



# IMPLEMENTING POP

Leading, Structuring, and Managing  
a Problem-Oriented Police Agency

Michael S. Scott  
and Stuart Kirby



**COPS**  
COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



Center for  
**Problem-Oriented Policing**



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## About this Manual

This manual is intended for police executives interested in promoting the practice of problem-oriented policing (POP) within their police agency. (In the United Kingdom, the concept is more commonly referred to as problem-oriented partnerships with the intention of emphasizing the criticality of external partnerships. It is not otherwise distinct.) Whether you're a chief executive (police chief, chief constable, sheriff, or public safety director) already committed to the idea of POP, but looking for guidance on implementing it, or a senior-level executive tasked to plan your agency's adoption of POP, this manual should help you decide what steps to take, and in what order, to make POP an integral part of how your police agency does business.

If you lack the time to read the entire manual, read the Contents for a quick summary; you'll know which sections you might want to read in full. At the end of each section we reference a few good and readily accessible publications should you want to read more. We have also created a companion annotated bibliography of POP studies that you can access online at [www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org).

This manual assumes that you already know what POP is and that you are committed to the concept as a means of making your agency more effective. If this is not the case for you, visit the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing's website, [www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org), for an abundance of information on the principles and practice of POP.

This manual also assumes that you are well-versed in the basics of police management and therefore is not a primer or comprehensive text on the subject. Rather, it focuses only on the aspects of police administration and management that are most directly implicated in the shift to POP.

Implementing POP is as much about the art of persuasion and of modifying police culture as it is about the mechanics of police administration. The practical realities of changing police organizations and the public's expectations of police are far more complex than a step-by-step manual such as this one might imply. But we think the manual format serves as a useful reminder that for a police agency to truly adopt POP, all of its many systems, procedures, policies, structures, and personnel should be aligned and integrated in a way that makes practicing POP not only possible, but expected and encouraged. Each system, procedure, policy, structure, or employee, properly oriented to addressing problems, facilitates the orientation of other components.

Throughout the manual, we offer many suggestions for making changes to a police agency's operation. In so doing, we are mindful that police agencies come in all sizes and operate in a wide variety of political and legal environments, both of which implicate whether and how you implement these suggestions in your agency. We are also mindful that police agencies have varying tolerances for the pace of change with varying opportunities and obstacles to effecting changes. Even if for your agency a particular recommendation doesn't make sense or is impractical at the time, consider its underlying principle and how it might be adapted to fit your agency's and community's needs, now or in the future.

# Prepare Yourself and the Agency

## 1. Know the basic argument for POP

Lord Stevens, a previous commissioner of the London Metropolitan Police Service, once explained the fundamental challenge of policing with an analogy. He asked his audience to imagine a fast-flowing river, sweeping hundreds of people away in its current. He argued that the traditional police response is to jump into the river and try to help as many people as possible, rather than to head upstream to determine why and how people are falling into the river in the first place. He went on to say, “And so begins a reactive cycle of uncontrolled demand and equally uncoordinated response. The police become like lifeguards frantically swimming against the tide from one incident to another, employing different tactics in a disjointed and unfocussed manner with little or nothing to show for it at the end of the day.”<sup>1</sup> The use of POP represents a way forward for police to have something sustainable to show for their efforts at the end of the day.

Implementing POP in a police agency—and in its local government and community as well—is conceptually simple, but practically challenging. At its core, POP is a simple and straightforward concept: police agencies should be run in a manner that maximizes their ability to effectively and fairly prevent and control threats to public safety and security. What needs to be done so a police agency can do this? The short answer is everything, by which we mean that all aspects of running a police agency—who it hires; how it trains; how it is resourced; how it is led, supervised, and managed; how it relates to those outside the agency; and how it evaluates its performance—should be done with the goals of being effective and being fair. Everything about the way a police agency is run does not necessarily need to be changed, just the things that are standing in the way of the agency being its most effective and fair.

We are not advocating that every agency employee be an expert at and always actively engaged in problem solving. For one thing, much of the conventional police work remains to be done: incidents must be handled, emergencies must be attended to, criminal cases must be investigated, etc. And it is as unrealistic and impractical to make every agency employee an expert problem solver as it is to make everyone an expert criminal investigator or emergency responder. Moreover, developing deep problem-solving expertise and capacity is a long-term process, one that is still evolving across the whole police profession. Within any police agency, it might prove ambitious enough just to encourage a greater openness to questioning the relative value of some current responses to policing problems and a willingness to consider even modest improvements to those responses.

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1. Source: Stevens, John. 2001. “Intelligence-Led Policing.” Paper presented to the 2nd World Investigation of Crime Conference, Durban, South Africa. Cited in J. Ratcliffe. 2008. *Intelligence-Led Policing*. Cullompton, U.K.: Willan Publishing.

If making the organizational changes recommended in this manual seems daunting, consider this: police agencies—whether they adopt POP or a more traditional approach to policing—are inherently complex organizations because policing is inherently complex. There’s no getting around or ignoring this fundamental truth. And yet, most police officials—from the line officer to the chief executive—don’t fret every day about whether all of the complex pieces comprising a functioning police agency are working as they should. For the most part, police agencies run relatively smoothly from day to day, with each employee doing what is expected of him or her, confident that somehow his or her individual efforts coalesce in a way that allows the agency to achieve its objectives.

Indeed, it has probably been a very long time since anyone in a police agency—the chief executive included—seriously thought about the complexities of its operation because there is a basic logic to the business of policing that dictates how the agency should be run. Moreover, because most police agencies have been around for a relatively long time—a hundred years or more for many—we come to trust in the wisdom of habit: we will do today what we did yesterday because it made sense then.

Even chief executives who have the opportunity to build a new police agency from scratch, as one of us (Scott) did, don’t need an instructional manual to do so, even if one existed. We build and run police agencies in accordance with a number of basic assumptions about a police agency’s objectives, the public’s expectations, and the police profession’s customs. This gets tricky when some of those basic assumptions are challenged or altered, as POP compels us to do. Reconsidering those basic assumptions also requires reconsidering some aspects of how police agencies are organized and administered.

POP is premised on the following basic assumptions about policing:

- The police function is broader than merely enforcing the law. Enforcing the law is only one means to achieve a range of police objectives; it is not the objective itself.
- Police work comprises a wide array of problems that threaten public safety and security, not an endless string of isolated incidents and criminal cases.
- Line-level personnel have tremendous insight into the nature, causes, and handling of these problems and should be closely consulted in developing improved responses to them.
  - Understanding how police should respond to problems requires more than merely knowing what conduct is unlawful; it requires understanding the varying interests at stake as they relate to how police handle the problems.
  - How police respond to problems entails the exercise of considerable professional discretion, including by line personnel.
  - Better choices about how police should respond to problems can be made through careful, open deliberation, and when informed by rigorous analysis of the problems.

### Read More:

Goldstein, Herman. 1990. *Problem-Oriented Policing*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Skogan, Wesley, and Kathleen Frydl, eds. 2004. *Fairness and Effectiveness in Policing: The Evidence*. National Research Council, Committee on Law and Justice. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press.

## 2. Understand why POP implementation can fail

With more than 30 years of experience experimenting with the practice and management of POP, we know there have been varying degrees of success in creating problem-oriented police agencies. Most efforts enjoyed at least some initial success, but it was not sustained for the long term. Among the reasons noted for the lack of sustained implementation are the following:

- The imperative to respond to emergencies and routine incidents overwhelms the need to adopt a problem-oriented way of working.
- The response to problems focuses on enforcement and detection rather than prevention.
- Police executives and/or police supervisors provide inadequate leadership and organizational support for problem solving.
- The champions of POP are too soon replaced by others less committed to the approach.
- Line personnel become cynical about reform movements and do not engage.
- Line personnel fail to understand or accept POP as constituting real police work.
- Responsibility for problem solving is delegated solely to line officers with inadequate management support.
- Police lack the understanding and ability to work effectively with non-police partners.
- Extraneous political turmoil distracts the organization from properly developing POP.

If previous attempts to implement POP at your agency have been unsuccessful, rest assured that it doesn't always take root in early attempts. Perhaps the implementation was not properly planned or executed, the organization or the public was not ready for the concept, or leadership prematurely abandoned its commitment to the approach. Try to learn the reasons POP was not successfully adopted or sustained in your agency, or in other agencies that influence yours.

### ***Read More:***

Knutsson, Johannes, ed. 2003. *Problem-Oriented Policing: From Innovation to Mainstream*. Crime Prevention Studies, vol. 15. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press.

## 3. Understand how POP relates to other policing concepts

Whether by design or default, all police agencies are guided by operational and organizational strategies. Modern police management literature offers a police executive a wide variety of organizational and operational strategies and philosophies from which to choose. Some are compatible and mutually reinforcing and others are incompatible or conflicting. Some are broad, general statements about how police should conceive and approach their work; others are more specific prescriptions for how police can control crime more effectively.

Unlike most other policing strategies and philosophies, POP addresses how police should conceive their function and approach their work and offers a specific mechanism for doing so. Accordingly, it should not be seen as an alternative to many of these other approaches but rather an overarching approach that leaves room for their incorporation.

POP has been succinctly summarized by Herman Goldstein as follows:

“Problem-oriented policing is an approach to policing in which discrete pieces of police business (each consisting of a cluster of similar incidents, whether crime or acts of disorder, that the police are expected to handle) are subject to microscopic examination (drawing on the especially honed skills of crime analysts and the accumulated experience of operating field personnel) in hopes that what is freshly learned about each problem will lead to discovering a new and more effective strategy for dealing with it. Problem-oriented policing places a high value on new responses that are preventive in nature, that are not dependent on the use of the criminal justice system, and that engage other public agencies, the community, and the private sector when their involvement has the potential for significantly contributing to the reduction of the problem. Problem-oriented policing carries a commitment to implementing the new strategy, rigorously evaluating its effectiveness, and, subsequently, reporting the results in ways that will benefit other police agencies and that will ultimately contribute to building a body of knowledge that supports the further professionalization of the police.”

Source: Goldstein, Herman. 2001. “Problem-Oriented Policing in a Nutshell.” Presentation at the International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference. San Diego, California.

The following modern policing strategies and philosophies are widely considered to be compatible with POP in one or more ways:

### *Community Policing*

Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies, which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public-safety issues such as crime, social disorder and fear of crime.

Source: COPS Office. 2009. *Community Policing Defined*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

### *Intelligence-led Policing*

“Intelligence-led policing is a business model and managerial philosophy where data analysis and crime intelligence are pivotal to an objective, decision-making framework that facilitates crime and problem reduction, disruption and prevention through strategic management and effective enforcement strategies that target prolific and serious offenders.”

Source: Ratcliffe, Jerry. 2008. *Intelligence-Led Policing*. Cullompton, U.K.: Willan Publishing.

Also see Kirby, Stuart, and Ian McPherson. 2004. “Integrating the National Intelligence Model With a ‘Problem Solving’ Approach.” *Community Safety Journal* 3(2): 36–46.



## *Broken Windows Policing*

“Broken windows policing refers to a police emphasis on disorderly behavior and minor offenses ... [which]...left untended is a sign that nobody cares and leads to fear of crime, more serious crime and, ultimately, urban decay.”

Source: Sousa, William H., and George L. Kelling. 2006. “Of ‘Broken Windows,’ Criminology, and Criminal Justice.” In *Police Innovation: Contrasting Perspectives*, ed. D. Weisburd and A. Braga. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

## *CompStat*

CompStat (shorthand for compare statistics) is a police management tool that originated in the New York City Police Department in the 1990s. It emphasizes the use of up-to-date computerized crime data, crime analysis and crime mapping, the rapid deployment of police resources to the locations where those patterns exist, and police-command accountability for specific crime strategies and solutions in their areas.

Source: Silverman, Eli B. 2006. “Compstat’s Innovation.” In *Police Innovation: Contrasting Perspectives*, ed. D. Weisburd and A. Braga. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Also see Willis, James J., Stephen D. Mastrofski, and Tammy Rinehart Kochel. 2010. *Maximizing the Benefits of Reform: Integrating Compstat and Community Policing in America*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

## *Hot Spots Policing*

Hot spots policing directs police action—including, but not limited to, intensive police patrols—to those small geographic areas that historically have given rise to a high volume of calls for police service and crime incidents.

Source: Weisburd, David, and Anthony A. Braga. 2006. “Hot Spots Policing as a Model for Police Innovation.” In *Police Innovation: Contrasting Perspectives*, ed. D. Weisburd and A. Braga. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

## *Evidence-based Policing*

Evidence-based policing asserts simply that “police practices should be based on scientific evidence about what works best.” Like POP, it does not precisely state how police should address problems, but rather is an approach for determining those matters.

Source: Sherman, Lawrence W. 1998. *Evidence-Based Policing*. Ideas in American Policing Series. Washington, D.C.: Police Foundation.

## *Reassurance Policing*

Reassurance policing, a term more familiar in the United Kingdom, focuses on reducing the causes of public insecurity, namely by addressing so-called signal crimes, which are mainly low-level nuisance and disorder offenses. It explicitly incorporates problem-solving methods and has obvious parallels to broken windows policing and community policing.

Source: Millie, Andrew, and Victoria Herrington. 2005. “Reassurance Policing in Practice: Views from the Shop Floor.” London: British Society of Criminology.

Even these brief descriptions should illustrate that POP encompasses many prominent features of these other approaches. It promotes community engagement; analysis of crime trends and patterns; attention to low-level disorder and fear; a preference for responses that are proven effective; a focus on hot spots, repeat offenders and repeat victims; line employees' participation in management decisions; and sometimes strict law enforcement, all to the extent that these features lead to more effective and fair responses to problems.

### *The Professional Policing Model*

In addition to these modern strategies, the dominant policing strategy of the mid-20th century—the professional model or traditional policing—persists as a strategic option. Some of its best features, including rapid response to emergencies, fair and efficient handling of incidents, and thorough investigation of serious crimes, remain intact under POP. However, some of its features, such as its emphasis on random, preventive patrol; reactive, deterrence-based tactics; and strict command and control management are less compatible with POP.

Police scholars and practitioners alike debate the relative merits of these strategies and how they relate to one another. Read enough about these strategies to understand their core elements and how they are similar to and different from one another and the problem-oriented approach.

Feeling frustrated by the proliferation of policing and management strategies is understandable. It's hard enough for those who can devote all their time to such matters to stay on top of these strategies, let alone for a police executive who must devote most of his or her time to administering the agency on a daily basis.

It might be tempting to compile a police management strategy by combining the best components of several strategies, in order to avoid the drawbacks associated with adopting one strategy, and to deflect any criticism for endorsing that one strategy to the exclusion of others. However, we advise against it for two reasons.

First, POP is one of the few truly comprehensive strategies. It is not just an operational tactic or management technique; it has implications for the whole of policing. It is firmly rooted in an understanding of the complexities and challenges of daily policing in open and democratic societies. Its pragmatic orientation, valuing of line-level knowledge and experience, and focus on effectiveness all seem to resonate well with line officers and field commanders. Second, choosing and committing to POP avoids feeding the skepticism, or cynicism, that creeps into police organizations when employees sense that management is just bouncing from one strategic innovation to another. Adopting a coherent long-term strategy helps guard against what some have dubbed “innovation fatigue” in police agencies.

