



# Midsize Police Agencies

*Surviving, Thriving, and Forging a New Business Model for Law Enforcement in a Post-Recession Economy*



**COPS**

Community Oriented Policing Services  
U.S. Department of Justice





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for Law Enforcement in a Post-Recession Economy*

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# Acknowledgments

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) gratefully acknowledges the participation of the many highly qualified, committed, and talented individuals and organizations that made the 2013 Midsize Agencies Forum a success.

The experience and skill set of each attendee brought perspectives to the meeting that enabled participants to review and evaluate a broad set of challenges and offer practical and proven solutions based on experience.

The IACP extends appreciation to the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) for its unyielding support in helping to advance the midsize cities effort specifically and law enforcement broadly.

## Background

There are nearly 700 midsize cities—those with populations between 50,000 and 500,000—in the United States, hosting a combined population of more than 75 million, which is almost twice that of the major cities (those with populations greater than 500,000) and nearly one-quarter of the total U.S. population. These jurisdictions comprise a significant proportion of the American urban and suburban landscape and include places like Overland Park, Kansas; Berkeley, California; Boise, Idaho; Arlington, Virginia; and Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Despite this significant presence in the American municipal landscape, midsize cities and their associated police agencies have until recently not been a distinct area of focus for research, funding, or advocacy.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) recognized this gap in 2009 and has since prioritized the needs and interests of midsize police agencies. An informal network of motivated and forward-looking midsize city police chiefs brought the matter forward, and the IACP's Governing Body directed that work should begin to explore options to address the concerns of this underserved segment of the association's membership. With encouragement and financial support from the COPS Office, IACP held a foundational design meeting in May 2009. A subsequent meeting to develop an action agenda was held during the IACP Annual Conference in October 2009. Results of these efforts were published by the IACP and the COPS Office in *Out of the Shadows—Policy Research for Midsize Law Enforcement Agencies: A Call to Action*.<sup>1</sup>

The Midsize Agencies Section (MAS) was formalized and approved by the IACP Board of Officers in January 2010 and held its first official meeting at the 2010 IACP Annual Conference. The MAS is dedicated to providing a voice for chiefs of the police agencies of the nearly 700 midsize jurisdictions and serves as a forum for these leaders to share the unique challenges and opportunities in policing that emerge in departments serving cities of this size. Midsize agencies have resources that smaller departments may lack, without the complications of larger organizations.

The IACP looks to the Midsize Agencies Section for leading transferable practices in policing. Since its inception, the MAS has grown to more than 270 members with more joining every month. This burgeoning section is committed to embracing and leveraging the special capacity and flexibility of midsize agencies to innovate and drive progressive change within our profession with the goal of better policing our communities.

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<sup>1</sup> International Association of Chiefs of Police, *Out of the Shadows—Policy Research for Midsize Law Enforcement Agencies: A Call to Action* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2010), <http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/outoftheshadowsreport.pdf>.

# Overview of the Meeting

In 2013, the MAS set out to fulfill its promise to serve as an incubator for innovative police practices. With support and input from the COPS Office, the IACP Midsize Agencies Section (MAS) convened more than 40 police leaders and city managers to discuss their successes and challenges under the theme *Sustaining and Advancing Community Policing in the New Economy*. The forum's goal was to set the foundation for a transferable framework to facilitate and advance thoughtful innovation in policing. Intended outcomes for the meeting were to create a

- meaningful, continuous dialogue;
- rally point for the MAS;
- platform for the identification of gaps and challenges;
- blueprint for our collective way forward.

Forum objectives and topics for discussion were based on a MAS member survey that solicited areas of interest in a post-recession environment. Through an interactive facilitated discussion, participants were asked three questions:

In a time of increasing demands and diminishing resources, how is your agency

1. **changing its business model?** Explore alternative organizational and staffing arrangements, and identify options with the greatest potential for improving productivity or service delivery.
2. **maximizing technology?** Identify and discuss promising practices in information and data management/analysis and affordable, attainable new technologies that generate positive return on investment.
3. **redefining community policing?** Discuss the evolving definition and application of community policing.

Participating chiefs and city managers offered successful examples and case studies, candidly discussed challenges, and offered thought-provoking considerations and solutions for the future, proving midsize agencies are leaning forward in many ways. The pages that follow highlight the key themes and leading examples that emerged, providing the promised blueprint for progressive police service delivery.



