many in the field, this doesn't look much like "police work" anymore.

To be sure, policing remains among the most admired of professions and surveys of the public regularly reveal that Americans want more police protection rather than less. But just because the public wants more, does not mean they want "more of the same." Police leaders, confronting these public demands regularly and more directly, have sensed the need for change sooner than their line personnel. Their initiatives, however, have too often been met with anger and intense resentment, leaving many police organizations with serious rifts between rank and file and police administration.
Challenges to American policing, then, are as daunting internally as they are from the outside. But though the prospect of bringing crime under control seemed insurmountable in the waning days of the 1960s, police organizations, researchers and communities working together proved up to the task. It is argued here that the current issues surrounding law enforcement in the United States – though no less significant – can be addressed effectively and successfully to the extent that these same groups have the opportunity and the will to work together toward that end.

The Consortium Proposal

It is against this backdrop that the current proposal is advanced. Its purpose is to create a multi-year, multi-jurisdictional consortium to serve as a laboratory and proving ground to examine current policing practice and to build a new policing paradigm that combines crime control effectiveness with broad community support and acceptance. The proposed approach integrates three interrelated strategies - policing science, practice, and community involvement - on a collaborative platform that focuses on shared values and true partnerships and that fosters trust and confidence.

The proposed structure will involve a National Steering Committee, spearheaded by a major professional police organization, and composed of key researchers (some drawn from the Research Council), practitioners and community organizations and advocacy groups. The Steering Committee will set the tone, give direction and technical assistance, and serve as a clearinghouse for the work of the jurisdiction-level consortia. A key role of the Steering Committee will be to convene periodic meetings in which Consortium projects and results can be presented, debated and discussed and from which advancements in policing can be disseminated.

Consortium participation in each jurisdiction will require active commitments from law enforcement, community organizations, city leadership, other local agencies and academic institutions. To ensure successful interaction among these entities, Consortium members will use collaboration tools and processes that have been proven effective through research evidence[5]. The success of the efforts and initiatives launched by the Consortium will be assessed in each case based on both outcome measures (e.g., crime reduction, fear reduction) as well as measures of community trust and police legitimacy. Consortium members will pledge their active support and participation over a five-year period.

The interweaving of strategies involving sound scientific inquiry, practitioner experience and community involvement addresses many of the shortcomings identified by the Research Council in their review of the state of American policing. In particular, the Research Council recommended that police organizations focus more on achieving "localized and specific results" that "reflect community goals" in order to increase their effectiveness[6], and that results be documented through rigorous assessment and research programs designed to advance the science and practice of policing.

The Research Council also noted the need not only to foster innovation in policing, but also to study under what conditions or processes it occurs. Since a major goal of this Consortium

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5 These include the University of Kansas' Community Tool Box, and the US Department of Health and Human Services' Strategic Prevention Framework.
6 National Research Council, op.cit., at page 7.

is organizational transformation, the collaborative framework will create a natural laboratory to study innovation across a number of jurisdictions, police organizations and community settings. In addition, the involvement of a National Steering Committee will ensure effective dissemination of study results and outcomes.

Consortium Approach

As noted earlier, the essential elements of the Consortium involve three interrelated strategies, as follows:

- **Science** – This strategy will adopt a science-driven, evidence-based approach by bringing policing practitioners together with the scientific community to establish a research agenda and collaborate on addressing common research needs. In addition to local research/academic resources available in each jurisdiction, the National Steering Committee for the Consortium is hoping to attract the interest and involvement of national-level research groups such as the National Network for Safe Communities formed by Dr. David Kennedy at the Center for Crime Prevention and Control at John Jay and the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy, led by Dr. David Weisburd at George Mason University as well as the contributions of individual researchers.

- **Practice** –This strategy will leverage informed practitioner experience and scientific rigor in the
  1) systematic study of important operational and procedural issues,
  2) adoption of innovative and best practices,
  3) development of systems to support those practices, and
  4) evaluation of the practices to determine effectiveness.