**Table 1: Selected Comparisons between Problem-Oriented Policing and Other Popular Policing Concepts**

	Problem-Oriented Policing	Community Policing	Intelligence-led Policing	Broken Windows Policing	CompStat	Hot Spots Policing	Evidence-based Policing	Reassurance Policing	Professional Policing
Primary emphasis	Improving response to public-safety problems falling within police mandate	Engaging the community in the policing process	Reducing crime, primarily of organized crime networks, through intelligence gathering, analysis, and sharing	Reducing crime through disorder control	Reducing reported serious crimes	Reducing crime and calls for service at high-call locations	Employing policing tactics and strategies that are scientifically proven effective	Reducing “signal crimes” (i.e., nuisance, damage, and graffiti), that create public fear	Reducing and preventing crime
When police and community collaborate	Determined on a problem-by-problem basis	Always or nearly always	Not an explicit priority	To identify community concerns	Not an explicit priority	Not an explicit priority	Not an explicit priority	To identify community concerns	In the course of call/crime investigations
Emphasis on problem analysis	Highest priority given to thorough analysis	Encouraged, but less important than community collaboration	Emphasized with regard to crime problems, primarily to prioritize use of police resources, identify and apprehend prolific offenders	Not an explicit priority	To the extent necessary to identify short-term crime spikes	To the extent necessary to identify crime hot spots	Local analysis important, but stronger emphasis given to applying general research knowledge to local crime problems	Necessary to understand local issues, which are often unreported to the police	None; some emphasis on conventional crime analysis to anticipate and interrupt future crimes
Preference for responses	Strong preference that alternatives to criminal law enforcement be explored and that preventive responses be preferred over merely reactive ones	Preference for collaborative responses with community	No explicit preferences, but strategic law enforcement tends to be emphasized	Preference for formal and informal enforcement of social norms and rules	Preference for intensive police presence and enforcement	Preference for intensive patrol at known hot spots; ambiguous about what, precisely, police should do at known hot spots	Strong preference for responses that are scientifically proven effective	Strong preference for collaboration with community and partnership approach to improve the local environment	Preference for random preventive patrol, rapid response to calls for service, and criminal investigation, all to identify and apprehend or deter offenders
Role for police in organizing and mobilizing community	Advocated only if warranted within the context of the specific problem being addressed	Emphasizes strong role for police	Not an explicit priority	Emphasizes strong role for police where community organization is weak	Not an explicit priority	Not an explicit priority	Not an explicit priority	Police seen as coordinating authority for other public agencies and voluntary bodies	Not an explicit priority
Importance of geographic decentralization of police and continuity of officer assignment to community	Preferred, but not essential	Essential	Not an explicit priority	Important so officers know what local community norms to enforce	Not an explicit priority	Not an explicit priority	Not an explicit priority	Decentralization important to provide leadership at neighborhood level	Preference for centralized control of police operations and rotating officers to reduce corruption risks

(Table 1 continued)

	Problem-Oriented Policing	Community Policing	Intelligence-led Policing	Broken Windows Policing	CompStat	Hot Spots Policing	Evidence-based Policing	Reassurance Policing	Professional Policing
Degree to which police share decision-making authority with community	Strongly encourages input from community while preserving police's ultimate decision-making authority	Emphasizes sharing decision-making authority with community	Not an explicit priority	Essential, in that police are enforcing/reinforcing community norms	Not an explicit priority	Not an explicit priority	Not an explicit priority	Community identifies problems, and, in consultation, agrees on priorities for the police	Discouraged; police guard against perceived community and political interference in police matters
Emphasis on officers' skills	Emphasizes intellectual and analytical skills	Emphasizes interpersonal skills	Not an explicit priority	Emphasizes exercise of discretionary authority and strong interpersonal skills	Emphasizes command-level decision-making; little emphasis on line-level officers' skills	Emphasizes willingness to spend time at known hot spots	Emphasizes willingness to follow evidence-based protocols	Emphasizes interpersonal and problem-solving skills in relation to 'signal crimes'	Emphasizes vigilance, efficiency, obedience, investigative skills, aggressive law enforcement
View of the police role or mandate	Encourages broad, but not unlimited, role for police, stresses limited capacities of police and guards against creating unrealistic expectations of police	Encourages expansive role for police to achieve ambitious social objectives	Originally more narrowly limited to serious crime control; more recently broadened to include more aspects of policing function	Embraces broad police mandate to explicitly include order maintenance	Emphasizes narrower crime reduction role	Not explicit	Not explicit	Can extend police mandate to areas that arguably should be dealt with by other public bodies	Emphasizes narrower crime reduction role; opposes broader social-service role

#### 4. Understand how problem solving fits with other policing modes

When a police agency adopts POP it does not forsake its conventional operating modes, such as patrolling public spaces, responding to emergencies and routine service requests, investigating crimes and preparing cases for prosecution, and providing other ancillary services to the public.

To some extent, these conventional responsibilities exist independently of problem solving. Patrol officers monitor public spaces in part to reassure citizens of the government's presence and vigilance. Police respond to emergencies to protect life and property, and handle routine incidents of all sorts. Patrol officers and detectives investigate crimes in part to hold individual offenders accountable to the law and to try to provide victims with some sense of justice, even if it does little to prevent or reduce the larger crime problems.

In another sense, these other functions necessarily relate to problem solving because many of these community conditions, incidents, and cases comprise the indicators of chronic problems. Although some police matters are resolved routinely and never become part of a larger problem, far more are symptomatic of persistent problems that cannot be resolved in a lasting way through routine handling. Indeed, the working definition of a “problem” in the context of POP is: 1) a recurring pattern of incidents, 2) for which the police are generally responsible for addressing, 3) that are causing harm to the community, and 4) routine policing is unlikely to effectively control or prevent.

Even though these conventional police functions and responsibilities remain essential, consider how they will interact with the relatively new problem-solving function. Some specific considerations include:

- How long during their otherwise uncommitted time will you expect patrol officers to patrol public spaces rather than engage in purposeful problem solving?
- When police officers are handling critical or routine incidents, will you expect them to investigate the history of similar incidents at that location or involving the same individuals to determine if the incident at hand is the latest manifestation of a chronic problem?
- When patrol officers and detectives investigate cases, will you expect them to determine whether they are part of a wider pattern of similar offenses, and, if so, to engage in preventive problem solving?
- Will the information management system that tracks and manages conditions, incidents, and cases be designed and used to enable your officers, supervisors, commanders, and analysts to readily detect emerging problems?
- When officers and detectives file incident and case reports, will you expect them to include more than the minimum information necessary for historical documentation and probe further into the causes and conditions of the larger problems?
- Will you deem problem solving as essential as the conventional police functions, or will you view it as an optional function to be performed only if and when you have the time and resources?

To determine how to integrate problem solving as a core function with the conventional police functions, consider the various systems that exist to ensure each conventional function is performed routinely and competently. We may take these systems for granted; however, without them, we would have few assurances these functions were handled properly. For each conventional core police function—preventive patrol, routine incident response, emergency incident response, and criminal investigation—we establish the following processes to ensure they are carried out:

### *Define the Unit of Work*

To understand their work conceptually, police officers are taught the definition of the unit of work for each core function. Preventive patrol is organized in “shifts and sectors” and routine and emergency incidents and criminal investigations are organized in “calls for service” and “cases” respectively. Likewise, problem solving can be defined as a unit of work in terms of “problems” or “problem-solving projects.” Understanding the basic unit of work is essential for workers in all fields because it serves as the structure for understanding what is expected of them.

### *Teach Officers the Specialized Knowledge and Skills to Perform the Function*

Police recruits are taught patrol techniques and patrol vehicle operation; the policies, procedures, and tactics for handling a wide variety of incidents; emergency vehicle operation, emergency medical care, and scene command and control techniques; and the elements of crimes and how to find and collect evidence to support criminal prosecutions. Likewise, they need to learn problem-solving processes and how to collect and analyze information necessary to understand problems’ causes.

### *Create a Reporting and Record-Keeping System*

A variety of report forms, such as field interview cards, offense-incident reports, use-of-force reports, and critical incident reports, exist for documenting daily patrol activity, how incidents were handled, and how cases were investigated. Elaborate systems such as computer-aided dispatch (CAD) and records management systems (RMS) exist for storing, organizing, and retrieving these records. Likewise, there is a need to create reporting requirements, forms, and storage systems suitable for documenting problem-solving activities.

### *Establish Clear Objectives, Performance Standards, and Accountability Systems*

Establish objectives and performance standards for conventional police functions (e.g., to resolve disputes, solve crimes, and establish culpability), and accountability systems to ensure these functions are properly carried out (e.g., reporting requirements, clearance rates, and performance reviews). Also set clear objectives and standards and appropriate accountability systems for problem solving (e.g., to reduce the incidence of or harm caused by problems).

The units of work, objectives, record-keeping systems, report forms, performance standards, specialized training, processes, and accountability systems for each of the basic policing modes are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2: Organizational Systems and Standards for the Various Modes of Police Work**

Mode of Police Work	Work Unit	Objectives	Record System	Reports	Performance Standards	Specialized Training	Processes	Accountability
Preventive Patrol	None – ongoing	Prevent and detect offenses, promote general feelings of security	Daily activity reports, patrol vehicle mileage	Daily activity reports	Absence of crime, low levels of citizen fear, high rates of police detection of certain types of offenses (e.g., commercial burglary)	Patrol methods (random, directed, conspicuous, inconspicuous)	Limited – some officers use systematic area coverage patterns and plans	Limited – some expectations that officers will detect certain offenses on their beats, some command accountability for absence of citizen complaints about police presence
Routine Incident Response	Call	Record incident, resolve dispute, provide or take information	Dispatch records	Report or coded disposition	Complainant satisfaction, no repeat calls that shift, fair treatment of parties, proper completion of report	Special training by type of incident	Procedures according to call type, reporting requirements	Code out call, file report; accountability rests with assigned officer and shift supervisor
Emergency Response	Critical incident	Save life, interrupt crime, protect property, minimize injury	Dispatch records, after-action reports	Critical incident report	No deaths, minimal injuries, order restored	Vehicle operation, first aid, hostage rescue, SWAT, defensive tactics	First aid procedures, critical incident procedures, triage	Primary officer or scene commander, until incident ends (handed off, if necessary)
Criminal Investigation	Case	Establish culpability, make prosecutable case, apprehend offender, clear case	Case files	Case report and file	Case filed by prosecutor, suspect apprehended	Death investigation, crime scene analysis, forensics, interviewing	Criminal investigative procedures	Case file deadlines, case management (handed off, if necessary), rests with detective assigned, unit supervisor
Problem Solving	Problem or project	Reduce harm, reduce incidence, eliminate problem, improve response	Project files	Sometimes none, project report	Significant reduction in harm, caused by intervention, for reasonable period of time	Problem-solving methods	SARA, CAPRA 5 Is PROCTOR	Rests with police chief, district commander, supervisor, and officer
Support Services	Program or procedure	Provide service, enhance police legitimacy	Program reports	Program or budget reports	Use/popularity of service	Specific procedures	Written procedure or curriculum	Fiscal

Source: Scott, Michael S. 2000. *Problem-Oriented Policing: Reflections on the First 20 Years*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

## 5. Know your agency's strengths and limitations

As the new chief executive, take stock of your agency's strengths and limitations as they relate to POP—even if you are promoted from within and familiar with the agency—before launching POP.

### *Conduct an Organizational Audit or Assessment*

You can assess organizational strengths and limitations through a structured organizational audit or less formally. In either case, you need to know in what respects your agency is ready to practice POP and what preparations you need to make for a firmer foundation on which POP can be built.

Review this whole manual to get a sense of POP's organizational and administrative requirements, but the following are among the most critical:

- **The police function.** All police employees—line officers and supervisors alike—should acknowledge and understand that police work is not only enforcing the law but working ultimately to meet the goals of public safety and security. If police employees cling to the belief that their function is merely to enforce the law, little about POP will make sense to them.
- **Police-community relations.** A basic level of trust and communication between the police agency and the community must exist in order to identify and address public-safety problems in a preventive fashion. Having officers engage in community problem solving will help improve police-community relations; however, without a basic level of trust, it will be difficult to do so effectively.
- **Police officer competencies.** Effective problem solving necessitates basic personal values, habits, and competencies such as professional ethics, respect for democratic policing principles, interpersonal communication skills, report writing, and analytical abilities.
- **Management competencies.** Basic performance accountability systems—for handling incidents and investigations—must be in place. Your supervisors and commanders must have basic leadership and administrative abilities.
- **Agency competencies.** POP is an advanced form of policing, which makes it difficult to engage in effectively if the agency is not competent in more basic police services such as responding to emergencies, handling routine incidents fairly and effectively, and investigating crimes.
- **Data.** Because problem solving involves analyzing data to spot patterns and trends and to understand problems' causes, having reliable access to basic data such as incident reports and calls-for-service is vital.
- **Tolerance for organizational change.** All police agencies undergo substantial adjustments in response to wider social changes and other external pressures, but some adapt more readily to change than others. Some agencies change only when compelled to so, whereas others initiate change from within in the interest of continual improvement. Your agency's organizational change history will influence the method, the timeframe, and the difficulty of making the necessary changes to adopt POP.



### *Develop an Implementation Plan*

Once you complete an organizational audit or assessment, develop a written plan for adopting a problem-oriented approach to policing. Written organizational plans are only as useful as you and others make them: once written, they can either sit on shelves untouched or genuinely dictate action. Plenty of examples of both abound. Make sure you include in the planning process key stakeholders within the agency, both those with formal authority and those with informal influence on others' opinions and actions, and a deep understanding of the agency's culture and work processes.

A useful POP organizational plan should, at a minimum, include the following:

- Clear articulation of the agency's need to adopt POP
- Summary of the agency's strengths and limitations as they relate to POP
- Description of the major objectives to be achieved under the plan
- Clear delineation of responsibilities, sequences, timeframes, and resources for taking actions necessary to achieve objectives

## 6. Articulate your vision

Although POP holds great potential for improving police service and makes logical sense to those familiar with its principles, don't assume that everyone will readily embrace the changes required to adopt the approach. Although it possesses many limitations and drawbacks, the conventional policing model is familiar and therefore offers a degree of comfort to the general public, the mass media, police officers, and other criminal justice officials. Many people cling tenaciously to the position that we can ensure public safety and security solely by apprehending and punishing offenders and evidence to the contrary is merely an argument that we need to redouble our efforts.

This means you will have to "sell" POP to your police employees, other government officials, and the general public. In brief, you need to articulate and explain the following:

- Why conventional policing fails to deliver the effective police service it promises
- Why POP is likely to be more effective and fair
- The implications of POP on the role of police, community, and other government agencies in promoting public safety and security
- The changes required to adopt POP

The concept of POP is both simple and complex, which complicates your job to promote it. It is simple insofar as it advocates figuring out the causes of and developing more effective responses to specific public-safety problems. Who can argue with that logic? But the concept is complex because of the many discrete public-safety problems—the causes of which and the effective responses to which can be multifaceted. There isn't a single solution to all public-safety problems, and you cannot promote POP by stating exactly how police are going to respond to these problems. You can't simply say that police are going to “get tough on crime,” “crack down on violators,” “target hot spots,” “have zero tolerance for crime,” “take the bad guys off the street,” or “fix the broken windows.” Police may very well do some of these things, but not one of them will assuredly solve any particular problem. Unfortunately, proclaiming that police will “analyze problems in order to develop tailored solutions to them” doesn't make for a very juicy sound bite. So you will need to clearly and concisely explain that POP:

- Reduces recurring crime and disorder problems more effectively than other policing approaches
- Promotes sustainable, not just short-term, reductions in public-safety problems
- Allows for more public input into how policing is done
- Is responsive to serious crime problems and relatively minor nuisances alike
- Requires greater use of data to understand problems
- Calls for line-level employees to be more involved in decision-making
- Engages the resources of the entire community, not just the police, in addressing public-safety problems
- Focuses on better control of potential offenders and better protection of potential victims and crime-prone places
- Draws upon good practice from other communities that have dealt with similar problems
- Is more cost-effective than conventional policing approaches
- Helps police shift and share responsibility for addressing public-safety problems

When promoting POP, don't just talk about the steps you need to take to become a problem-oriented police agency; talk about what it will look like when you get there, emphasizing the following:

- Police won't bear the lone responsibility for addressing all public-safety problems.
- Police won't be resigned to repeatedly responding to the same places and to the same individuals with no resolution to the underlying problems.
- Public-safety problems will not fester or spin out of control before they are finally addressed.
- Solutions to all public-safety problems won't necessarily require expending more public resources.
- Police officers will enjoy the inherent satisfaction that comes from effectively addressing difficult public-safety problems.
- Police will earn even greater trust and respect from the public by becoming more effective at controlling and preventing public-safety problems.

You can promote POP with a great fanfare approach or a low-key approach.

### *A Great Fanfare Approach*

A great fanfare approach makes the transformation to POP highly public and dramatic. You might explicitly link your tenure as chief executive to the adoption of POP. You might hold press conferences, issue press releases, produce marketing materials, publicize your strategic plan, and talk it up at every public opportunity.

If you opt for this approach, you will likely want to name your effort: “problem-oriented policing,” “community policing,” “neighborhood policing,” “community problem solving,” “smart policing,” “intelligence-led policing,” “evidence-based policing,” or some variation thereof. Labeling calls attention to the effort and gives it a unifying theme that captures the imagination of your key constituents. The advantage of this approach is that you can maximize what might be a small window of opportunity and secure the support and resources necessary to move toward POP.

The disadvantage of this approach is that it can appear faddish and is thereby vulnerable to being supplanted by the next popular idea that comes along. Moreover, great fanfare police reform movements can provoke resentment and resistance from those who interpret the movement as a repudiation of the police work they have been doing, and few people enjoy being told that everything they have been doing up to that point in their career has been wrong.

### *A Low-key Approach*

A low-key approach is by design less visible and dramatic. It involves a lot of planning with a lot of input and seeks to build a problem orientation and problem-solving capacity within the police agency through incremental, but deliberate, changes and improvements. As such, you need not label your effort beyond saying that it reflects an effort to continually improve police service.

The advantage of this approach is that it invites less open resistance and is less likely to be repudiated by a successor chief executive who might feel the need to establish a distinctive managerial identity from yours. It also buys you more time to consider, plan, and implement necessary changes because you are not doing them in the limelight. The disadvantage of this approach is that it might not generate sufficient public or political support to garner the resources you need to implement changes.

No matter which approach you take, seize upon every opportunity to reinforce your commitment to POP. Understand that even though it might not always appear to be so, your employees, political officials, and community leaders pay heed to how you view the policing function. You are the primary voice on matters pertaining to public safety and security. Everything you say and do signals what is important to you.

### **Read More:**

Chermak, Steven, and Alexander Weiss. 2003. *Marketing Community Policing in the News: A Missed Opportunity?* Research for Practice. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice National Institute of Justice.

This also means your constituents are acutely attuned to any contradiction in your words or between your words and your actions. Accordingly, talk about effective problem solving often; incorporate POP promotion into your daily schedule; and consider the effect of all your decisions and actions on the agency's capacity for POP. Remain persistent and consistent in your message, and people will eventually conclude you are serious about POP.

## **7. Manage organizational change**

Police organizational change is inevitable, whether purposeful or not. What we are concerned with here is purposeful and planned organizational change that supports POP. To some degree, large social forces such as heightened public interest in social problems that impact policing—illegal immigration, mental illness, drug abuse, homelessness—or declining government resources will naturally push police agencies toward POP because they compel police to rethink how they are addressing these problems and at what cost. But that movement will not occur as quickly or as efficiently without careful, purposeful planning and management.

