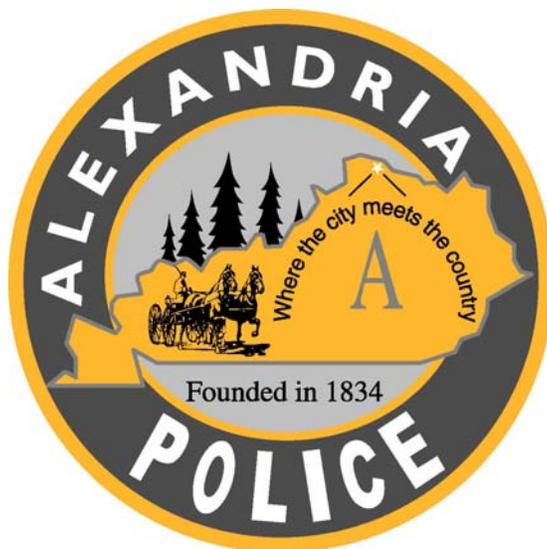




**ONSITE
ASSESSMENT PROCESS
COMMUNITY POLICING
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



Prepared for:

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Alexandria Police Department Community Policing On-Site Assessment Report Executive Summary

Overview

This report is the result of a request by Alexandria Kentucky Chief Michael Ward for an Onsite Assessment sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Public Safety and conducted by the Kentucky Regional Community Policing Institute (Kentucky RCPI).

The Onsite Assessment Process provides organizational development and technical assistance to law enforcement agencies and their communities through a trained Assessment Team. The Onsite Assessment Process seeks to identify the current status of community policing within the department and assess the level of understanding and support of community policing of local government and community members.

The Assessment Team examined all aspects of the organization related to community policing. This report provides the Chief of Police and the members of the department with information to assist them in becoming more responsive and service-based in community policing.

This report is neither a management audit nor an accreditation assessment; it is not meant to criticize personalities, views, or management styles of any department members. Management styles that work very effectively in a traditional law enforcement agency may create barriers in a community policing environment that encourage decentralized operations and decision making, creativity and innovation, partnerships, and problem solving. This report provides recommendations for change to help the department assess its readiness and commitment to community policing and problem solving.

The assessment is designed to explore the agency from a variety of perspectives including employees, citizens, and elected officials. Assessors use a series of questionnaires that serve as guides to ensure that the interviews cover important topic areas, including the following:

- Understanding of community policing
- Vision/mission of the organization
- Ethical and integrity issues
- Organizational structure
- Calls-for-service management
- Management and planning services
- Internal and external relations
- Human resources
- Resistance or barriers to change
- Organizational communication patterns
- Issues of power and control
- Financial management
- Community Issues
- Community partnerships
- Social capital

- Roles of the chief executive, command staff, and first-line supervisors
- Government, media, and community groups

The Assessment Team conducted approximately 150 interviews during the week long assessment process. Interviews were held with 13 law enforcement officers and command staff from the department and neighboring law enforcement agencies, 34 local government officials including city council members, judges, and prosecutors. The remaining interviews included residents, school officials, school board members, students, neighborhood members, community representatives, businesspeople, and civic organization leaders.

The assessment team has made a variety of recommendations in each of the report sub-sections. We would not expect nor should the chief attempt to implement all of the recommendations. We included many recommendations so the chief could pick those that best suit his leadership style and the culture of his agency.

Findings

The assessment team found a fully functioning police department being led by a police chief who is a progressive thinker and well respected both internally and externally in the Alexandria community. The chief and his staff have been implementing Community Policing programs for some time and have several very successful programs. Department leadership is now looking for suggestions on how to transition from a programmatic model into making community policing a departmental philosophy.

This is a common obstacle facing Chiefs who are attempting to initiate substantial change in an organization. In the past few years much training has been conducted on the topics of community policing and problem solving with minimal impact on what most patrol officers actually do during their shifts. One of the methods used to change behavior is to implement structure that requires employees to do things differently and to do different things. Some of the new activities this model asks officers to perform or to perform differently include but are not limited to:

- Crime prevention
- Problem solving
- Trust building
- Public speaking
- Conflict resolution
- Neighborhood organization
- Increasing positive contacts with the public

The most promising change made to date in the Alexandria department is the implementation of the Geo-Focus program. This where each police officer is assigned a specific geographic area of the city and is held responsible for crime, crime prevention, quality of life issues and other police related responses. The assessment team believes that Chief Ward and his staff can use this initiative to provide the foundation to bring about the philosophical changes he is seeking.

Recommendations

This report contains many recommendations the chief can use to bring about the desired change he is seeking. Far too many to be listed in this executive summary. However, these recommendations are designed to impact both behavior and thinking of the agency personnel. They include both strategic and tactical approaches.