  In addition to local resources available in each jurisdiction, the Consortium expects to rely on national practitioner organizations such as the National Sheriff's Association, the Major Cities Chiefs organization and the Police Executive Research Forum to support this strategy, and possibly to spearhead the National Steering Committee.

- **Community** – This strategy will empower community stakeholders to address crime, safety and policing issues and will support them in applying evidence-based practices to address community concerns. Central to this strategy will be providing training in the development problem-solving approaches to address concerns in a manner that ensures fair and effective outcomes.

Consortium Areas of Focus

Each Consortium jurisdiction will launch initiatives across six areas that are central to the effectiveness and legitimacy of law enforcement: use of force, fair and impartial policing, enhanced crime analysis, community mobilization and police oversight. The rationale for focus in each area can be briefly stated as follows:

- **Use of Force** – Easily the most consequential and controversial of police actions, it is also the source of intense community concern in many jurisdictions. Use of force is also inextricably linked to police effectiveness and efficiency, since it affects the capacity to accomplish public safety objectives not only in specific incidents but also with respect to broad initiatives. It is expected that Consortium participants will advance this aspect of policing by examining it through scientific, practitioner and community lenses.

- **Fair and Impartial Policing** – This is stated goal of both law enforcement and community members, but many persons in minority communities do not feel they are treated fairly or receive the same benefits of policing services as others. Effective policing is based largely upon a compliance model, but public compliance is predicated on a mutual belief in the efficacy, fairness and legitimacy of enforcement actions. In communities that feel disenfranchised and where police actions are regarded as unfair and illegitimate, compliance will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. Each Consortium jurisdiction is committed to serious examination of biased policing complaints and establishing a path to correct them.

- **Enhanced Crime Analysis** – More effective crime analysis is made possible through advances in data mining and database management applications, but law enforcement has yet to realize of the full benefits of these tools. Consortium partners in the university and research communities in each jurisdiction can assist police organizations in using analytical tools more effectively, crafting policing strategies based on information gained, as well as in evaluating the results of these strategies. Community partners in each jurisdiction can ensure that the public's need for crime information is also being met.

- **Effective, Efficient Policing** – In an era of diminishing budgets and the prospect of rising crime rates, the requirement for police departments to develop and implement effective crime fighting strategies within the parameters of available resources has never been more important. The identification of policing strategies based upon the concerted efforts of practitioners, the academic community – to include economists and business experts - and the public is our best hope for fighting crime and managing an economic crisis which has left no segment of society untouched.

Consortium Areas of Focus - Continued

- **Community Mobilization** – This is essential if public stakeholders are to be full partners in the efforts in each Consortium jurisdiction. Police capacity to achieve public safety goals has been shown time and again to be contingent on the assistance of the public, and the public's continued assistance and cooperation are in turn dependent on the their confidence in law enforcement and their treatment as true partners in the public safety mission. To ensure that community members are not relegated to the role of being quiet listeners, expected to rubber stamp "expert" decisions, each Consortium jurisdiction will undertake skill-building initiatives that put all participants on equal footing.

- **Police Oversight** – Police oversight, or lack thereof, is a hot button topic in many communities. It involves not only how instances of police misconduct are handled, but also how police employees are recruited, trained, monitored, supervised and disciplined. The public will to support law enforcement is closely tied to a belief that police organizations take seriously their duty to act fairly and appropriately and will take steps to ensure compliance with established laws, policies and community standards. Policing organizations that inspire such public trust are ultimately more effective in achieving public safety objectives. Each participating jurisdiction offers a different oversight model, varied training and supervisory protocols and different disciplinary structures and approaches. Each Consortium organization commits to examining the strengths and weaknesses of its systems and structures in cooperation with their research/academic and community partners. The National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE) is expected to assist Consortium jurisdictions in these efforts.