Much organizational change theory supports the proposition that for organizational change to succeed it must progress through at least the following three phases:

- Recognizing the need to change the standard approach
- Experimenting with new approaches
- Institutionalizing new approaches

### *Understand What You Are Committing the Organization to Undertaking*

Committing to POP requires you to rethink the police function, to reconsider who is responsible for causing public-safety problems and for fixing them, to reexamine how strategic policing decisions are made and by whom, and to make some changes in policing strategies and tactics. These substantive changes will invariably call for you to make some significant changes to the police agency's structure and management, which, even if everyone concurs with the substantive changes, will create no small degree of disruption and apprehension in organizational life.

### *Anticipate Support for and Resistance to Change*

When assessing support for and resistance to POP, consider the circumstances under which you became the agency's chief executive and what is expected of you. If you are expected to make the police agency more effective, more efficient, more transparent, or more restrained in the use of force and arrest authority, POP is likely to be seen as a welcome approach toward those goals.

The organizational audit or assessment you conducted before launching the movement to POP should identify the level of support and resistance you are likely to encounter and from what quarter. Gauge the support or resistance you might encounter from the following:

- Your political executive or police governance body
- Influential community leaders
- Your senior and mid-level command staff
- Leaders of the police officers’ association

You will want and need to garner the support of many others, but without the support (or at least the absence of aggressive resistance) of the above constituents, moving forward will be quite difficult.

Although it would be ideal for every employee, political official, government official, etc., to both understand and support POP, only some will. Some will not support it because they don’t understand it. Others who don’t understand it will support it, perhaps out of loyalty, obedience, or a sense of personal advantage. Still others might understand it but still not support it, either because they disagree with its premises or know they won’t be able to practice it well. Knowing which and how many key constituents fall into each cell in the Support/Understanding matrix will help you know how to increase support and understanding and know when you have achieved the level of support and understanding necessary to sustain the concept long term.

Figure 1: Support and Understanding of POP Matrix

	Understand POP	Don’t Understand POP
Support POP	X %	X %
Oppose POP	X %	X %

### *Manage Change at Different Levels*

Effecting police organizational change implicates managing change at various levels: the wider social environment within which the police organization operates; the organization as a whole; units within the organization; and individuals within the organization. Police organizations do not operate in a vacuum: they affect and are affected by the political, social, economic, and legal features of the community they serve. Except in very small police agencies, much police work is performed within the context of small groups of officers who work the same shift, the same area, or the same types of cases. Each small group exerts influence on the attitudes and activities of the individuals within it. And, ultimately, police organizations comprise individual employees who have their own attitudes toward their work as well as their own work habits, styles, and priorities. You need to attend to all of these levels at which organizational change must take effect.

### Changing the Policing Environment

How a police organization delivers its services is primarily in response to its constituents' demands and expectations. Although constituents are often pleased with the results of effective police problem solving, they don't necessarily know to routinely expect it of police or how the service is delivered. You need to attend to how constituents' demands for police service are shaped and reconcile potential conflicts between a problem-solving approach and the more conventional approaches to which constituents are accustomed.

### Changing the Police Organization

All police agencies develop a collective sense of their mission, values, and customs that transcend their individual employees' attitudes and behaviors. This sense of organizational identity might translate as being, for example, enforcement-oriented or service-oriented, proactive or reactive, aggressive or restrained in the use of force, traditional or innovative, internally or externally focused, political or professional, and so forth. How each agency is structured, managed, and led greatly influences its collective identity. Ultimately, you want your agency to internalize as part of its collective identity a capacity for addressing community problems routinely, effectively, and fairly.

### Changing the Mission and Practices of Police Units

Each unit within a police agency—whether it be a patrol shift, a district, a special investigative unit, or a special enforcement unit—adopts a sense of its own mission, values, and customs. In addition to managing the entire agency's identity, pay attention to the collective identity and culture of each unit to ensure it is incorporating problem solving. Even units that do not specialize in problem solving should view it as relevant to its mission and values.

## Changing the Work of the Individual Police Employee

Some employees will have a better aptitude for problem solving than others, but every employee should know that problem solving is a valued and expected part of every job within the agency. Police managers need to pay attention to how each employee understands and performs his or her role as it relates to effective problem solving.

### *Set Ambitious yet Realistic Goals*

The art of organizational change is the ability to judge the pace at which the agency can process and adapt to specific changes. Move too fast and you risk losing the support of those who cannot adjust quickly enough or you lose opportunities to refine some changes based on early experience. Move too slow and you risk losing the support of those who are willing to change, but who cannot thrive in a police organization operating under competing philosophies. Moreover, your latitude to take risks and make controversial changes might be reined in by political leaders before you finish making key changes. Your organizational audit or assessment will guide you in making these judgments. This, too, is where having a written plan for organizational change helps greatly: it allows you to implement particular changes in a logical sequence such that each successive change is made easier by the previous ones. In addition, it allows others to follow the logic and sequence of changes, to see how they interrelate, to see how each contributes to the larger goal, and to anticipate the changes to come, all of which can help alleviate the inevitable apprehension that organizational change engenders.

As a general proposition, challenge the organization's employees—they might tolerate (or even thrive in) the change process better than you anticipate—but pause periodically to allow for them to adapt to changes and for you to assess how well they are implemented and received.

## 8. Clarify roles and responsibilities

To implement POP, all employees must know their role and show clear ownership and accountability for it. As you move to POP, employees will look to you and other leaders to clarify how this approach works in practice and how they will be asked to work differently.

POP is relevant to all positions in a police agency; however, the specific roles and tasks for each position will vary. Some employees will directly and actively undertake problem solving; others will do so indirectly or merely in support of others.

### **Read More:**

Connors, Edward, and Barbara Webster. 2001. *Transforming the Law Enforcement Organization to Community Policing*. Alexandria, Virginia: Institute for Law and Justice.

Townsley, Michael, Shane Johnson, and Ken Pease. 2003. "Problem Orientation, Problem Solving and Organizational Change." In *Problem-Oriented Policing: From Innovation to Mainstream*. Crime Prevention Studies, vol. 15, ed. J. Knutsson. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press.

Greene, Jack. 1998. "Evaluating Planned Change Strategies in Modern Law Enforcement: Implementing Community-Based Policing." In *How to Recognize Good Policing: Problems and Issues*, ed. J.P. Brodeur. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD PROBLEM-ORIENTED SUPERVISOR

- ★ Allows officers freedom to experiment with new approaches
- ★ Insists on good, accurate analysis of problems
- ★ Grants flexibility in work schedules when requests are proper
- ★ Allows officers to make most contacts directly and paves the way when they're having trouble getting cooperation
- ★ Protects officers from pressures within the department to revert to traditional methods
- ★ Secures resources for officers and protects them from undue criticism
- ★ Knows what problems officers are working on and whether the problems are real
- ★ Knows officers' beats and important citizens in them and expects officers to know them even better
- ★ Coaches officers through the problem-solving process, gives advice, helps them manage their time and helps them develop work plans
- ★ Monitors officers' progress on work plans and makes adjustments, prods them along, slows them down, etc.
- ★ Supports officers even if their strategies fail, as long as something useful is learned in the process, and the strategy was well thought out
- ★ Manages problem-solving efforts over a long period of time; doesn't allow effort to die just because it gets sidetracked by competing demands for time and attention
- ★ Gives credit to officers and lets others know about their good work
- ★ Allows officers to talk with visitors or at conferences about their work
- ★ Identifies new resources and contacts for officers and requires them to check them out
- ★ Coordinates efforts across shifts, beats, and outside units and agencies
- ★ Identifies emerging problems by monitoring calls for service, crime patterns, and community concerns
- ★ Assesses officers' activities and performance in relation to identified problems rather than by boilerplate measures
- ★ Expects officers to account for their time and activities while giving them more freedom to decide how to address problems in their areas of responsibility
- ★ Provides officers with examples of good problem solving so they know what is expected
- ★ Provides more positive reinforcement for good work than negative reactions to bad work
- ★ Realizes this style of police work cannot simply be ordered; officers and detectives must come to believe in it

Sources: Goldstein, Herman. 1990. *Problem-Oriented Policing*, 158. New York: McGraw Hill.  
Eck, John E., and William Spelman. 1987. *Problem-Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in Newport News*, 104–05.  
Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum.



Some positions are particularly critical, such as executive and supervisory officers, general patrol officers and detectives, specialist problem-solving officers, crime analysts, and communications staff.

### *Executive and Supervisory Officers*

As the formal leaders in an organization, commanders and supervisors can make or break successful POP implementation. Supervisory support is more critical to effective problem solving than the provision of extra time for problem-solving initiatives. Leaders must not only demonstrate understanding and commitment to POP, but be aware how their actions can promote or inhibit its practice. For you, as a police executive, this means three things.

First, your commanders and supervisors must explicitly commit their support of POP. Obviously, the sincerity and depth of your employees' stated commitments will vary, but it is reasonable and necessary to expect your commanders and supervisors to be supportive and to hold them accountable.

Second, your commanders and supervisors themselves must become proficient in problem solving. Bear in mind that if the length of your agency's engagement in POP is relatively short, some of your commanders and supervisors might not have practiced at the line level what you now expect them to lead others in doing. They will not have the benefit of drawing on personal experiences to encourage and guide their subordinates, which is a real handicap.

Third, your commanders and supervisors need to be able to direct, encourage, and support their staff in their problem-solving endeavors. In essence, they create the environment in which problem solvers are either stifled or inspired.

### *General Patrol Officers*

General patrol officers have perhaps the most contact with the public and often have a rich picture of the policing problems within the area, particularly if they have stable beat assignments. At times, officers are limited to bringing short-term relief to a particular community issue. At other times, however, they have the opportunity to prevent future recurrences of this same incident.

For example, in responding to a resident's repeated calls about loud music being played in a neighbor's apartment, an officer might simply tell the offender to turn down the volume and leave the scene. The offender is likely to turn up the music again the following night, and the scene would repeat itself, with the same officer, or another, responding. Using a problem-solving approach, the officer could bring the two individuals together to understand each other's perspective and negotiate a compromise. The officer could then encourage the building manager to take some responsibility in deterring future annoyances by invoking the tenancy agreement.

Although you might question whether this brand of problem solving truly exemplifies POP, such a preventive approach is preferable to the reactive approach and should be encouraged. Patrol officers should, at a minimum, adopt a preventive and problem-solving mindset in which they routinely inquire whether the incidents at hand have occurred before and whether they are likely to occur again without special intervention. If so, they should try to use quick and simple problem-solving responses to prevent recurring incidents.

Depending on a variety of factors—patrol workloads, officer competencies, the availability of specialist problem solvers, etc.—you could expect more from your patrol officers with regard to problem solving. There is abundant evidence that, given the right encouragement and support, patrol officers can undertake, even lead, some rather advanced and sophisticated problem solving. Although there are clear drawbacks to having unrealistically high problem-solving expectations of your patrol officers, be careful not to set unnecessarily low expectations. As a general rule, patrol officers should be encouraged and supported in undertaking problem solving to the extent their time and talent permits, but, at a minimum, the patrol officer should go beyond merely responding to calls and resolving them in a temporary and cursory fashion.

### *Detectives*

Most detectives apply for and are selected for their position because of their interest and skill in investigating crime and building prosecutable cases. Not surprisingly, detectives are among the most resistant to embracing a problem-solving perspective as they tend to place a greater emphasis on detecting crime than on preventing it. However, because crime generally concentrates around a small number of offenders, victims, and places that police already know, detectives are well-positioned to address these chronic offenders, victims, and places from a problem-solving orientation. Indeed, because detectives have more discretionary time than patrol officers, and have ready access to data and support staff, there is little reason not to expect them to apply problem-solving methods to their workload. Detectives can be even more effective problem solvers when prosecutors and corrections officials, with whom they ordinarily work closely, also adopt a problem-oriented perspective.

Detectives have had documented successes in using a POP approach to address such problems as chronic offenders, gang-related homicide, drug markets, shoplifting, burglary, auto theft, and scrap metal theft.

### *Crime Analysts and Records Staff*

If your agency employs crime analysts who are not familiar with or proficient in problem analysis, understand that adding problem-analysis duties to conventional crime-analysis duties might not come naturally or easily to all analysts. (More details about developing sound problem-analysis capabilities are in sections 12, 13, 14, and 17.)

Additionally, records staff—those who process records and those who develop and manage the record-keeping systems—need to recognize and meet the new information needs that POP creates. Many more employees will require access to much more data and records than is customary under conventional policing approaches. (More details about managing police records are in sections 4, 12, and 16.)

### *Communications/Call-Handling Staff*

The call screening and dispatching functions are critical to an effective POP approach for two primary reasons. First, they determine how patrol resources are deployed. Over-deploying patrol staff undermines patrol officers' abilities to engage in proactive problem solving. Second, they serve as an important source of information about the incidents that might, in the aggregate, constitute chronic community problems for which a problem-solving approach is warranted. It is vital that your managers have substantial control over the call screening and dispatching functions.

If call takers are able to accurately identify the nature of the call, they may be able to do the following:

- Divert the caller to another agency better suited for their needs
- Provide appropriate advice via telephone rather than dispatch an officer
- Provide the caller with an alternative and more efficient method of reporting their concern (e.g., via computer mail or in person at a police facility)
- Brief dispatched officers about the number and nature of prior calls at the location or made by the individuals involved in the incident so they might deal more effectively with the issue on arrival
- Accurately record the call to assist in the identification of trends and later analysis

### *POP Coordinator*

If your agency is large enough to warrant it, consider designating one staff member who reports directly to you to advise you and to coordinate the planning and implementation of POP. As this manual makes evident, there are many special issues to consider in moving an agency toward POP, all while managing the agency's conventional functions.

### **Read More:**

Boba, Rachel, and Roberto Santos. 2011. *A Police Organizational Model for Crime Reduction: Institutionalizing Problem Solving, Analysis, and Accountability*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Braga, Anthony A. 2008. *Problem-Oriented Policing and Crime Prevention*. 2nd ed. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press.

Forst, Brian. 1998. "Problem-Oriented Criminal Investigation." In *Problem Oriented Policing: Crime-Specific Problems, Critical Issues and Making POP Work*, eds. Tara O'Connor Shelley and Anne C. Grant. Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum.

Geller, William A., and Guy Swanger. 1995. *Managing Innovation in Policing: The Untapped Potential of the Middle Manager*. Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum.

Grinder, Donald. 2000. "Implementing Problem-Oriented Policing: A View from the Front Lines." In *Problem-Oriented Policing: Crime-Specific Problems, Critical Issues and Making POP Work*, vol. 3, eds. C. Solé Brito and E. Gratto. Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum.

McEwen, Thomas, Deborah Spence, Russell Wolff, Julie Wartell, and Barbara Webster. 2003. *Call Management and Community Policing: A Guidebook for Law Enforcement*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

## 9. Get the right people and train them properly

Although any effort to reorient a police department into a problem-solving organization will initially concentrate on existing staff, it is important that new employees are also attuned to this approach. Consider initial employee recruitment and selection, training, promotion, and special assignments in seeking to get people with an aptitude for problem solving into positions where it can be practiced.

### *Recruit and Hire Problem Solvers*

If you want new employees to become problem solvers they must understand they are joining a problem-oriented organization. Ensure your recruiting materials highlight POP and provide specific examples of how the approach is applied in the various agency positions. Clearly understanding the organization's expectations at this early stage allows potential recruits to decide whether they want to continue with their application. Make sure your agency's recruiters actively seek out candidates who have demonstrated an interest in and aptitude for problem solving in their previous line of work. This applies to both sworn and non-sworn positions, particularly crime analysts. Problem-solving ability, generally, requires more than technical skills and knowledge; it calls for habits of the mind, including creativity, curiosity, persistence, and adaptability.

Although problem-solving skills and aptitude are not the only desirable traits in new recruits, applicants who are unable to think analytically about crime and disorder problems or who are only interested in the law enforcement dimension of policing will almost assuredly struggle with POP. Review your agency's personnel selection instruments and procedures to ensure they help identify candidates with a problem-solving interest and aptitude.

### *Teach Employees Problem Solving*

Standard police training courses will not necessarily develop a trainee's proficiency in problem solving. Ensure your recruits, police officers, supervisors, and support staff are properly trained in problem-solving principles and methods. Problem-based learning methods generally are superior for developing these skills.

If you want your staff to incorporate problem solving into their work routines, not only familiarize them with the concept, but also train them to be proficient in the following:

- The basic principles and methods of POP and problem solving
- Identifying potential problems among routine incidents and conditions
- Analyzing problems to better understand causes and contributing conditions
- Designing new approaches to respond to problems
- Identifying and securing agency and community resources to address problems
- Finding information relevant to problem-solving efforts (e.g., the POP Center website)

Problem-solving training should be tailored to the specific needs and concerns of the positions in your organization. It should be delivered in a variety of ways in the following training settings:

- Pre-service training academies
- Field training and other mentoring programs
- In-service training programs
- Specialized external training programs

A single dose of training will not make employees proficient problem solvers. Introductory training must be reinforced by subsequent, more advanced training. This is especially true for newer officers. It typically takes new police officers several years to understand and become proficient in the basics of the job (and to get some of the craving for action and excitement out of their system) and to find problem solving relevant and comprehensible.

The *Model POP Curriculum*, available online at [www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org), can be customized for different teaching and training needs.

### *Select for Special Assignments and Promote Problem Solvers*

Because special assignments and promotions are widely seen to be among the most powerful ways in which a police administrator rewards good performance, make sure these processes reflect the importance placed on competent problem solving. Promoting or awarding coveted special assignments to competent problem solvers advances POP in two basic ways: 1) it rewards those who have demonstrated such competency and incentivizes others who desire promotion or special assignment, and 2) it facilitates problem solving among line employees by ensuring they have knowledgeable and supportive supervisors and support staff.