Once the chief has determined which of the recommendations he intends to implement, one of the most important strategies is the communication process. The communication process becomes critically important because it is the best tool available to address resistance to change, misunderstandings, and clarifications. The assessment report contains some specific recommendations related to communications. They include but are not limited to:

- Ground all training, policy and rewards in the values and mission of the organization. These elements should drive both the day-to-day operations as well as the long-term planning process.
- Establish a communication process so that each employee understands his/her individual role in accomplishing these goals. One fortunate aspect of an agency this size is that the Chief can have one-on-one meetings with each employee and through this method facilitate their understanding of how they play a vital role in meeting the agency goals. Furthermore, there is significant literature that suggests that an organization that can marry the goals of the individual employee with those of the organization will result in enhanced job satisfaction while meeting those agency goals. These one-on-one meetings can be used to help identify each employee's personal goals and determine how that may be facilitated as each work toward meeting the goals of the agency. This procedure can be then incorporated into a plan of work for each employee and be tied to career development and post-career development and be supported by the performance review process.
- The Chief should consider having a one-on-one meeting with each supervisor to discuss the role of that individual in changing the direction of the agency. This meeting should focus on role clarification and seeking the supervisor's active support. It might be helpful to have a discussion about how personal values and agency values can be in conflict, (i.e., an employee does not support community policing but the agency is trying to move in that direction). The Chief should point out that, as an employee of the organization, that individual is obligated to act in accordance with agency values vs. personal values.
- Develop a plan of work with each employee. This plan should address that employee's personal goals and how they can achieve these while accomplishing the agency goals and objectives. Training should be tied directly to this plan. All aspects of the plan should be cross referenced to the role of the employee, the

agency mission, a specific goal or objective and grounded in the values of the organization.

- During this time of transition, the Chief may want to consider conducting formal “roll calls” where all officers assigned to a given shift would be present. This could be done every other week or once a month. This would help ensure that everyone is on the same page with regard to the department, and it also provides the Chief or other appropriate supervisor an opportunity to address any questions or rumors that may have arisen during the interim.
- Establish regular and ad-hoc meetings with everyone in the agency concerning COP and what that means as to how that individual and unit provides service to the community. It may take frequent meetings on the front end in order to achieve the understanding needed for the desired change to occur.

Closing

It is imperative that all who review this report keep the purpose in mind and the findings and recommendations of assessors in perspective. The research was limited in scope and pertains only to what the assessors perceived that the current level of participation and understanding of community policing is as well as the perceived readiness level of the police department and the community to engage more fully in the philosophy. Any and all findings were based upon this foundation.

Assessors found the majority of the agency employees to be open to and receptive of the Chief’s efforts to move deeper into the implementation of community policing and problem solving. However, there were some exceptions. We found a small number of officers and supervisors that were not committed to be “fully” engaged in the philosophy. This is a low number and it is our belief that this will, in time with the leadership of the chief, be corrected through attrition and better education as to what community policing means to those officers and employees.

As to the extent of implementation, we found the Alexandria Police Department to have several *programs* in place that are indicative of community policing practices. Programmatically, the Alexandria Police Department would be considered a success. The next step for the Alexandria Police Department is to move from the program phase to an agency philosophy of community policing. The Chief will need to continue to be the driving force behind this movement at least for the time being. Geographic focus is one of the bedrock principles of community policing and is key to the development of a deep sense of “ownership” and true accountability necessary for an agency wishing to become fully engaged in the philosophy of community policing. With the implementation of Geo-Focus, the Chief has positioned the agency to move to the next level. It is through Geo-Focus and the structure it will provide that can be the catalyst to cause behavioral changes, that future progress can be made.

Agency leadership must insist on officers doing things differently within their assigned geographic areas. With a few exceptions, when not on a call for service, the norm for an Alexandria patrol officer is to ride around on patrol. This is extremely traditional in nature and is one of the mindsets that requires changing. Officers need to understand that their roles change in this model. Officers are not expected to eliminate random routine patrol, but they are expected to take a sizable amount of time previously spent on patrol and use that time in different ways. Under this model, police officers should be looking for ways to engage the citizens in their assigned areas in a variety of ways, such as; become organizers, facilitators, and communicators. Much more time should be spent in working on and implementing crime prevention strategies than in the past. These strategies should not be imposed from the top; each officer should develop and implement strategies that are appropriate for his/her assigned area.

Problem-solving is another role that patrol and investigative personnel must assume in their assigned geographic areas. Presently, problem-solving at the Alexandria Police Department consists of working on individual cases or calls for service and trying to resolve them. While this remains important, officers and investigators should now assume a higher level of problem-solving. This higher level of problem-solving requires more than just resolving a particular call for service or criminal case. This level of problem-solving requires looking at aggregate data to address chronic reoccurring problems. An example might involve focusing on false alarm runs and identifying homes and businesses that generate an abnormally high level of calls for service. It could also involve a series of crimes that appear to be related because of similar characteristics. It requires patrol officers and investigators to partner with other city, county and state service providers and private entities to find solutions to these issues. The Chief has provided several training sessions on problem-solving and there is a problem-solving team currently in place that is working on an identified speeding issue. However, officers not involved in the problem-solving project generally do not see themselves as part of this process. This is another example of programmatic as opposed to philosophical implementation of COP/POP principles.

For the most part, we found Alexandria to have officers that appear to have the service-mindedness and dedication that is necessary to be successful in transitioning to a fully-implemented COP/POP model of policing. What is needed now is more structure to ensure institutionalizing the concept. The implementation of Geo-Focus should offer the necessary structure, provided that leadership requires officers to spend uncommitted time in performing the different tasks previously mentioned.

The Alexandria Police Department is in an excellent position to take advantage of opportunities that have been presented to them through this assessment process and progress to the next level of community and problem-oriented policing.