A minimum of three major initiatives focusing in one or more of these areas will be launched by each Consortium jurisdiction over the five-year life of the project. These initiatives will be subject to prior review and approval by the National Steering Committee. This will ensure that efforts across Consortium jurisdictions are complementary and involve the level of scientific rigor and local acceptance consistent with the overall objective of building models for a new policing paradigm.

The Consortium Quick Start Activities

Consortia can serve as powerful transformative structures, but they can also be unwieldy and frustratingly slow in moving forward. The purpose of the Consortium proposed here is too important to succumb to the weaknesses that too often afflict such structures. For this reason, the Consortium project will begin with a meeting of the National Steering Committee and with representatives from each participating jurisdiction to be held in Seattle, WA in April 2012. This meeting will set the ground rules for Consortium participation, affirm relationships between Consortium jurisdictions, the National Advisory Council and national level research and practitioner partners and develop benchmarks to assess progress and results.

In addition, three "quick-start" activities are planned in each Consortium jurisdiction, as follows:

1. **Recruitment and training of Consortium partners.** Each jurisdiction will identify local community and research/academic partners, obtain their commitment to the goals and objectives of the Consortium and provide skill training in problem-solving and group processes. The objective of this effort is to ensure that all feel empowered and have the necessary skills to participate fully in the efforts of the Consortium.

2. **Assessment of exemplar crime control efforts.** The police organization in each Consortium jurisdiction will submit one of its recent crime control projects for assessment by its local partners as well as by researchers from the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy. The objective of this effort is to give Consortium participants practice in the application of scientific principles to crime control efforts as well as to assess how crime control strategies are understood and accepted by community members. This activity also sets each Consortium on a results-oriented path.

3. **Assessment of use of force standards and metrics.** The police organization in each Consortium jurisdiction will submit its use of force policies, procedures and available data on force use for assessment by a national panel of practitioners and researchers. The objective of this effort is to address one of the most difficult aspects of police use of force, i.e., the absence of clear standards and metrics against which individual departments can measure themselves. Both the Major Cities Chiefs organization and the Police Executive Research Forum have expressed a keen interest in assisting the Consortium jurisdictions and the law enforcement community generally in developing such benchmarks.

Consortium Participants

To date the following jurisdictions have committed to participating in the proposed Consortium:

While each Consortium jurisdiction presents different crime and public safety profiles, organizational and oversight structures and policy and procedure frameworks, they share several important characteristics that are essential to the success of this effort, as follows:

- **Political support** – Each of these jurisdictions has significant support from city leaders for bringing research into practice in policing and for ensuring that policing efforts meet community expectations. This support is critical for ensuring the integration of wider City resources (economic development, human services, etc.) in policing problem-solving efforts.

- **Academic support** – Each of these jurisdictions has established a strong relationship with one or more research partners who have the capacity to conduct rigorous scientific evaluations.

- **Motivated community stakeholders** – Each of these jurisdictions has community groups anxious to participate in assuring fair, equitable and effective policing.

- **Police department commitment and urgency** – The police leadership in each of these jurisdictions has demonstrated a strong commitment to the objectives of the Consortium. In addition, these jurisdictions share an urgency, borne of longstanding or more recent community concerns and dissatisfactions with their performance, to accomplish the kind of transformative action envisioned by the Consortium.

Conclusion

The proposed Consortium offers a particular opportunity to address the challenges and recommendations for American law enforcement laid out by the National Research Council in 2004. It adopts a structure to ensure that policing strategies and innovations not only attract scientific scrutiny and rigorous assessment, but also achieve community acceptance and support. It seeks to tackle some of the thorniest of policing issues and problems and does so in a highly visible, collaborative and transparent manner. As noted earlier, American policing is at a crossroads and in need of a fundamental re-examination of its objectives and approaches. The proposed Consortium can provide a powerful vehicle to carry US law enforcement through the transformation necessary to ensure its vitality and strength in the 21st century.