A word of caution: Take care not to reward competent problem solvers by assigning them to a new position in which they are not expected to apply problem-solving methods. Problem solving should not be seen merely as the way to get ahead in the organization, but also as the way in which the organization approaches its work. One can reasonably be expected to employ problem-solving principles and methods in coveted special assignments such as narcotics, gangs, emergency response, and intelligence, as one can in general patrol and investigations.

#### **Read More:**

Scrivner, Ellen. 2006. *Innovations in Police Recruitment and Hiring: Hiring in the Spirit of Service*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

COPS Office. n.d. *A Problem-Based Learning Model for Training and Evaluating Police Trainees*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.



# Structure the Agency to Facilitate POP

## 10. Decide whether to specialize or generalize problem solving

Whether to delegate problem solving to all police officers and detectives or only to specialist officers is, at first appearances, a difficult choice. This decision has at least two dimensions. First, assuming that POP is a relatively new concept to your agency, decide which approach best allows the concept to take root and develop within your routine operations. Second, decide which approach makes sense for the long term—beyond a pilot or experimental phase. There are documented successes and failures, and advantages and disadvantages, to both approaches. However, you don't have to choose just one approach; blending the two approaches has considerable merit and whether problem solving is specialized or generalized is less important than that problem solving is expected whenever it is needed and feasible. Blending generalist and specialist approaches for problem solving seems to make as much sense as it does for other dimensions of police work. For example, all police officers are expected to investigate crimes even though some (i.e., detectives) specialize in doing so, and all police officers are expected to respond to emergencies and critical incidents even though some (i.e., special weapons and tactics teams) specialize in doing so.

### *Specialist Approach*

A specialist approach entails tasking a group of officers with applying POP principles and methods. This usually, but not necessarily, frees these officers from some or all routine policing responsibilities such as handling calls for service, emergencies, and investigations, primarily to provide them with the time they need to address problems.

In addition to time allocation, there are several advantages to the specialist approach. It is easier to train a small number of officers in problem solving than it is to train everyone. Specialist officers can more easily cultivate contacts in the community and in government and non-government organizations that will be important to effective problem solving. Specialist officers, particularly if they volunteer for the assignment, are likely to be highly motivated by this type of work. Specialist officers can cultivate their own sense of organizational identity and insulate themselves from norms within the agency that might not support problem solving, and if permitted to remain in the assignment for a prolonged period, can develop special expertise and competence in problem solving.

There are also disadvantages to the specialist approach. It carries the risk of engendering resentment within the larger organization that select officers are receiving what might be perceived as special privileges or that other officers are not deemed competent enough to engage in problem solving. When fewer officers are actively engaged in problem solving, the concept and skills will spread more slowly throughout the agency. Specialist officers, being fewer in number, will be able to address only a limited number of projects. The agency might be denied the benefit of the problem-solving initiative and creativity of its generalist officers who are relegated to more routine policing duties.

If you choose to adopt a specialist approach, in whole or in part, try to minimize the disadvantages cited above while capitalizing on the advantages. You can make clear that although some officers specialize in problem solving, others are encouraged to engage in problem solving to the extent their other duties permit. You might allow general-duty officers to rotate into the specialist unit for a limited time to work on particular problems with which they have a special interest or expertise.

### *Generalist Approach*

In the generalist approach all officers and detectives are expected to engage in problem solving as a part of their routine duties. There are advantages to this approach. A greater number of officers become engaged in the practice of problem solving in a shorter span of time. The more officers who are engaged in problem solving means more will be identified as having an aptitude for this style of work, and there will be greater benefit to the community and agency from their being allowed to apply those talents. The generalist approach conveys a stronger signal to the agency and to the community of the agency's commitment to POP because routine work implies greater permanence than does specialist work.

The generalist approach seems to work best if patrol officers and detectives have a clear and manageable area of responsibility (either a permanent beat or patch in which they work, or a defined type of case they handle) to which they can apply problem-solving methods. The generalist approach also works best if the majority of officers and detectives possess the basic skills (e.g., interpersonal communication, data analysis, conflict resolution) and willingness that are necessary for effective problem solving.

#### **Read More:**

Goldstein, Herman. 1990. *Problem-Oriented Policing*, 172–75. New York: McGraw Hill.

## **11. Decentralize the organization where possible; centralize where necessary**

In general, POP is better supported by relatively decentralized organizational structures; however, effective problem solving can occur under either centralized or decentralized systems. Centralization/ decentralization of police agencies has two related components: physical and authority.



### *Physical Decentralization*

Physical decentralization entails having police personnel work out of facilities located throughout the jurisdiction (rather than in a single central location) and/or working in smaller, discrete sectors of the larger jurisdiction.

Physical decentralization better enables police officers and supervisors to benefit from the familiarity bred by proximity and continuity. To become intimately familiar with and make observations and judgments about the nature and severity of a community's public-safety problems, police officers need sufficient time to handle incidents. They also need to make sufficient positive contacts with and establish the trust of the community's residents to effectively communicate about problems. Although there is no hard-and-fast rule, assigning police officers to a particular geographic area (e.g., a beat, a patch, a neighborhood) and work shift for at least a full year, and ideally longer, is important for effective problem solving. Under most circumstances, it will take police officers at least 6 months just to learn the problems and key actors in their beat, and many problem-solving initiatives take months or even several years to bring to conclusion.

Where feasible, also assign supervisory officers to particular geographical areas for sufficient time periods so they too become familiar with the area's policing problems and key stakeholders.

### *Decentralization of Authority*

Decentralized authority calls for delegating significant decision-making authority down the chain of command. Decentralizing authority better enables police officers and supervisors to make decisions that are matched to local circumstances. Policing problems can vary considerably in their local context, and it often follows that the responses need to vary. What works well in one context might not work well in another. To effectively respond to problems, a police agency needs the support and commitment of citizens and non-police organizations, which is more likely when key stakeholders are involved in the decision-making. When the police department's decision-makers have close working relationships with these key community stakeholders, the decision-makers will more willingly seek and incorporate the stakeholders' input into decisions when responding to problems.

There are many types of decisions to be made to effectively solve problems, most especially the following:

- What problems get special attention
- What resources to devote to addressing particular problems
- Which outside organizations and individuals to engage in addressing problems
- What actions to take in response to problems
- How to resolve disputes and conflicts over the response to problems
- How to communicate problem-solving activities to the public

The type of authority that is delegated to the various levels within the organization will and should vary across agencies, but the following general principles can help you with these determinations:

- The amount of decision-making authority you delegate to particular positions and ranks should be shaped in part by the level of your staff's training and knowledge. Highly trained and knowledgeable officers should be entrusted with greater degrees of decision-making authority.
- Ensure your decision-makers are taught how to make good decisions. Recognize that making decisions while problem solving differs in some ways from making decisions while handling incidents and investigating cases.
- Decision-making authority should include some degree of control over the resources needed to address problems, such as:
  - The number of personnel to devote to a problem
  - Their work schedules
  - Access to specialized analysis resources
  - Access to special information
  - Finances to pay for equipment, supplies, and overtime
  - Access to public information systems (e.g., the mass media, police agency website)
- Decision-makers should always be held accountable for their decisions. They should be prepared to explain and justify their decisions and accept the consequences for those that are ill-considered.

You will necessarily assume some political risk for delegating decision-making authority, as will those to whom you delegate. Some mistakes and miscalculations will be made, so be prepared to support the decisions made in good faith and with due consideration even if they don't yield the desired results.

### *Centralized Problem Solving*

Although most policing problems are best addressed at either the beat level or the district level, some are best addressed at the jurisdiction level. Jurisdiction-wide problems are usually larger in scope, more complex, require greater resources to study and address, and therefore call for some degree of centralized response. This might mean that in a large agency a centralized unit is tasked with identifying, analyzing, and responding to large, complex problems while in a smaller agency merely you and your senior-level staff need to be personally involved in responding to these problems. Ensure your organization can recognize when problems should be addressed at a higher, more centralized level, and that it has the capacity to do so.

### *Reconciling Shift Management with Territory Management*

Policing will always require managing shifts and territory. That is, certain management issues arise in the context of how police services are delivered in the immediate time frame, say by the officers who are working on a particular shift. Other management issues arise in the context of the territory (i.e., the beat, the neighborhood, the district) and transcend the policing activity occurring on a particular shift. It is admittedly difficult, but important to reconcile, the two needs.

Some policing problems tend to cluster by shift. For example, truancy problems cluster during the day shift when school is in session. Bar fights cluster during the night shift when patrons are heavily intoxicated and most bars are open for business. For these types of problems, the shift supervisor might be well-positioned to manage a problem-solving response and coordinate activities with the officers and supervisors who work the same shift on different days. Many problems occurring within a geographic area, however, cut across the time frames of police shifts and therefore require some management constancy across shifts and days of the week.

To reconcile the time and territory management needs, you could give your supervisory staff both shift and territory management responsibilities. For example, a field supervisor might be responsible for managing all police activity occurring on a particular shift and the problem-solving activity within a smaller geographical area across shifts and days. This approach is necessary where problem-solving responsibilities are entirely generalized. The alternate approach is to have different supervisors for shift management and for territory management. Regardless of what approach you choose, officers responding to incidents on a shift basis and those working on problems will need to actively communicate.

### *Consider the Rank Structure*

To push decision-making authority down in police organizations, some police executives have opted to eliminate some command ranks from the conventional hierarchy. Although doing so won't necessarily result in greater decision-making authority being vested near the line level, flattening the organizational hierarchy reinforces the notion that important decisions should be made without the need for multiple levels of prior review. One thing is reasonably certain: eliminating police ranks is highly unsettling to employees, at least in the short term. It reduces employees' real and perceived opportunities to elevate their professional status through promotion. Given that eliminating ranks has an uncertain effect on police problem solving, doing so could prove to be more distracting than helpful to your efforts to advance POP.

#### ***Read More:***

Goldstein, Herman. 1990. *Problem-Oriented Policing*, 159–61. New York: McGraw Hill.

## 12. Develop systems to identify and define problems

The first stage of any problem-solving process entails identifying and defining the problem, or “scanning” in the SARA problem-solving model terminology.

Identifying and defining policing problems requires more management attention than might be apparent. Some policing problems present themselves quite clearly and obviously to the police, but others do not and can easily be missed without a structured approach to scanning the environment for problems.

Although it is tempting to conclude that police have enough to contend with by just responding to public-safety incidents without actively searching for hidden problems, in the long term it nearly always benefits the community and the police to identify problems early and address them before they become deeply entrenched or critical.

Often, there will be several different ways in which problems can be defined. However problems are initially defined, be alert to the need to redefine them as analysis of each problem makes clearer its real nature and causes.

There are a wide range of methods for identifying policing problems, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. Consider whether each method is reliably in place in your agency’s operations and administrative systems. For each method, there should be both active and passive means to identify problems.

### *Patrol Officer and Detective Observations*

When handling calls for service or investigating cases, patrol officers or detectives are likely to notice emerging patterns that might indicate an underlying chronic problem. Make sure there is a procedure for nominating these patterns for consideration as a formal problem-solving project. It can be as simple as submitting a form or making a verbal request to a supervisor or analyst. In addition, supervisors or analysts should periodically ask officers and detectives whether they are noticing any patterns that might need further inquiry.

Patrol officers and detectives develop a feel for the communities they patrol and the cases they handle, and they often detect emerging problems before they become apparent through official statistics. However, bear in mind that it is not just one patrol officer or detective handling all of the police business in an area or crime type. In fact, due to work schedules and the volume of service calls, even the most attentive and conscientious patrol officer can handle no more than 10 percent of the police business in an area. This means you cannot count on individual officer/detective observations alone to accurately detect all problems.

### *Supervisor and Analyst Observations*

Supervisors and analysts are also likely to detect emerging patterns among the incidents and cases they monitor over the police radio, attend to in person, or read about in official reports. Because they monitor the work of multiple patrol officers or detectives, they are well-positioned to spot patterns that individual officers and detectives might not. They, too, should initiate a formal inquiry into potential problems once they detect an emerging pattern. You and your executive officers should also periodically query the supervisors and analysts about the problems that exist within their areas of responsibility.

### *Routine Crime Analysis Reports*

As police records systems have become more automated and software programs more sophisticated, it has become easier to identify emerging patterns and trends from the aggregate data. You need to ensure your automated systems—to include both call-for-service data (e.g., Computer-Aided Dispatch records) and incident report data (reports in the Records Management System)—are programmed so it is possible to spot potential problems in the data. You can have someone routinely review the data, looking for emerging patterns, or program the software to generate an alert at set thresholds of activity (e.g., when a specified number of calls-for-service are recorded within a specified timeframe). Following are some of the more useful patterns to which you want your computer programs and staff to be attentive.

#### Repeat Call Locations

A high number of calls-for-service at particular addresses might be the first sign of an underlying chronic problem. Make sure you generate automated reports of high-call locations at different jurisdictional levels (i.e., city-wide, district-wide, and beat-wide) and that the staff who police those areas regularly review the reports and initiate appropriate preliminary inquiries to determine if the call volume is abnormal for a location of that size and type. Plotting incidents on a map and disseminating those maps is a useful tool for spotting potential problem locations.

#### Repeat Incident Types

Routinely monitor the volume of incidents under each classification to determine whether substantial increases of certain incident types reflect underlying problems. Also review the incident classifications to determine if they are useful for identifying potential problems. For example, an incident classification called “disturbances” will typically lump together a huge volume of very different types of conduct, making such a classification nearly worthless for identifying problems.

### High-Call Time Periods

Monitoring high-call time periods is obviously important for determining appropriate staffing levels, but it can also be useful for detecting problems. Certain time periods are notorious for the police service demands they generate: bar closing time, work commuting times, school release times, alcohol-oriented festivals, etc.

### Repeat Offender Lists

Because research confirms that a relatively few number of offenders commit a relatively high proportion of offenses, routinely identify the most active offenders within a jurisdiction across all types of offenses and give them some sort of special attention. In addition, generate lists restricted to repeat offenders of certain types of infractions such as the most prolific violent offenders, nuisance offenders, drunk drivers, spouse abusers, etc.

### Repeat Victim Lists

The same rationale pertains to repeat victims, but many police agencies neglect to routinely scan their records for chronic victims who might merit some special attention to reduce their rate of victimization. As with repeat offenders and repeat call locations, consider generating multiple types of lists such as chronic victims of all offenses, chronic domestic violence victims, chronic theft victims, etc.

### *Citizen and Community-Group Observations*

Ensure you use both passive and active methods to learn what the community considers to be chronic problems in need of special attention. The police communications center (emergency and non-emergency telephone records) is an obvious method for learning about community concerns, but many public-safety issues are not reported to police this way. Encourage citizens to use other methods to communicate their public-safety concerns, such as the following:

- Sending an email to or leaving a voice mail for beat officers
- Calling special tip lines (e.g., for narcotics or gang complaints)
- Reporting concerns at community meetings attended by police
- Completing surveys

Not all community concerns will constitute genuine problems meriting special police attention, but they are an excellent starting point for further investigation.

### *Government-Official Observations and Requests*

Sometimes public-safety problems that might warrant special police attention first come to the attention of government officials, such as mayors, city managers, city council representatives, and other local government workers (fire, emergency medical services, public works, probation and parole, prosecution, parks and recreation, school, mental health, public health, traffic engineering, etc.). Ensure there is a system in place for government officials to communicate these concerns to the police, and, ideally, a mechanism for reporting back to the official what measures, if any, were taken to address the concern. Keeping government officials apprised of police actions goes a long way toward promoting their confidence in the police, and, more importantly, encouraging them to collaborate with police, if appropriate, to address the problem.

### *Media Reports*

When the media reports public-safety problems, it is seldom news to the police, but good investigative journalism can often help document the nature and scope of a problem. News accounts can provide useful factual and perceptual information about the problem, and can help generate public and political interest to address the problem if it proves to be valid and deserve special police attention.

## 13. Develop the agency's capacity to analyze problems

Effective problem solving requires a thorough analysis of a problem to understand its causes or contributing factors. Problem analysis, however, is the dimension of POP that typically requires the greatest overall improvement.

Although some lower-level problem solving can be performed through rudimentary data collection and analysis methods, more advanced problem solving requires more sophisticated analysis capability.

Problem analysis requires developing new data sources and new analytical methods because it seeks to answer the questions deemed unimportant or irrelevant in conventional policing: why is this problem occurring and are current efforts to address this problem effective?

### **Read More:**

Boba, Rachel, and Roberto Santos. 2011. *A Police Organizational Model for Crime Reduction: Institutionalizing Problem Solving, Analysis, and Accountability*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Clarke, Ronald V., and John E. Eck. 2007. *Understanding Risky Facilities*. Problem-Oriented Guides for Police; Problem-Solving Tools Series, No. 6. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Eck, John E., and William Spelman. 1987. *Problem-Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in Newport News*, 41–47. Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum.

Goldstein, Herman. 1990. *Problem-Oriented Policing*, 65–79. New York: McGraw Hill.

Tilley, Nick. In press. *Analyzing and Responding to Repeat Offending*. Problem-Oriented Guides for Police; Problem-Solving Tools Series, No. 11. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Weisel, Deborah Lamm. 2005. *Analyzing Repeat Victimization*. Problem-Oriented Guides for Police; Problem-Solving Tools Series, No. 4. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Modern policing calls for many different types of analysis: forensic analysis of evidence; administrative analysis of finances and staffing; investigative analysis to identify offenders and build prosecutable cases; legal analysis of statutes and case law; and basic crime analysis of crime patterns and trends to better target resources. Problem analysis is yet another type of analysis and should not be confused with these others. Even if your agency can perform these other types, it is not necessarily prepared to execute effective problem analysis.