# Innovation from Necessity: Maximizing Internal and External Resources

From staffing analyses to partnerships and resource sharing, midsize agencies are looking inside and outside their organizations for increased efficiencies. Citizen-informed call prioritization, functional consolidations with neighboring agencies, and alternate staffing arrangements that leverage the talents of civilians, retirees, and volunteers are all on the table. Midsize agencies are working with their communities to adjust operations and service delivery without sacrificing citizen satisfaction. Some examples follow.

## Staffing scheduling and deployment

Midsize agencies are finding that taking a fresh look at organizational structure, staff schedules, and deployment can illuminate opportunities for positive change. Some agencies have moved away from patrolling districts to patrolling hotspots based on real-time data. Others are flattening their rank structure and exploring the costs and benefits of two-person patrol cars in light of the many demands and distractions faced by officers behind the wheel. Periodic and routine staffing studies are also worth consideration. Whether conducted internally by an analyst or with an external consultant, reviewing call data on a regular basis to ensure that shifts, schedules, and patrol areas match workload can help ensure resources are deployed to efficiently meet demand.

## Partnerships

Midsize police agencies are finding that combining resources and partnering with other agencies is an effective strategy in leveraging internal resources. Civic leaders and citizens recognize duplication of effort and support smart, well-thought-out collaborations. Shared purchasing, resources, and functions are increasing among police, sheriffs, highway patrol, state police, and smaller local departments. Examples from midsize agencies include

- combining crime scene processing and lab capabilities with neighboring jurisdictions;
- joining regional records management systems shared by a number of agencies to streamline information sharing and interagency collaboration while potentially saving on license fees;
- combining dispatch and call-taking personnel and workspace where feasible;
- sharing training facilities with nearby public safety entities to economize resources and foster inter-agency collaboration;
- tapping into camera feeds of local businesses and high schools to extend intelligence capacity;
- partnering with local academics to assist with data analysis;
- involving probation/parole, community prosecutors, and courts in integrated problem-solving efforts;
- engaging in joint purchasing arrangements to leverage buying power for large scale contracts;
- dispatching mental health co-responders with officers to aid in problem solving and officer safety;
- partnering with loss prevention specialists in major retailers.

## Civilians and volunteers

Midsize cities are realizing that not all calls for service require or warrant response from a certified sworn police officer. Crimes without suspects or leads and traffic accidents without injury can be handled by civilians. Similarly, administrative functions like grant writing, records management, public information, and data management and analysis can be ably delegated to civilians, freeing up sworn staff for patrol and investigations. Other ideas include hiring back retired officers to work part-time on cold cases or as school resource officers and using volunteers to conduct crime victim surveys to measure performance or inform investigations.

## Policing to community priorities

Police agencies and their stakeholders are finding that full-service policing is no longer sustainable or even necessary. Jurisdictions simply cannot afford to offer an emergency response to every 911 call. Further, public expectations are changing. Citizens expect efficiency from government now more than ever. Midsize agencies recognize that service reduction decisions cannot be made in isolation, and they are looking to community members to help set priorities. Open and collaborative discussions with the public can help ease anxiety associated with service cutbacks. Knowledge of what citizens value most from their police departments, combined with an understanding of the associated costs, can lead to the creation of a public safety vision based on shared values and a culture of mutual understanding within the community. Find out what matters to citizens and what makes them feel safe, police to those priorities and values, measure the results, and report back.

## Championing accountability and transparency

The fiscal crisis, the popularity of social media, and the explosion of technology and big data have combined to usher in a new era of accountability and transparency in government, particularly with regard to budgeting and financial management. Trends among forum participants show a move to push fiscal awareness and responsibility further down the organizational chart. Supervisors and commanders are expected to manage their own budgets, including overtime and training, and are held accountable in a CompStat-like process.<sup>2</sup> Budget training for all employees serves to educate and remind workers that they are stewards of the public trust. Open online checkbook registers give citizens an interactive, real-time view of city expenditures.

## Identifying unconventional operational efficiencies

Fiscal austerity has forced many police chiefs to evaluate every budget line item for potential cost savings. Discussions in the forum focused on innovative approaches to leverage resources. For example, while other categories are already lean, fleet management is one of the last areas available to increase efficiency and save costs. Small opportunities can yield big financial results, such as

- sharing fuel with the local sheriff's office in exchange for use of the police firing range;
- applying decals on black cars to reduce custom paint job expenses;
- monitoring and rotating vehicles out of the fleet based on total maintenance cost rather than just mileage;
- using different trim packages for administrative versus patrol cars.