We recommend that you and key staff members read the POP Center publication, *Crime Analysis for Problem Solvers: In 60 Small Steps*. This is a highly readable primer in problem analysis. We won't attempt to summarize here what is well-said in that publication. As a police executive, read at least the first few sections and expect other staff members to read the whole publication carefully.

Next, determine whether you have, either on your staff or accessible to your agency, the expertise required for effective problem analysis. Few sworn police officers bring to the job or are trained on the research knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform advanced problem analysis. This applies to many civilian analysts, too.

Although it is difficult to say precisely what level of analytical knowledge, skills, and abilities are necessary for problem analysis, require a minimum of a master's degree level of training. Larger police agencies, if possible, should seek out someone with a higher level of analysis training, such as a doctorate, to oversee their agency's problem analysis. Although problem analysis rarely involves the most sophisticated analysis methods, without an in-depth understanding of statistics and research methods, it is easy to draw faulty conclusions from improperly conducted analysis. Moreover, having at least one highly trained analyst available to your other employees enables them to develop basic analysis knowledge and skills.

Your agency's size and resources will largely determine its problem-analysis capability. There are several general options:

### *Hire Your Own Analysts*

The ideal option is to hire analysts with the proper background, training, skills, and orientation for problem analysis as permanent police agency employees. An unscientific rule of thumb is that there should be one problem-solving analyst for every 100 sworn officers in your agency. Having fewer than this will make it difficult to conduct much problem analysis.



### *Enlist External Analysts*

If there is a college or university nearby, one or more professors and their students (preferably graduate-level) might be available to perform some problem analysis for your agency. Ideally, they should be able to work with your staff from the project's outset to its conclusion, the assessment of outcomes. If not, they should at least be available to conduct discrete analysis tasks and turn over their findings to your staff. External analytical support can be fee-based or free if it coincides with the professor's research interests, or students can earn credit for their work.

### *Establish or Participate in a Regional Analysis Consortium*

Your state or county government, or the federal government, might also have available analysts. Some state departments of justice or law enforcement have analysts on staff to work on law enforcement-related issues. Some jurisdictions have federal analysis operations such as fusion centers that support local police. If none exist or are inadequate for your needs, consider creating an analysis consortium to serve multiple police agencies within your region. As a last resort, you might explore hiring on a contract basis another police agency's analyst to work on specific analysis tasks for your agency.

As a final note, even the most competent and best-resourced analysts will be wasted if they aren't asking or being asked the right questions. Developing a true problem-analysis capacity within your agency depends heavily on cultivating the habit, among your analysis and operations staff, of asking not merely what crime and disorder is happening, but why and what can be done to prevent it.

### **Read More:**

Amendola, Karen L., and Greg Jones. 2010. *Selecting the Best Analyst for the Job: A Model Crime Analyst Assessment Process for Law Enforcement Agencies*. Washington, D.C.: Police Foundation and U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Boba, Rachel. 2003. *Problem Analysis in Policing*. Washington, D.C.: Police Foundation.

Braga, Anthony A. 2008. *Problem-Oriented Policing and Crime Prevention*. 2nd ed., 145–63. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press.

Clarke, Ronald V., and John E. Eck. 2005. *Crime Analysis for Problem Solvers: In 60 Small Steps*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

White, Matthew B. 2008. *Enhancing the Problem-Solving Capacity of Crime Analysis Units*. Problem Oriented Guides for Police; Problem-Solving Tools Series, No. 9. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

## **14. Develop the agency's capacity to assess problems**

Assessment is the last stage of the SARA problem-solving model: determining rigorously and reliably what effect the problem-solving initiative had on the targeted problem.

In some respects, developing both problem-identification and problem-analysis capacity also develops problem assessment capacity. Properly assessing problems requires having good data systems and properly trained and oriented analysts to interpret the data.

Beyond ensuring you have the proper data collection and analysis systems and staff, your main objective here is to instill within the agency the *value* of transparent and rigorous assessment and the *habit* of demanding it.

It is difficult to say with certainty why crime and disorder occurs or doesn't occur—why it is increasing or decreasing—because there are so many factors that potentially affect them. When crime rates are falling, it is tempting as police to take some credit for that; when they are rising, it is equally tempting to claim that policing has nothing to do with it. There's usually enough truth in those assertions to make them plausible on the surface. Police alternately get more credit and less credit than they deserve for affecting public safety and security. At least in the realms of public opinion, politics, and mass media reporting, many police claims of effectiveness are believed or disbelieved on rather flimsy evidence.

It is sometimes said, although not accurately, that it is impossible to measure what did not happen. With regard to policing, this is usually said in defense of continuing some crime prevention initiative in the absence of hard evidence that it is in fact preventing crime. By this flawed logic it might also be said that it is impossible to prove that an intervention is not working; one can always claim that conditions would have been worse if not for the intervention.

POP seeks to blast past the general debates about why overall crime rates are rising or falling. Instead, it seeks to determine the success of efforts to address a specific problem under specific conditions.

The purpose of problem assessment is twofold: 1) to determine whether or not to allocate police resources, which are nearly always scarce, to other crime and disorder problems, and 2) to determine whether to apply the responses deployed in the present problem to future problems of the same type or to other types of problems. To make the first determination you need to know with some degree of confidence whether or not the problem you targeted has improved. To make the second determination you need to know whether the problem improved because of the responses you deployed, as opposed to some other cause outside police control.

Properly executed data analysis can tell you what occurred as a result of your problem-solving efforts. Whether that outcome can be claimed a success or failure is more a matter of judgment. In making that judgment, consider that success in the context of POP can mean several things, including the following:

- Totally eliminating a problem from the community's concern
- Reducing the volume of incidents occurring as a result of the problem
- Reducing the level of harm occurring as a result of the problem
- Shifting responsibility for addressing the problem to an entity better able to control it
- Responding to the problem in a fairer or more humane fashion

Make sure your problem-assessment efforts are attuned to these different possibilities so your claims of success or failure are placed in the context of reasonable objectives for that problem.

Perhaps the most important aspect of developing a problem-assessment capacity is cultivating within your agency an acceptance that not all problem-solving initiatives will achieve the best possible outcomes. Some efforts might fail altogether or even make problems worse. However, if problem assessment is done well, you will learn not only that the effort failed but why. Learning why problem-solving efforts failed will, in the long term, prove nearly as valuable as learning from those that succeeded. Policing problems are sometimes quite difficult to solve; otherwise, routine policing efforts would have already solved them. Moreover, because relatively little is known across the whole police profession about what does and does not work with respect to particular problems, any knowledge gained—whether through success or failure—is valuable to the profession and, therefore, should be valued within the agency as well.

It is hoped that if the police agency is more transparent and candid about the successes and failures of its efforts to address public-safety problems, over time, the larger community will better appreciate the challenges police face and stand more willing to assist in addressing even the most intractable public-safety problems.

## 15. Optimize employee performance

It is important to explicitly integrate problem solving into performance appraisal and accountability systems. Develop and implement performance appraisal and accountability systems that account for the multiple and complex dimensions of police work as accurately and fairly as possible.

Any performance management framework should be multifaceted and multi-tiered. Before a new framework is designed, review what is already in place to determine how these mechanisms can be amended to support a POP approach.

Evaluating problem-solving performance encompasses assessing expertise, effort, and effectiveness. Ensure your employees possess or acquire expert knowledge about the problems they seek to address and that they make a good faith effort to employ a problem-solving process to these problems. And, ensure that new responses to problems prove more effective and fair than previous responses.

### *Performance Appraisal Systems*

There is some disagreement within the police profession as to the value of standardized, regular performance appraisals for all employees. Some deem them essential to optimizing employee performance; others consider them a waste of time and perhaps even counterproductive. A full exploration of this issue is beyond the scope of this manual, but, as it relates to problem solving, there are some special considerations relating to individual employee performance appraisal.

### **Read More:**

Eck, John E. 2002. *Assessing Responses to Problems: An Introductory Guide for Police Problem Solvers*. Problem-Oriented Guides for Police; Problem-Solving Tools Series, No. 1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Guerette, Rob T. 2009. *Analyzing Crime Displacement and Diffusion*. Problem-Oriented Guides for Police; Problem-Solving Tools Series, No. 10. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

### Guard against the means over ends syndrome

It is the means-over-ends syndrome—by which police managers focus more on how police service is delivered than on its results—that prompted the development of POP. Guard against this syndrome creeping into new performance-appraisal systems. Measuring police performance exclusively on process rather than outcomes is misguided no matter how enlightened the new processes might be. In short, don't content yourself with merely counting the number of POP projects undertaken, community meetings attended, partnerships formed, etc., to assess police performance. For example, requiring every officer to be working on a POP project can, and often does, yield some artificial and superficial projects. The nature of genuine community problems should drive the measures taken to address them, not the other way around.

### Measure problem-solving performance in the context of each problem

Although it is possible and useful to assess an employee's general problem-solving skills and abilities, it is important to consider the context of each problem addressed in assessing the employee's overall problem-solving performance. Some problems are small and relatively easy to solve; others are large and complex. Some problems are amenable to complete eradication; others only to modest improvement. Some obstacles to effective problem solving are within the employee's capacity to overcome; some are not. Some responses to problems will have an immediate measurable effect; some responses will take time to measure fairly.

A word of caution is in order about police performance indicators. As is especially the case in the United Kingdom, externally set police performance indicators or targets can distort problem-solving initiatives because in most cases, the crime reduction targets are set somewhat arbitrarily and not in the context of localized problems. Any value obtained from setting broad crime reduction targets tends not to be very helpful in promoting the practice of POP. The process for identifying policing priorities and setting targets should be more flexible and more deliberate. Whether problem-solving initiatives should be driven top down or bottom up is less important than that the priorities and objectives be reasonable, and that determination calls for input from the top, middle, and bottom, as well as from outside the agency.

### Recognize the value of collaborative problem solving

Perhaps more so than other modes of police work, effective problem solving often entails collaboration and cooperation with other agency employees or with people outside the agency. Performance-appraisal systems should specifically assess whether individual employees are able to collaborate and cooperate effectively with others to achieve their objectives.

## Distinguish problem solving from other policing modes

Problem solving need not be the only policing mode emphasized in performance appraisals.

Competent emergency responses, criminal investigations, service delivery, and short-term crime suppression all constitute important police work as well. Take care, however, to assess and recognize each on its own terms. Avoid adopting a loose definition of problem solving such that it applies to any police work that yields a measurable improvement to public safety. For example, deploying a saturation patrol to stem a short-term crime increase in a target area or apprehending a serial offender might well constitute good policing, but it does not necessarily constitute problem solving. It is important to distinguish proactive policing methods from problem solving, which intends to deliver more sustainable solutions. Not doing so may result in a culture where officers concentrate solely on short-term fixes rather than long-term solutions.

### **A PERFORMANCE-MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN ACTION**

IN THE LANCASHIRE CONSTABULARY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, the police chief devolved the operational performance management process to the assistant chief. Although the assistant chief could intervene on a day-to-day basis, this was generally delegated to the territorial commander, who had previously shown the systems were in place to identify and deal with daily problems. The main performance management intervention took place once every 3 months when the assistant chief visited the command team of a territorial area. The territorial commander would then present information concerning a manageable number of priorities. If the commander was failing to achieve a target on one of these priorities, the assistant chief could intervene and ask questions, which generally followed the SARA format and included whether the command team was aware of the extent of the problem; where, when, and how it was happening; why it was happening; were the proposed responses logical in terms of dealing with the problem; and when did the area feel they would have dealt with the issue? As such, the response could vary from a short-term response such as the arrest of a prolific offender to a medium-term response such as the target hardening of a car park. The process was documented, and, over the year, the assistant chief was able to establish the level of professional understanding the command team had in its particular area and the effectiveness of its analytical ability and interventions. This process involved all the command team's senior managers, which provided useful coaching for junior team members. Similarly, because all the territorial areas were covered systematically, the assistant chief was able to establish trends over the entire police department.

## EXAMPLE OF A PROBLEM-SOLVING PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

### PATROL OFFICER PROBLEM SOLVING

- ★ Does the officer initiate problem-solving activities in his/her neighborhood or beat?
- ★ Does the officer successfully apply problem-solving techniques that provide long-term solutions to the identified problems?
- ★ Is the officer familiar with chronic problems in his/her assigned beat?
- ★ Does the officer routinely review available sources of information to identify chronic problems (e.g., records systems, neighborhood/business/community associations, fellow officers/managers, other agencies, news articles and stories)?
- ★ Does the officer analyze problems sufficiently to improve his/her understanding of them?
- ★ Does the officer compile sufficient documentation related to problems to allow others to understand the problems and the responses to them?
- ★ Does the officer consider a wide range of alternatives for responding to problems before taking action?
- ★ Does the officer keep his/her supervisor apprised of problems and the responses to them?
- ★ Does the officer make use of resources outside the police department in addressing problems?

### *Performance-accountability Systems*

Any accountability system should be transparent and fair. Individual employees should be clear about their responsibilities and have the means to deliver success.

Performance accountability relates closely to performance appraisal. Performance accountability for problem solving entails two elements: 1) having employees explain what they did to address problems and why, and 2) meting out positive or negative consequences for problem-solving performance.

### Explaining problem solving

Expect your employees to regularly explain their problem-solving activity to others. Establish a system in which they can do this regularly. There are many forums for describing and discussing problem-solving activity: internal staff meetings (at various levels), inter-agency staff meetings, community meetings, government committee and council meetings, special problem-solving sessions, Compstat-style sessions, training sessions, promotion and special-assignment assessment panels, and professional conferences. Some forums will be explicitly tied to performance appraisal; others will be primarily for sharing information, educating, or brainstorming.

### Consequences for problem-solving performance

There are also many types of consequences, both positive and negative, that can be linked to problem-solving performance, including the following:

- Retention (e.g., concluding a training or probationary period)
- Promotion to higher rank
- Coveted special assignments
- Formal public recognition (e.g., awards, media coverage, public meetings)
- Informal peer recognition
- Attendance at professional conferences

### ***Read More:***

Braga, Anthony A. 2008. *Problem-Oriented Policing and Crime Prevention*. 2nd ed., 163–69. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press.

Brodeur, Jean-Paul. 1998. "The Assessment of Police Performance: Conclusions." In *How to Recognize Good Policing: Problems and Issues*, ed. J.P. Brodeur. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Goldstein, Herman. 1990. *Problem-Oriented Policing*, 163–65. New York: McGraw Hill.





# Put POP Into Action

## 16. Affix responsibility for addressing problems

There will always be some uncertainty and disagreement over whose responsibility it is to address particular community problems. Is it the responsibility of the government or the private sector? If it is the government's responsibility, does it fall to the police or another government agency? If it is the police's, which unit of the police agency bears responsibility? Within a unit, which individuals are responsible?

One of POP's core principles is that the police share responsibility for addressing community problems that fall within the police agency's mandate as it is defined locally. Assign responsibility within the agency for addressing these legitimate problems as clearly as you can.

First, define what it means to be responsible for addressing problems and ensure your employees clearly understand the general responsibilities, which might include any or all of the following:

- Identifying the problem
- Analyzing the problem
- Mobilizing resources to address the problem
- Taking action to redress and/or prevent the problem
- Monitoring progress toward resolving the problem

You will determine specific responsibilities on a case-by-case basis.

Assigning responsibility for addressing problems requires more careful management attention because problem solving remains a relatively new mode of policing. It is far clearer who bears what responsibilities for handling calls-for-service and for investigating crimes than who bears what responsibilities for addressing problems.

Although calls-for-service and criminal cases do get lost in the system when individuals fail to handle and close out these matters, it is relatively rare. This is because individual employees have, for the most part, internalized their responsibilities; supervisors monitor their work; others outside the agency (e.g., complainants, crime victims, prosecutors) hold them accountable; and record-keeping systems (e.g., computer-aided dispatch and records management systems) help track whether those responsibilities were met.

Develop a problem-solving project tracking system that is separate from, but complementary to, the computer-aided dispatch and records management systems. At a minimum, a project-tracking system should record the following information:

- The nature of the problem (as originally defined and as redefined)
- The individuals and units responsible for the project's management
- A unique project identifier (e.g., a sequential number)
- The dates the project was opened and closed
- The summary status of the project (e.g., active, inactive, closed, or completed)

In addition to the automated record-keeping system, create a system for maintaining the complete project file. Ideally, this file will also store documents in electronic format.

POP project record-keeping systems serve multiple purposes, but for the purposes of this manual, they serve to assign responsibility for addressing the problem and facilitate monitoring whether the responsibility is met.

Ensure that problem-solving projects, once initiated, are brought to some satisfactory resolution. It is all too easy for problem-solving projects to fade into oblivion from lack of attention and follow-up. This commonly occurs when individuals responsible for the projects leave their assignments (due to promotion, transfer, retirement, etc.) or other matters compete for the responsible parties' time and attention.

Review the automated problem-solving project-tracking system to identify projects that are not yet closed. Inquire about the status of significant problem-solving initiatives. Establish regular meetings with your immediate subordinates at which you review and discuss the status of problem-solving projects, and expect your subordinates to do likewise down the chain of command. Use these opportunities to prod along projects that are languishing, redirect those that seem off track or to celebrate the successes of those that are completed.

### **Read More:**

Boba, Rachel, and Roberto Santos. 2011. *A Police Organizational Model for Crime Reduction: Institutionalizing Problem Solving, Analysis, and Accountability*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Scott, Michael S., and Herman Goldstein. 2005. *Shifting and Sharing Responsibility for Public Safety Problems*. Problem-Oriented Guides for Police; Response Guide Series, No. 3. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Too often, police problem solving is considered an optional job function. Individuals might receive recognition for good problem-solving work, but those who opt not to take on a problem-solving project are not held accountable. Although it is logical for police managers to encourage but not require problem solving when it's first being introduced to the agency, unless it is eventually deemed an essential and obligatory part of the policing job, it will not be taken seriously. Ultimately, a police officer should not be permitted to opt out of addressing problems just as he/she is not permitted to opt out of handling calls-for-service or investigating criminal cases. It is management's responsibility to set the terms of employment—that is, to say what the job is—even if employees are granted latitude to determine how best to get that job done. If you want police problem solving to happen, expect it and assign responsibility for it.

## 17. Provide administrative support for problem solvers

It is not enough to exhort line personnel to solve problems—you must also ensure they have the requisite administrative support. Problem-solving operations need analytical, clerical, fiscal, and legal support.

### *Analytical Support*

As discussed previously, developing your agency's problem analysis capacity is critical. Analysis support is also critical. Although you can reasonably expect line personnel to conduct some of their own rudimentary problem analysis, more often they will require support from other personnel who have the time, skills, and equipment to conduct thorough problem analyses. Ensure problem solvers know how to request analytical support and receive appropriate priority for their requests.

### *Clerical Support*

Problem solving generates some special clerical support needs, such as preparing, storing, and managing reports about problem-solving activities; scheduling meetings; and recording and distributing meeting minutes.

### *Fiscal Support*

One of the challenges presented by problem solving is funding initiatives and activities that could not have been anticipated in the agency's regular budgeting cycle. Whereas much of conventional policing's costs can be anticipated ahead of time (with some funds set aside for unanticipated overtime pay), problem solving is more fluid. Financial needs arise as the problem-solving project evolves. Special funds may be needed to conduct special analysis tasks (e.g., administer surveys, code data) or to purchase supplies and services for a new response to a problem (e.g., a crime prevention publication or equipment).

You need to consider how problem solving affects your agency's fiscal systems with respect to both anticipated and unanticipated costs.

Try to anticipate in your regular budgeting process costs to support problem-solving activity, such as new computer hardware and software for problem analysis, special problem-solving training for officers and analysts, travel expenses for staff to attend POP meetings and conferences, patrol and detective staffing that accounts for the time needed to engage in problem solving, and so forth.

Ensure your administrative staff knows where to seek out special funding for costs that cannot be anticipated in the regular budgeting cycle. Possible sources include government or foundation grants, community development funds, special police revenue funds such as those from asset forfeitures, corporate and community donations (e.g., through special police foundations), special tax funds (e.g., from business improvement or other special tax districts), and police volunteer programs (for staffing assistance). Avoid stifling creative problem solving because no funds are available to support the activities that emanate from the process.

### *Legal Support*

Some problem solving implicates novel legal issues that require specialized legal analysis, authority, or skills that only government lawyers (e.g., city or county attorneys, state or federal prosecutors, police in-house counsel) can provide. This might entail determining what the current law requires or allows, initiating a novel legal action, or drafting new legislation that improves the response to the problem.

## **COMMUNITY PROSECUTION**

COMMUNITY PROSECUTION IS A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO THE BUSINESS OF PROSECUTION. BASED ON FIVE PRINCIPLES, COMMUNITY PROSECUTION:

1. Gives community members a greater voice in solving problems that plague their neighborhoods
2. Provides prosecutors a greater opportunity to be proactive in fighting crime
3. Changes the focus of prosecution from simply obtaining convictions on assigned cases to solving problems in neighborhoods so crime problems will not recur
4. Assists law enforcement agencies in their community policing efforts
5. Assists law enforcement and community residents in their fight against crime by involving local citizens' groups that can provide police with information regarding crime evidence

Problem-oriented community prosecution is highly effective because it broadens the mission of prosecution from simply prosecuting and processing cases to eliminating problems and reducing and preventing crime. This redefined approach to crime, driven by a new commitment to pursue the citizens' priorities, considers the relationship between the community's fear of crime and crime itself. This broadened focus leads prosecutors to emphasize those cases and offenders that residents identify as high priority, or having a significant impact on the quality of life in their neighborhoods.

Source: Marion County (Indiana) Prosecutor's Office

Ensure the government lawyers available to serve your agency are prepared to assist in problem solving. This requires of the lawyers, at a minimum, the following:

- Understanding what problem solving is, why police are doing it, and why police are seeking legal assistance
- Having an open and creative attitude toward using the law to help solve complex public-safety problems
- Being willing to make time to support police in problem-solving activity

Recognize that the type of problem solving implicated by POP does not come naturally to many government lawyers. They probably did not learn it in law school, they have not been routinely expected to engage in it, and they might be more inclined to reduce the jurisdiction's liability exposure than to apply the law in creative or aggressive ways to address problems. Government lawyers who have a problem-solving orientation have often proved to be quite helpful to police. Community prosecution is an approach to government lawyering that supports POP.

### **Read More:**

Goldstock, Ronald. 1992. "The Prosecutor as Problem-Solver: Leading and Coordinating Anticrime Efforts." *Criminal Justice* 7 (3): 3–9, 48–49.

Nugent, M. Elaine, Patricia Fanflik, and Delene Bromirski. 2004. *The Changing Nature of Prosecution: Community Prosecution vs. Traditional Prosecution Approaches*. Alexandria, Virginia: American Prosecutors Research Institute.

White, Matthew B. 2008. *Enhancing the Problem-Solving Capacity of Crime Analysis Units*. Problem Oriented Guides for Police; Problem-Solving Tools Series, No. 9. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

## **18. Manage officers' time to facilitate problem-solving**

Much police work, especially that performed by patrol officers, is done under rather tight time constraints. Problem solving is fundamentally different in this respect. Problem-solving projects proceed at a pace dictated by the project's circumstances and challenges. They might take days, weeks, months, or even years to conclude. Problem solving usually requires the painstaking accumulation and analysis of information, reflection on and deliberation of alternative responses, negotiation of partnerships, and planning and implementation of new responses that must be given time to take effect.

Finding blocks of time to dedicate to problem solving is a real challenge for general patrol officers. Consider ways to create these blocks of time and help officers make the best use of this time.

First, determine how much uncommitted time general patrol officers could devote to problem solving. Don't rely exclusively on your employees' perceptions when making this determination; their estimates are commonly distorted by attributing exceptionally busy work periods to all work periods. You may find there is more time available than you thought.

Next, decide how much uncommitted time you want patrol officers to have for concentrated problem-solving activity. There is no widely accepted standard, but a reasonable rule of thumb is that general patrol officers should have from one-third to one-half of their total time uncommitted (from handling calls, writing reports, appearing in court, personal relief, etc.), some of which they can dedicate to concentrated problem solving. Then factor this desired percentage into the patrol staffing formula.

If the desired amount of uncommitted time is unavailable under existing staffing levels, you can propose a staffing increase. Also consider the following alternate means of increasing uncommitted time for problem solving:

### *Analyze the Patrol Workload*

At least annually, analyze the patrol workload to understand what activity is consuming your patrol officers' time. Identify high-volume call types such as responding to intrusion alarms or emergency-line hang-ups, minor thefts, minor damage vehicle crashes, and parking complaints, and consider whether your practices for handling these call types are reasonably efficient and productive. If they aren't, work on changing them. You may find you can recapture large amounts of patrol time through more efficient responses to common call types.

### *Assess the Method and Timing of Police Responses to Citizen Requests for Service*

Take a careful look at both how and how quickly your agency responds to citizens' requests for police service. You might conclude that, in some instances, both the method and the timing of the response are inefficient (and also ineffective). Instead of sending patrol officers right away to respond in person to non-emergency calls, consider that you can equally serve these residents by having them contact a knowledgeable person via phone or email; report the matter via online, mail-in, or walk-in systems; or by referring them directly to a more appropriate agency. You might even better serve these residents by delaying your response to a time more convenient for them and the responding officer. Is it more important for residents to confer with the permanent beat officer or with any police officer quickly? Confering with beat officers might ultimately be more effective if officers can subsequently resolve the underlying conditions giving rise to the residents' complaints.

Commonly referred to as "differential police response," these response alternatives have been tried and tested, and, when properly implemented, can yield both time savings for police and high-quality service for citizens.

### *Reassess the Need for Specialized Units*

Often created in response to some exigency, specialized police units continue to exist long after the exigency has passed. At least once every few years, take stock of why specialized units were created, and, if the justifications no longer exist, consider abolishing the units and reassigning personnel to generalized patrol or investigative services. This will lighten the workload, thereby creating more uncommitted time that can be used for problem solving.

### *Recapture Time through Effective Problem Solving*

Problem solving represents an investment of time and resources. That investment should yield a more effective response to the underlying problem, but occasionally it will also substantially reduce the time and resources police need to respond to the incidents arising from the problem. Shuttering a bar, an apartment complex, or a business that is the source of many calls for police service can recapture patrol time. Dealing with the underlying problems of a chronic complainant can eliminate many future calls. Redesigning a roadway could reduce traffic crashes or speeding complaints that otherwise consume police time.

### *Streamline Processes*

Examine and try to streamline time-consuming processes that patrol officers commonly rely on. Perhaps custodial arrests can be processed as effectively, and more efficiently, through summonses. Perhaps wait times at hospitals, psychiatric wards, criminal courts, and jails can be reduced. Perhaps paraprofessionals such as private security officers or community service officers can help with some aspect of the processing. Perhaps report forms and systems can be streamlined to eliminate repeat entries of the same information. Perhaps reporting systems can be better automated.

### *Reduce Demands on Officers for Other Discretionary Duties*

Consider how patrol officers are expected to use their uncommitted time and weigh those expectations against the value of concentrated problem solving. If, for example, patrol officers are expected to issue a certain number of summonses, regardless of whether the violations comprise a chronic problem; or officers are expected to randomly patrol their beats, randomly check businesses at night, or make a set number of citizen contacts, you might conclude such routine and random activity is less productive than would be purposeful problem solving. Take care not to replace conventional unproductive tasks with new unproductive tasks, even if those new tasks seem community-minded. Allow officers the latitude to use their discretionary time as befits the community problem on which they are working.

### **Read More:**

Goldstein, Herman. 1990. *Problem-Oriented Policing*, 151–52. New York: McGraw Hill.

McEwen, Thomas, Deborah Spence, Russell Wolff, Julie Wartell, and Barbara Webster. 2003. *Call Management and Community Policing: A Guidebook for Law Enforcement*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

### **Encourage Team Problem Solving**

Encourage your patrol supervisors to promote collaboration among patrol officers on the same shift so that a patrol officer might be temporarily freed from routine call handling to engage in concentrated problem solving while other patrol officers pick up the slack. Alternatively, officers on different shifts might coordinate with each other so a POP project's various tasks are performed when it is most feasible. For example, a day shift officer might meet with a merchant during business hours while a night shift officer might run computer queries when the workload subsides, both to further the same POP project.

## **19. Cultivate and manage effective partnerships**

Effective policing requires police agencies to establish working partnerships with a wide range of organizations. This is a nearly universally accepted principle of modern policing, and much has been written elsewhere in support of it. This principle is especially relevant to POP because, as problem analysis reveals the factors and conditions that cause particular crime and disorder problems, it becomes more critical for police to have effective working relationships with the groups that are best able to control or change those factors and conditions.

Developing and managing effective partnerships requires more effort than one might think. Even when organizations mutually agree to establish a partnership, they come together with different objectives and with their own working systems.

Here we focus on your role as a police executive in cultivating and managing effective partnerships in support of a POP approach. Do the following with respect to promoting effective partnerships:

- Emphasize the general principle that police must work in partnership with others.
- Cultivate at the leadership level an organizational attitude that promotes partnerships with the organizations most essential to effective policing.
- Set expectations for your supervisory and line staff to actively participate in and manage external partnerships.
- Emphasize that the most effective partnerships are tailored to particular problems rather than to general inter-organizational relations.
- Recognize that some partnerships will be easy to develop and maintain and others will be reluctant and challenging.



### *Emphasize the General Need for Partnerships*

Because some police agencies have been, or have been perceived to be, closed and secretive organizations, non-police organizations in many communities are apprehensive about working with the police. This might be driven by a perception that police are solely interested in enforcing the law and arresting offenders, or, conversely, a perception among police officers that external groups are only critical of the police. Some of that perception is driven by the legitimate interests and requirements of police to keep some information confidential. To a large extent, when police agencies and non-police groups fail to develop and maintain effective working relationships it is because they are unaware of one another's interests, capacities, and constraints.

Publicly state your agency's willingness and desire to work with external partners to help overcome institutional hesitancy. Find opportunities for your supervisory and line staff to learn about the interests, capacities, and constraints of key community groups, and encourage them to meet with their counterparts in these groups. Have your staff, including officer recruits, spend extended time within external organizations to learn more about them. Where appropriate share work space with external groups to facilitate collaborative work and to create opportunities for individual working relationships to form.

### *Cultivate Partnerships with the Organizations Most Essential to Effective Policing*

Because of the vast array of public-safety problems, the number and nature of partnerships police agencies might participate in is too many to count. However, some external organizations are routinely important to effective policing, including the following:

- Prosecution and corrections agencies
- Mental health and drug and alcohol treatment service providers
- Emergency medical service providers
- Juvenile delinquency and protection agencies
- Building code enforcement agencies
- Schools
- Corporate and private security

As a police executive, cultivate an effective personal working relationship with your counterpart executives in these community groups.

### *Promote External Partnerships Among Supervisory and Line Staff*

It is equally important to foster mutual support among community groups so that they work cooperatively with your supervisors and line staff where possible. As a police executive, particularly of a large agency, you do not have the time or the information necessary to cultivate and manage every important partnership in your community. Although you will want to become personally involved in some problem-oriented partnerships, such as those related to large, jurisdiction-wide problems, the responsibility to communicate and collaborate in order to effectively address problems most often falls to supervisory and line staff.

### *Emphasize Problem-Oriented Partnerships*

Some partnerships are intended to promote good inter-organizational relations; others are intended to address specific problems. Both are important, but recognize the difference. Problem-oriented partnerships have the following features:

- The partners are determined by the nature of the problem and the responsibility and capacity of partnering groups to address it.
- The partnership is action-oriented toward identifying, analyzing, responding to, or monitoring problems.
- The partnership is intended to last only as long as it is needed to effectively address the problem.

#### **Read More:**

Braga, Anthony A. 2008. *Problem-Oriented Policing and Crime Prevention*. 2nd ed., 174–87. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press.

Chamard, Sharon. 2006. *Partnering With Businesses to Address Public Safety Problems*. Problem-Oriented Guides for Police; Problem-Solving Tools Series, No. 5. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Newburn, Tim, and Trevor Jones. 2002. *Consultation by Crime and Disorder Partnerships*. Police Research Series, Paper 148. London: Home Office Policing and Reducing Crime Unit.

Rinehart, Tammy A., Anna T. Laszlo, and Gwen O. Briscoe. 2001. *Collaboration Toolkit: How to Build, Fix, and Sustain Productive Partnerships*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Wells, William. 2009. "Community Partnerships." In *Implementing Community Policing: Lessons from 12 Agencies*, eds. E. Maguire and W. Wells. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

### *Develop and Manage both "Willing and Natural" and "Reluctant and Challenging" Partnerships*

Most of us are inclined to think first of partnerships that are natural, relatively easy to manage, and wholly cooperative because all the partners' major interests align. But POP almost always entails reconciling conflicting interests among the groups with a stake in the problem at hand. These conflicts might be between two non-police groups or between the police and the non-police groups. Some groups might not want to partner with the police in any form and must be persuaded to do so. There is a role for you as a police executive in developing and managing the willing and natural partnerships as well as the reluctant and challenging ones. For the sake of POP's effectiveness, you cannot afford to shy away from the reluctant and challenging partnerships that are essential to addressing difficult and persistent public-safety problems. In some instances, you should become personally involved to establish these types of partnerships and keep them on track and accountable.

## 20. Document POP projects

If your agency conducts a successful problem-solving initiative, there will be obvious benefits to the community and the agency even if no written record is made of the work. However, recall that one of POP's key elements is a commitment to "reporting the results in ways that will benefit other police agencies and that will ultimately contribute to building a body of knowledge that supports the further professionalization of the police." Your agency's experiences can directly benefit police agencies all over the world that are addressing similar problems.

Documenting POP projects also provides the following in-house benefits:

- It enables your agency to learn from present efforts when addressing similar problems in the future.
- It enables other employees to pick up the project where the original project managers leave off (e.g., due to promotion, transfer, retirement).
- It creates a record of activity that is useful to review if the project fails to achieve its objectives.
- It establishes a contemporaneous record of activities and findings that may be useful for persuading key decision-makers to agree with your agency's recommended responses to the problem.
- It creates a compelling story you can use to educate other officers, including recruit officers, about problem solving.
- It informs and educates key people in your community (i.e., government officials, the mass media, civic leaders) about how your agency works to address public-safety problems.
- It documents the activities of involved employees for performance review and recognition purposes (e.g., awards and promotions).

Problem-solving project documentation should include two components: 1) the detailed record of activities and analysis findings, and 2) a coherent narrative of the completed project. Each serves different purposes. The detailed record constitutes the working file, allowing problem solvers to keep track of what work has been done and what remains to be done. The coherent narrative serves to educate others about the problem and how it was addressed.