2. Ed Ryan and Susan Evans, "Using CompStat to Manage a Police Budget," *The Police Chief* 81 (April 2014): 36–40, [http://www.policemagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display&article\\_id=3318&issue\\_id=42014](http://www.policemagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display&article_id=3318&issue_id=42014).

# The New Force Multipliers: Embracing Emerging and Evolving Technologies

Midsized agencies are early adopters of many leading edge technologies that can facilitate community policing in new and different ways. From social media and mobile tablets to cloud servers and apps, midsized agencies recognize these as opportunities for law enforcement and are among the first to explore and embrace their potential. At the same time, midsized agency chiefs recognize that a potential pitfall of increased use of technology can be a reduction in personal, face-to-face communication, both among officers and with the community. Officers are encouraged to get out of their cars and talk to citizens and business owners.

## Maximizing social media

By now, use of social media by police has become nearly mainstream, particularly among midsized agencies. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other platforms have ushered in a new era of community policing. Departments are sharing news and information directly with citizens, without the filter of the local media, and they are actively engaging public participation in crime prevention—and crime solving—efforts. Some departments host Tweet-alongs, Facebook town halls, and real-time chats with officers, and some even produce creative YouTube videos that often go viral. With comments and questions coming in around the clock and the expectation of immediacy, social media management can be time intensive, but the gains in public engagement are proving to be worth the effort.

## Facilitating data access and analysis

Police departments are awash in data. Records management systems are very competent and robust, but often there is so much information that it is not accessible to people who need it most. A data team or analyst at headquarters who knows the ins and outs of the system is key, but so too is the ability for individual officers to get what they need quickly. Technology training, both in the academy and ongoing through in-service, helps empower officers to access information to solve problems.

## Fostering internal communication

Midsized agencies are exchanging information internally in an increasingly high tech and paperless manner. By leveraging common computer drives, SharePoint and secure intranet sites, and internal blogs, officers are becoming more efficient by sharing shift reports, suspect leads, and administrative information quickly and seamlessly.

## Leveraging mobile technology

Nearly all officers have smart phones or tablets, and they are using them for work. Many departments are replacing mobile data terminals with tablets and forgoing car-mounted radios, at a substantial cost savings. Push technologies that transmit key data in real time, sometimes negating the need for roll call, are becoming more prevalent, along with the use of mobile apps that connect citizens with officers and officers with headquarters.



# Next Generation Community Policing: Refocusing on Leadership and Community Needs

Police agencies have changed considerably just within the last five years, as technological advances including the proliferation of mobile technologies, data, and social media, along with declining human and financial resources, have ushered in a sea change in police service delivery. Midsize police agencies are not only adjusting rapidly to the changes but also helping to lead through the changes.

What implications are there for the community policing philosophy? While some larger agencies have reduced or eliminated their community policing programs, discussion from the midsize forum seemed to indicate that these jurisdictions, in large part, are doubling down on their investment in community policing. When resources are declining, refocusing on the tenets of community policing can help fill the gaps.

## Organizational transformation

Participating midsize agency chiefs are transformative leaders, effecting change for the benefit of their officers, their communities, and the broader profession. There is a commitment to leadership development, community involvement, and proactive—or coactive—policing. Midsize agency chiefs are working to build organizations that are flexible and embrace change.

## Partnerships

Participating midsize agency police chiefs recognize that broad-based community partnerships are requirements for fulfilling the police mission in a post-recession economy. Partnerships start within the department—building solidarity and unity of effort among employees while building positive relationships with the city and county management team, public officials, key players within the community, and citizens at large. The result is a cultural commitment to community policing with buy-in throughout the department, the city, the county, and the community.

## Problem solving

Effective leadership, combined with a coalition of community partners, positions midsize police agencies to empower officers to solve problems. Technology—and training on how to use it—gives officers the power to connect to data when they need it to inform problem solving efforts and effect change.

# Challenges Facing Midsize Police Agencies

While midsize police agencies are doing great things, participants also discussed some challenges during the forum. Participants noted three areas of need that, if addressed, could facilitate the identification and transference of community policing leading practices from and among midsize agencies to the broader law enforcement community.