The project narrative can follow a variety of forms. One form to consider is the style required for submitting a project to the Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing. It invites a relatively concise narrative in logical sequence and plain language. The Center for Problem-Oriented Policing website ([www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org))—where your narrative will be posted—is an ideal forum for publicly sharing exemplary POP projects.

## A TEMPLATE FOR A POP PROJECT REPORT

### A. SCANNING

- ★ What was the nature of the problem?
- ★ How was the problem identified?
- ★ Who identified the problem (e.g., community, police managers, officers, politicians, press)?
- ★ Far more problems are identified than can be explored adequately. How and why was this problem selected from among other problems?
- ★ What was the initial level of diagnosis/unit of analysis (e.g., crime type, neighborhood, specific premise, specific offender group)?

### B. ANALYSIS

- ★ What methods, data, and information sources were used to analyze the problem (e.g., surveys, interviews, observation, crime analysis)?
- ★ What is the history of the problem? How often and for how long was it a problem?
- ★ Who was involved in the problem (e.g., offenders, victims, others) and what were their respective motivations, gains, and losses?
- ★ What harms resulted from the problem?
- ★ How was the problem being addressed before the problem-solving project? What were the results of those responses?
- ★ What did the analysis reveal about the causes and underlying conditions that precipitated the problem?
- ★ What did the analysis reveal about the nature and extent of the problem?
- ★ What situational information was needed to better understand the problem (e.g., time of occurrence, location, other particulars re: the environment)?
- ★ Was there an open discussion with the community about the problem?

Although they do it routinely, it is widely understood that most police officers do not enjoy writing reports. Adjust the documentation requirements to match the scope and importance of the problem-solving initiative: keep it relatively short and simple for small projects and more expansive for large ones. Also consider delegating some of the narrative report writing to specialists. If your agency is large and has civilian specialists such as grant writers, public information officers, analysts, researchers, and planners, consider tasking them with interviewing problem solvers and writing their problem-solving narratives.

Also consider documenting problem-solving initiatives in other media, such as through narrated video or slide presentations. Not only can these media serve your record-keeping purposes, but they can be highly effective means of communicating complex projects to lay audiences.

## A TEMPLATE FOR A POP PROJECT REPORT *(con't)*

### C. RESPONSE

- ★ What range of possible response alternatives were considered to deal with the problem?
- ★ What responses did you use to address the problem?
- ★ How did you develop a response as a result of your analysis?
- ★ What evaluation criteria were most important to the department before implementation of the response alternative(s) (e.g., legality, community values, potential effectiveness, cost, practicality)?
- ★ What did you intend to accomplish with your response plan (i.e., project goal and corresponding measurable objectives)?
- ★ What resources were available to help solve the problem?
- ★ What was done before you implemented your response plan?
- ★ What difficulties were encountered during response implementation?
- ★ Who was involved in the response to your problem?

### D. ASSESSMENT

- ★ What were the results? What degree of impact did the response plan have on this problem?
- ★ What were your methods of evaluation and for how long was the effectiveness of the problem-solving effort evaluated?
- ★ Who was involved in the evaluation?
- ★ Were there problems in implementing the response plan?
- ★ If there was no improvement in the problem, were other systemic efforts considered to handle the problem?
- ★ What response goals were accomplished?
- ★ How did you measure your results?
- ★ What data supported your conclusions?
- ★ How could you have made the response more effective?
- ★ Was there a concern about displacement (i.e., pushing the problem somewhere else)?
- ★ Will your response require continued monitoring or a continuing effort to maintain your results?

## 21. Recognize and celebrate successful problem solving

One of the virtues of problem solving is that it creates a structure and method for police to achieve more lasting success: resolving chronic problems and creating tangible and lasting safety and security for community residents.

It is important to celebrate success as this signals to the entire department that this style of policing is valued. As important, praising early successes, even if relatively small or modest, is crucial in validating POP both inside and outside the agency. You can celebrate informally by acknowledging employees in the hall, sending laudatory emails, commending officers in roll call, or making congratulatory phone calls, and you can celebrate formally with official departmental commendations or at community banquets and promotions ceremonies. Some police departments hold in-house problem-solving conferences and award programs.

The standards by which you judge quality problem solving should not be so lax as to invite skepticism within the agency; however, well-executed problem-solving efforts that do not achieve the desired outcomes might merit recognition nonetheless if useful lessons were learned in the process.

Consider the following possibilities for recognizing and celebrating problem-solving successes:

### *Incorporate Exemplary Problem Solving into the Agency's Award Program*

Most police agency award programs recognize heroic police work, exemplary criminal investigations, and long professional service. Similarly, recognizing exemplary problem solving strongly signals to the agency that such work is also valued.

### *Send Problem Solvers to Professional Conferences and Meetings*

Sending problem solvers to professional police conferences, such as the annual International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference and state and local equivalents, allows them to talk about and be recognized for their problem-solving efforts with fellow professionals who understand and appreciate POP. At the local level, have problem solvers present their work at civic organization meetings and to local-government committees.

### *Encourage Problem Solvers to Submit Their Work for Professional Award Programs*

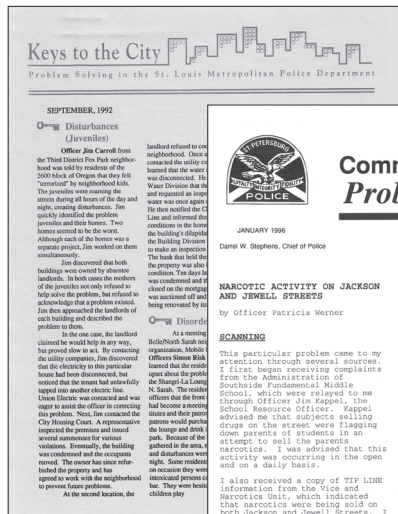
The Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing (see [www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org)) and other national, state, and local equivalents emphasize problem-oriented police work. You might even consider starting an in-house or regional POP conference and awards program.

## Have Problem Solvers Present Their Problem-Solving Work in Training Courses

Agency pre-service or in-service training sessions are good opportunities to allow problem solvers to talk about how they achieved their successes. The individual problem solvers benefit from the recognition, and the agency benefits from sharing their knowledge and experience.

## Publicize Exemplary Problem-Solving Work in Agency Newsletters and Reports

Include accounts of effective problem solving and the individuals responsible for the work in all of your agency's internal and external communications, such as annual reports, newsletters, and website postings.

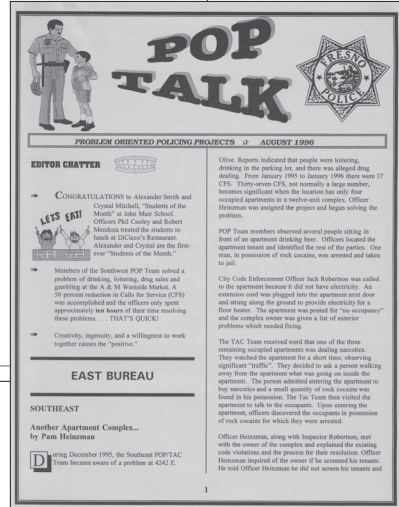


**NARCOTIC ACTIVITY ON JACKSON AND JEWELL STREETS**  
by Officer Patricia Werner

**SCANNING**  
This particular problem came to my attention through several sources. I first began receiving complaints from the Administration of Southside Fundamental Middle School, which were relayed to me through Officer Jim Fappel, the School Resource Officer. Fappel advised me that students in an attempt to sell the parents narcotics, it was advised that this activity was occurring in the open and on a daily basis.

I also received a copy of TIP LINE information from the Vice and Narcotics Unit, which indicated that narcotics were being sold on both Jackson and Jewell Streets. I spoke with Vice and Narcotics detectives who also indicated that there was narcotic activity occurring on both streets.

**ANALYSIS**  
I next began examining the problem by pulling the calls for service in



## Mention Exemplary Problem-Solving Work in Your Own Meetings

Take the opportunity to mention exemplary problem solving during regularly agency staff meetings. This demonstrates powerfully that problem solving is important to you and that you notice who is doing it well. Encourage your commanders and supervisors to do likewise in their regular meetings.

### *Encourage Local Journalists to Cover Stories about Problem-Solving Projects*

Much journalistic coverage of the police focuses on sensational crime incidents or troubles in the police agency. The daily news cycle can neglect to report on chronic public-safety problems and police efforts to address them. Most journalists are eager to learn of the more substantial work being done in the police agency and in the community, but you may need to feed these stories to them and encourage them to cover them in even greater depth.

### *Support Grassroots Community Celebrations of Effective Problem-Solving Initiatives*

Effective problem solving often entails your agency working closely with community groups or external agencies. When these groups wish to recognize and celebrate public-safety achievements, encourage your staff to support and participate in those events.

#### ***Read More:***

Chermak, Steven, and Alexander Weiss. 2003. *Marketing Community Policing in the News: A Missed Opportunity?* Research for Practice. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice National Institute of Justice.

### *Incorporate Effective Problem Solving in the Eligibility Criteria for Promotions and Special Assignments*

There are few more powerful ways to signal the kind of work that is valued in an agency than by the criteria used to advance employees' careers, whether through promotion, special assignment, or special training opportunities.



# Make POP Part of Your Legacy

## 22. Monitor organizational change

It bears repeating that organizational change plans are only as useful as they are made to be; they do not implement themselves. It follows then that you need to monitor and periodically assess the progress or lack thereof in moving the police agency toward POP.

Among the relevant indicators that POP is taking root in your agency's culture and organizational systems are the following:

- Quantity and variety of problems identified
- Variation in the scope of problems identified and addressed (ranging from simple, localized, beat-level problems, to problems of intermediate size and intricacy, to complex, jurisdiction-wide problems)
- Sophistication of the problem analysis
- Variety and type of external partners with whom police work to address problems
- Variety and number of response types put into action to address problems
- Effectiveness of problem-solving efforts in achieving project-specific objectives
- Perceived fairness of police responses to problems
- Familiarity of agency personnel with problem-solving terminology and thought processes
- Familiarity of agency personnel with professional resources that can inform their own problem solving
- Willingness of other government and non-government agencies to collaborate with police on public-safety problems

Those tasked with implementing various aspects of the transformation require timely, relevant, and comprehensible feedback about their efforts so they can adapt as necessary. Adjusting the plan can prove more difficult than you might expect. Those who developed and approved the original plan, yourself included, can become too wedded to a singular vision or path to realizing it. It requires reliable data, keen judgment, and a healthy measure of humility to know when to stick to the original plan and when to alter course.

If feasible, engage an outside researcher in assessing the POP implementation process so as to provide you with a more objective perspective.

See Appendix B for a sample problem-solving management assessment tool.

### ***Read More:***

Ikerd, Trent, and Samuel Walker. 2010. *Making Police Reforms Endure: The Keys for Success*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

## 23. Cultivate constituencies for POP

Police provide a range of services in a variety of ways to meet the expectations and demands of their constituents. Police constituents include private citizens and citizen groups; businesses; prosecutors, criminal courts, and corrections agencies; elected and appointed government officials and their agencies; academic and research organizations; and the mass media. These and other constituents expect police to provide certain services in certain ways, and, accordingly, they are willing to provide the support and resources police need to provide these services. In essence, meeting those expectations and demands keeps the police in business.

Problem solving represents a new type of police service. Just as police have historically cultivated key constituencies to support their provision of conventional services, cultivate constituencies that will expect and support problem solving. It is not enough for you and your officers to think problem solving is a valuable police service; your constituents must value it as well.

### *Private Citizens and Citizen Groups*

Private citizens and the groups they belong to are the most important police constituency because, ultimately, they shape the demand for all police services. Experience has demonstrated reasonably well that citizens appreciate and value police problem solving. They also value having input into policing priorities and methods. They value the personal contact with police officers and how it enables police to understand the particulars of local problems. And, of course, they value the benefits of effective problem solving: peace and quiet, reduced crime, reduced fear and anxiety, etc. The greatest challenge is educating citizens about how problem solving differs from conventional policing and what resources and support are required to sustain it. Take every opportunity to inform the wider public about how your agency effectively applied the approach to specific community problems. You might also provide community leaders and groups with some guidance and instruction on the principles and methods of problem solving that they might employ on their own to address community problems that do not require police involvement.

### *Businesses*

Business owners and business associations often have substantial influence over local government policy because they are so vital to the community's economy. Businesses are the victims of crime and disorder problems and occasionally contributors to them. Accordingly, they will perceive police problem solving as both helpful and harmful to their commercial interests. As is often the case, relatively few businesses are chronic victims or contributors to crime and disorder. Police must persuade the wider business community that problem solving is a fair and effective method for reducing the harms caused to commerce in general by the actions (or inactions) of a few businesses. Often, problem solving will yield more cost-effective methods for preventing crime and disorder than conventional policing, and business owners are sensitive to and well-versed in the principles and language of cost control and efficiency. Police should likewise understand business interests, principles, and terminology and apply them in problem solving.

### *Prosecutors, Criminal Courts, and Corrections Agencies*

Although prosecutors and criminal court judges might view their function as being limited to processing criminal charges referred by the police, they can play a broader and more effective role in promoting public safety by themselves applying problem-solving principles and methods. A good number of prosecutors' offices have broadened their function through community prosecution, which can and should entail problem solving. Prosecutors at all government levels—municipal, county, state, and federal—have authority and expertise they can use in novel ways to improve the overall response to policing problems. Even if prosecutors do not initiate and lead problem-solving projects, they can and have worked effectively with police in a problem-oriented fashion. Encourage your jurisdiction's prosecutors to do likewise.

Police-community corrections collaborations have become increasingly common as both seek improved ways to monitor offenders released from incarceration and help them successfully rejoin the community. Here, too, these collaborations can and should go beyond merely monitoring individual offenders and extend to developing improved strategic responses to entire classes of offenders and crime problems. Probation and parole officers have tremendous authority and expertise that can be integral to more effective supervision of offenders.

Over time, prosecutors' offices, criminal court judges, and corrections officials can come to expect from the police not just prosecutable cases, but genuine problem-solving collaborations. Seek out opportunities to involve prosecutors, judges, and corrections officials in POP projects, or at least share with them accounts of your officers' problem-solving projects to stimulate their thinking about the implications of problem solving for their own work.

### *Elected and Appointed Government Officials and the Agencies They Oversee*

Ultimately, all police agencies are accountable to some elected and appointed government officials whose support is essential for their work. Therefore, it is vital that you inform your government officials about the POP approach and its implications on the operation and administration of other government agencies. Effective problem solving frequently requires collaborations between police and other government agencies. Government departments that provide child protection services, street maintenance and traffic engineering, park maintenance and recreation services, building code compliance, and emergency medical services (among others), all have functions and responsibilities that potentially implicate public safety and policing. That does not mean they recognize the role they might play in preventing crime and disorder. These agencies might well cling to the conventional notion that crime and disorder prevention is a police responsibility alone, and that police best carry it out by being physically present and arresting offenders.

Create systems through which your staff can regularly communicate with other government departments' staff to identify community problems that might warrant interagency collaboration to address. Many non-police government officers welcome the opportunity to work with the police, particularly if in doing so, it helps them achieve their objectives more efficiently. This sort of interagency collaboration is greatly facilitated and commonplace in the United Kingdom where it is mandated by law through the Crime and Disorder Act, but it is equally important and possible even where not legally mandated.

### *Academic and Research Organizations*

Academic and research institutions are important police constituents because they often comment on how policing is done, either favorably or unfavorably. To advance POP locally, it helps to have the informed support of policing and crime scholars in your community. Scholars and researchers can

vouch for the legitimacy of the approach in their public comments, and those who possess real problem-oriented research skills can assist your staff in analyzing local problems, developing new responses and evaluating their impact. In addition, through their teaching, they help to develop a better-informed citizenry, and, on occasion, help prepare some of their students for future policing or crime analysis careers. In exchange, the police agency can be a fertile ground for scholars and students who want to study the kinds of complex social problems police routinely address.

### *Mass Media*

The mass media can play an important role in advancing POP in at least three ways. First, they can help police identify emerging or chronic public-safety problems that merit closer government and community attention. Journalists' research in describing a problem and its potential causes can be tremendously helpful to police for the purposes of analysis and generating public and political support for improved responses to the problem. Second, mass media can help police tell their POP stories to the public. Journalists can bring a good POP project story to life, telling it in a manner that readers will find engaging and informative. Third, public reporting of chronic crime and disorder problems can be part of an effective response strategy. Publicly exposing a party's refusal to accept responsibility for causing or contributing to a problem might motivate that party to cooperate with police and comply with community standards.

### **Read More:**

Chamard, Sharon. 2006. *Partnering With Businesses to Address Public Safety Problems*. Problem-Oriented Guides for Police; Problem-Solving Tools Series, No. 5. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

La Vigne, Nancy, Amy Solomon, Karen Beckman, and Kelly Dedel. 2006. *Prisoner Reentry and Community Policing: Strategies for Enhancing Public Safety*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute and U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Plant, Joel B., and Michael S. Scott. 2009. *Effective Policing and Crime Prevention: A Problem-Oriented Guide for Mayors, City Managers, and County Executives*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Scott, Michael S. 2003. "Getting the Police to Take Problem-Oriented Policing Seriously." *Problem-Oriented Policing: From Innovation to Mainstream*, ed. J. Knutsson, Crime Prevention Studies, vol. 15. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press.

Perhaps of greatest consequence is that once the mass media understands how police can effectively address community problems through problem-solving methods, they might come to expect it routinely, and, in turn, offer editorial support of the measures necessary to enable police to practice POP.

## 24. Instill organizational values and habits conducive to POP

Strive to inculcate in the agency certain critical values and habits that promote fair and effective policing. The following organizational values and habits are critical to sustaining POP for the long term:

### *The Value and Habit of Focusing on Results*

Nothing leads a police organization astray so much as losing sight of true policing objectives. If you can get your agency's employees into the habit of asking, "What are we trying to achieve, and is what we are doing the best way to achieve it?" you will have gone a long way toward institutionalizing POP.

Being clear about true policing objectives helps prevent an organizational obsession with measuring activity instead of results. It reminds people, for example, that the true objective is fewer traffic crashes and less traffic congestion, not the number of traffic citations issued; that the true objective is less actual crime and disorder, not the number of arrests made; or that the true objective is reduced citizen fear, not the number of officers on the streets.

The means by which police achieve their objectives are, of course, important and should be measured, but they should never be confused for—or become more important than—the objectives.

### *The Value and Habit of Analyzing Data, Research, and Experience to Inform Decision-Making*

If you can get your employees to place the same value on data analysis to inform decision-making that they customarily place on gathering hard evidence to inform arrest decisions, you will have greatly advanced the practice of POP. As much as police officers have become accustomed to seeking out evidence to build prosecutable cases, it is remarkable how often police programs are adopted and operational strategies employed with scant regard for hard data to support them. But, just as disregarding evidence or the lack of it can lead to bad results such as not solving a case or arresting the wrong offender, adopting an ineffective program or employing an ineffective strategy can also lead to bad results such as not solving a public-safety problem or wasting scarce resources that could have been used to better effect. Clever innovations, politically popular programs and feel-good policing strategies are a poor substitute for police action premised on well-analyzed and reliable data. Whenever important decisions are being made, someone should be asking, "What does the data tell us?"

In addition, problem solvers should also routinely seek out relevant research and reports on the experiences of others who have confronted similar problems. This search has been greatly facilitated by the accessibility of collections of research and practice on the Internet. For example, the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing's website ([www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org)) contains a rich collection of problem-oriented research and practice.

### *The Value and Habit of Collaborative Action*

When your employees set out to tackle a policing problem, one of the first questions they should ask is, "Who else needs to be involved?" Police agency collaboration with external individuals and organizations is not just good politics, it is usually essential to effective policing. As challenging as collaborative partnerships can be, they can also be hugely rewarding. Your employees need to believe they are worth the effort and know how to overcome the obstacles. Whether they like it or not, police need help to achieve their objectives, have a right to insist upon it and possess some institutional leadership capacity for mobilizing resources under challenging conditions. A police agency should strive to be known for its ability to bring people together, willingly or reluctantly, to address public-safety problems.

### *The Value and Habit of Sharing Responsibility for Public-Safety Problems*

In addition to thinking about who else should be involved in tackling a public-safety problem, your staff should be asking, "Whose problem is this?" Police agencies habitually accept large shares of responsibility for social problems simply by default. When other institutions or organizations fail to address social problems, the consequences of those failures are often left for the police to handle. As long as police continue to act as the agency of last resort, others will escape their responsibilities for the problem. Without shirking their own legal and professional responsibilities, police agencies should develop the habit of questioning whether some social problems are truly best left to the police to address. Herein lies the challenge of creating and managing reluctant partnerships. Police have historically taken pride in their can-do attitude and are properly expected to use some of their unique authority and skills to prevent social problems from getting out of control, but there is a new role police should embrace: brokers of responsibility for public safety. In this role, police are expected to not only tackle public-safety problems but insist that others do as well. Getting your police agency into the habit of saying, "This is not just a police problem; others must share responsibility" is critical to the effective practice of POP.

## *The Value and Habit of Acting Ethically*

Acting ethically transcends POP; it implicates all that the police do. Although we do not intend to preach this sermon here, ethical policing has some special connections to POP.

One of the reasons police are tempted to act unethically is to create the impression they are achieving their objectives when in fact, achieving them is nearly impossible, at least through conventional policing approaches. For example, in their legitimate desire for the public to feel safer, police might be tempted to manipulate and distort reported crime data to create the impression that crime is declining. Faced with high public expectations to reduce crime, but aware they cannot significantly reduce crime alone, police are tempted to focus on the appearance of public safety rather than the reality. However, properly practiced POP can change this ethical calculation. If police free themselves from the notion that they alone are responsible for public safety, they can instead coordinate community-wide action that can yield genuine improvements to public safety and thereby prevent the need to create false impressions.

One aspect of policing ethically is to be more open with the public about the limitations under which police operate, whether about the number of police officers, the probability of solving crimes, or the speed with which police can respond to requests for service. Although police might feel uncomfortable being so candid, worrying that it undermines their effectiveness, it is a necessary means to get the public to understand the type and degree of assistance and support police require to achieve their objectives. Securing that assistance and support will serve to strengthen, not weaken, police capacity.

Focusing on results instead of just on methods can greatly relax the pressure on police officers to “produce” a set level of arrests, summonses, detentions, searches, and the like. This in turn reduces the likelihood that police will try to meet these production goals in ethically dubious ways or in ways that don’t actually contribute to achieving the real policing objectives. High-volume enforcement that does not yield real public-safety improvements nearly always strains the relationship police have with the public, which only further undermines police effectiveness.

In short, POP seeks to drop much of the pretense about what causes crime and disorder and how it can be controlled and prevented. In its place should be a more open and fact-based exploration of community problems and a more equitable distribution of responsibility throughout the community for addressing those problems. This new transparency and candor better enables police officers, supervisors, and executives alike to act in a truly professional and ethical manner.

### ***Read More:***

Scott, Michael S., and Herman Goldstein. 2005. *Shifting and Sharing Responsibility for Public Safety Problems*. Problem-Oriented Guides for Police; Response Guide Series, No. 3. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

## 25. Develop your successors

Just as you have sought to put your mark on your police agency's culture and operating style, so too, will the police executives who follow you. Although you cannot guarantee that POP will survive your tenure as chief executive, you can create conditions under which the core principles of POP survive. This will occur if the agency's employees, succeeding police executives, and key police constituents recognize the value of the approach and want to continue it.

Whether you work in a jurisdiction in which the police executive's tenure is likely to be several decades or several years, you should always be developing your staff's knowledge, skills, and abilities for future leadership roles, including chief executive. Ideally, a staff member in whom you have instilled an understanding of and commitment to POP will succeed you. In case the succeeding chief executive comes from outside the agency, you will want to have advanced the POP approach to the point that those who select your successor will expect its continued development. Moreover, if POP, as practiced by your agency's employees, is delivering positive results, a succeeding chief executive will find it harder to abandon the approach.

We need not cover everything about identifying and developing junior executives for future chief executive positions, but would like to point out how this development process relates to POP.

To the extent they are also qualified in other respects, promote competent problem solvers to leadership positions within the agency. Problem solving helps develop critical leadership skills through analyzing data, prioritizing tasks, managing partnerships, coordinating resources, navigating bureaucratic and political processes, and so forth. Once employees master police problem-solving skills, they tend to apply them in leadership positions and to encourage them in others. Conversely, it is extraordinarily difficult to lead others in the practice of POP if one is not personally experienced or competent in its practice.

Provide promising future leaders with opportunities to expand their knowledge of POP and how it is practiced elsewhere in the profession. If promising staff members are pursuing higher education degrees, encourage them to incorporate POP into their studies. If you have the opportunity to send staff members to police command courses and programs, choose those that offer expert instruction in POP. Send promising future leaders to visit other police agencies that practice POP and to conferences where POP is featured. Encourage your staff to establish professional contacts in other police agencies and research organizations that have POP expertise.

Assign your junior and senior executives specific administrative tasks that help advance POP, such as incorporating POP into the training curricula, developing information management systems that facilitate problem analysis, recruiting and hiring new employees with problem-solving aptitudes and, perhaps most importantly, providing management support and oversight of large-scale POP projects.



Allow and encourage your management staff to exercise problem-solving leadership in the public forum. Have them give public talks or give interviews to the mass media about problem-solving work. Give public credit in your own talks and interviews to those individuals who demonstrate problem-solving leadership. In short, allow promising future leaders to develop a public reputation for leading effective problem solving.

Encourage your promising future leaders to broaden their horizons outside the police organization so they develop a deeper understanding of how other government and non-government organizations function and how those functions relate to policing. Encourage them to become good listeners so they better understand how people outside the police agency view the police and view public-safety problems.

Importantly, encourage your managers to develop their subordinates in much the same manner as you are developing them. Because POP depends so heavily upon engaging line-level personnel for identifying, understanding, and responding to public-safety problems, all police supervisors should work on devolving authority, responsibility, and credit down the chain of command rather than hoarding it for themselves.

If POP represents the leading edge of professional and democratic policing, as we believe it does, then those who demonstrate skill and proficiency in its practice and in leading it should naturally emerge as the most promising police executives for the future.

In the long term, the goal is to develop police agencies whose employees routinely think critically about their policing objectives, whether the current approaches are achieving them, and, if not, to design and adopt better approaches toward achieving them. The particular terminology of “problem-oriented policing” need not survive indefinitely. Indeed, one can hope that over time, the special label, “problem-oriented policing,” will become unnecessary: its practice will simply be thought of as “policing.”



# Appendixes

## Appendix A: A Critical Path Audit for Developing a Problem-Oriented Police Organization

This critical path audit is designed to help you determine which sections of this manual are most relevant to your organization. It explains each stage that is required to establish a truly problem-oriented police organization. Answering the 20 questions allows you to audit your organization, assess the current status of your POP implementation, and identify areas to improve. Each question relates to a particular section of the manual, and the section references are provided for ease of use.

Question	Section Reference	Yes/No
1. Do you understand what POP means and the benefits it provides when compared with other policing strategies?	1, 3	
2. Have you conducted an organizational audit to assess the level of change required to move to a POP organization?	5	
3. Have you decided to specialize or generalize a problem-solving approach?	10	
4. Have you decided on the speed and level of change within your area of responsibility?	2, 6, 7	
5. Have you assessed the level of support and opposition for any change program?	5, 7	
6. Have you put together a POP implementation plan with a project management approach to deliver it?	4, 5, 10, 11	
7. Do your staff know the role they will play in a POP organization? Are they clear on your expectations, specifically in relation to patrol officers, detectives, call-handling staff, and support staff?	6, 8	
8. Have you reviewed your recruitment process so new applicants know that they are applying to a POP organization and that they will be assessed on this competency?	9	
9. Are procedures in place to teach recruits problem-solving skills?	9	
10. Are internal procedures in place to highlight problem solving when selecting future specialists and promotions?	9, 15, 21, 25	
11. Are you satisfied the structure of your organization will facilitate problem solving, specifically in relation to decentralization?	11	
12. Are you clear how problems will be identified and prioritized, specifically in relation to the balance between bottom-up and top-down decisions?	12	
13. Do you have appropriate resources to analyze the problems identified?	13	
14. Do you provide sufficient time/resources/support for officers to engage in problem solving?	17, 18	
15. Do you value and cultivate a partnership approach within your jurisdiction?	19	
16. Are you able to assess the impact of your problem solving?	14	
17. Do you have a case-management system to monitor problem-solving initiatives and identify good practice?	20, 21	
18. Do you have a suitable accountability structure to identify those who are dealing with identified problems and to review problem-solving performance against your expectations?	8, 16	
19. Do you have systems within your organization to reward good problem solvers and develop poor problem solvers?	9, 15, 21	
20. Would an audit of your organization conclude you have made POP a part of your legacy?	22, 23, 24, 25	

## **Appendix B: A Problem-Solving Management Assessment Tool**

Having spent considerable time or effort implementing initiatives to facilitate problem solving, it is important that you objectively check your department's progress. One of us (Kirby) developed the following methodology, which has been used successfully in numerous police departments. You can use it as an assessment tool to set a baseline prior to implementation or to monitor progress at specific milestones.

The methodology requires the identification of past and current problem-solving initiatives within a jurisdiction. These initiatives are then assessed using a two-stage process. First, the initiatives are categorized showing the type of problems with which the department is engaged. Second, the assessor evaluates the initiative across the SARA format, asking a number of simple questions requiring 'yes' or 'no' responses. Although these judgments require some level of subjectivity, tests have shown a high degree of consistency among assessors.

The assessor asks the following questions:

- Scanning – Was the problem clearly defined (i.e., did it show what was occurring, who was involved, what was the harm, and the scale of the problem)? Was there a specified goal for the project and were baseline figures provided from which to measure success?
- Analysis – What was causing the problem? Ideally, the practitioner would use the problem-analysis triangle to structure the analysis process (i.e., victim, offender, and location).
- Response – This section should provide evidence that the intervention can deliver a sustainable result even after police resources are removed. The assessor looks for an intervention that eliminates the opportunity facilitating the problem. This often requires assistance from partner organizations.
- Assessment – This stage is divided into two parts. The first looks for actual data showing the impact of the intervention (e.g., crime figures, call-handling data, survey results). The second looks for anecdotal assessment of impact (i.e., the officer or other stakeholders said there was an improvement although they provided no quantitative evidence).

The following results in Table B.1 come from a specific police department where this tool was used in the early stage of development. The purpose of the assessment was to provide a specific benchmark in terms of the quality and quantity of problem solving. It was not atypical to other findings.

**Table B.1. Problems by Type**

Problem Type	Number of initiatives	Percentage of total
Antisocial behavior		30.00%
Burglary – non-residential		0.83%
Burglary - residential		15.83%
Criminal damage		5.83%
Dangerous dogs		1.66%
Drugs (dealing/using)		6.66%
Illegal street trading		0.83%
Knife crime		2.50%
Neighbor dispute		0.83%
Prostitution		3.33%
Robbery		3.33%
Street drinking		6.66%
Taxi touting		0.83%
Theft		6.66%
Theft from motor vehicle		4.16%
Threats to known male		0.83%
Truancy		0.83%
Vagrancy		3.33%
Vehicle crime		5.00%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b>

Using this type of table police managers can be informed whether the problems being worked on match the demand for the area or departmental priorities.

Table B.2 shows the quality of these problem-solving initiatives across the policing areas, using the questions highlighted earlier. In essence, the results show the percentage of passes for each stage of the SARA model. (Note there are separate categories for ‘anecdotal’ and ‘actual’ evidence in relation to assessment.) So, for example, 55 percent of problem-solving initiatives in Area A provide a sufficient level of information to pass the ‘scanning’ criteria.

Table B.2. Quality of Problem-Solving Initiatives by Policing Area

	Scanning	Analysis	Response	Assessment	
				Anecdotal	Actual
Area A	55%	35%	15%	20%	5%
Area B	55%	10%	20%	25%	10%
Area C	10%	0	0	30%	20%
Area D	25%	25%	5%	10%	5%
Area E	60%	0	15%	10%	0
Area F	45%	20%	5%	30%	5%
Average	42%	15%	10%	21%	8%

This type of assessment can provide a significant amount of information for police managers at the departmental and area levels. It can be used to develop new initiatives and target specific development. Similarly, the assessor can identify further detail in terms of trends across the SARA categories. For example, in the above illustration the assessor highlighted the following:

**SCANNING**

- Problems were not clearly defined, with the initiative working on an area that was too large/ indistinct, not a specific “hotspot” or problem area.
- Baseline figures were not included.
- Goal was not specific enough.

**ANALYSIS**

- Where analysis existed, it mainly consisted of a description of the problem.
- The reasons why the problem existed (the opportunity that facilitates the crime/incident) were almost always neglected.
- Very little mention of presence or lack of a capable guardian.

## RESPONSE

- Few showed partnership work or the potential for sustainable solutions.
- Responses were almost always police-generated.
- Responses were seldom linked to the causes of the problem.
- Many initiatives were simply a record of targeted police interventions, such as high visibility policing, etc.

## ASSESSMENT

- Only 8 percent showed actual data in their assessments.
- In many cases, the initiative was stopped without explanation.

## About the Authors

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## About the COPS Office



The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.

Rather than simply responding to crimes once they have been committed, community policing concentrates on preventing crime and eliminating the atmosphere of fear it creates. Earning the trust of the community and making those individuals stakeholders in their own safety enables law enforcement to better understand and address both the needs of the community and the factors that contribute to crime.

The COPS Office awards grants to state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies to hire and train community policing professionals, acquire and deploy cutting-edge crime fighting technologies, and develop and test innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders and all levels of law enforcement. The COPS Office has produced and compiled a broad range of information resources that can help law enforcement better address specific crime and operational issues, and help community leaders better understand how to work cooperatively with their law enforcement agency to reduce crime.

- Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested nearly \$14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing.
- By the end of FY2011, the COPS Office has funded approximately 123,000 additional officers to more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies across the country in small and large jurisdictions alike.
- Nearly 600,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.
- As of 2011, the COPS Office has distributed more than 6.6 million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs.

COPS Office resources, covering a wide breadth of community policing topics—from school and campus safety to gang violence—are available, at no cost, through its online Resource Information Center at [www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov). This easy-to-navigate website is also the grant application portal, providing access to online application forms.





*Implementing POP: Leading, Structuring, and Managing a Problem-Oriented Police Agency* is written for police executives interested in promoting the practice of problem-oriented policing (POP) within their police agency. The manual will help the police executive decide what steps to take, and in what order, to make POP an integral part of how their police agency does business. Its major sections cover preparing a police agency for adopting POP, structuring the agency to facilitate POP, putting POP into action, and making POP part of the chief executive's legacy.



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