## Communication

Participants noted a need for a mechanism to improve communication among and between midsize agencies—a means to share and network in a virtual environment, separate from email—with the goal of continuing the great dialogue that begins at meetings like the IACP and COPS Office Midsize Agencies Forum and of engaging and involving those who are unable to participate in person. Barriers (real or perceived) in communication and information transfer often inhibit the sharing of leading practices and the synergistic networking that allows great ideas to spread. Without such a conduit, the result is innovation in isolation.

## Collaboration

Section members identified a desire to learn from one another in a meaningful, interactive, and hands-on fashion. Where some agencies excel in policy or operations, others may struggle. Presently, there are very few platforms that enable agencies to connect and share transferable concepts among themselves or, ideally, with the broader field.

## Comparison

Finally, MAS members noted a continued interest in comparative performance evaluation—essentially a way to compare departmental performance against like agencies on a number of police-related data points (from operating budgets and fleet composition to crime incidents and clearance rates) as a means of identifying leading agencies that could be tapped for more information.

The IACP is actively working with the Midsize Agencies Section and engaging federal partners to work toward resolution of these challenges for the greater benefit of the profession.

## Conclusion

The forum discussion solidified the finding that midsize agencies are establishing themselves as bedrock police innovators, quietly creating a new business model for the field. Further, the IACP Midsize Agencies Section proved itself to be an engaged and enthusiastic group, ready to take the next step.

The IACP looks forward to continuing its partnership with the COPS Office to engage midsize agencies and build a support ecosystem that will help address the above noted challenges and fill gaps in existing knowledge about their complexities, innovations, needs, community policing strategies, and unique characteristics.

By leveraging the innovation, knowledge, and leadership offered by the Midsize Agencies Section, these departments will be poised to share best practices, engage in problem solving, and help transform their organizations to thrive in an era of economic uncertainty that requires a new business model for law enforcement.

The above documentation of collective wisdom provides a foundational blueprint to document realized advances and challenges and offer informed counsel to law enforcement agencies who look to leverage those realized advances and learn from navigated challenges.

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## About the IACP

The **International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)** is the world's premier law enforcement membership organization, dedicated to serving the leaders of today and developing the leaders of tomorrow. The IACP was founded in 1893 to encourage cooperation and exchange of information among police administrators and to promote the highest standards of performance and conduct within the police profession. With more than 23,000 members in more than 100 countries, this vision continues today.

The IACP serves the leaders of today through advocacy, education, research, and professional services. From new technologies to emerging threats and trends, the IACP is at forefront of the most contemporary and pressing issues facing police leaders. Through internationally acclaimed conferences and trainings, ground-breaking research, and unparalleled outreach and advocacy efforts, the IACP works hard to help law enforcement respond to these issues.

The IACP is also focused on developing the leaders of tomorrow. The IACP Center for Police Leadership, Police Chief Mentoring program, and Discover Policing initiative are just a few examples of the many training and educational opportunities designed to prepare tomorrow's leaders for the challenges they will face.

Learn more at [www.theiacp.org](http://www.theiacp.org).

## 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 more than \$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.
- To date, the COPS Office has funded approximately 125,000 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 700,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.
- To date, the COPS Office has distributed more than 8.57 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 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.





In 2013, the IACP Midsize Agencies Section (MAS) set out to fulfill its promise to serve as an incubator for innovative police practices. With support and input from the COPS Office, the MAS convened more than 40 police leaders and city managers to discuss their successes and challenges under the theme Sustaining and Advancing Community Policing in the New Economy. Through an interactive facilitated discussion, participants were asked three questions:

In a time of increasing demands and diminishing resources, how is your agency

- changing its business model?
- maximizing technology?
- redefining community policing?

Participating chiefs and city managers offered successful examples and case studies, candidly discussed challenges, and offered thought-provoking considerations and solutions for the future proving midsize agencies are leaning forward in many ways. This publication is a summary of the forum findings.



**COPS**

*Community Oriented Policing Services*  
**U.S. Department of Justice**

U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services  
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To obtain details about COPS Office programs,  
call the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.  
Visit the COPS Office online at [www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov).

Visit the IACP online at [www.theiacp.org](http://www.theiacp.org).

