

RESPONSE TO CITY OF CINCINNATI'S SUPPLEMENTAL  
COMMUNITY PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING STRATEGY REPORT

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The Cincinnati Police Department's February 15, 2018 supplemental report on problem solving was helpful in terms of providing information that was not previously included in the materials submitted for our consideration. These recent supplemental materials provided a more comprehensive picture of problem-solving projects in each of the five police districts, the Central Business Section, and the Criminal Investigations Section. The Emergency Communications Section and the Training Unit also provided information on projects they have dealt with. Overall, the supplemental report improved our understanding of how the CPD is undertaking problem solving by describing certain projects that had not previously been documented, and by providing greater details on several other projects that had been counted in the earlier report.

In earlier reports, we emphasized that the City of Cincinnati and its police department are fortunate to have available nationally recognized experts in policing at the University of Cincinnati's School of Criminal Justice. We note that the supplemental report states that the Cincinnati Police Department will contract with these experts. This is an important step forward.

While this additional information has proven to be helpful in gaining a better sense of the type of problem solving efforts that are undertaken by CPD and other City staff, the failure to include this material in the previous submissions does appear to reinforce certain earlier observations and concerns we had noted. There appears to be a lack of attention at higher levels of the organization to ensuring there is an ongoing emphasis on and documentation of problem solving efforts, a resistance to using or a failure to develop meaningful performance metrics and outcome measures to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of those endeavors, an uncertain commitment to transparency and both internal and external review, and a lack of awareness as to how critically important these tools and data are to informing and educating both staff and the community about which strategies and tactics might then prove to be most effective in contending with recurring problems. These are all essential to promoting and ensuring organizational accountability as well as in fostering an environment of continuous learning and improvement.

## Strategy:

While examining the recent materials submitted for consideration, we noted that the range of problem solving projects being undertaken might logically be grouped and dealt with based on the complexity of resources that are required as well as the duration of the time involved in dealing with these issues. Considering that, and to help address the gaps and needs mentioned above, we felt it might be useful to propose a method or model to help guide how the CPD might want to approach these recurring problems in the future. The model below is offered to encourage thought and consideration of such things as the resources, responsibilities and timelines involved in these matters and how to best achieve the outcomes desired.

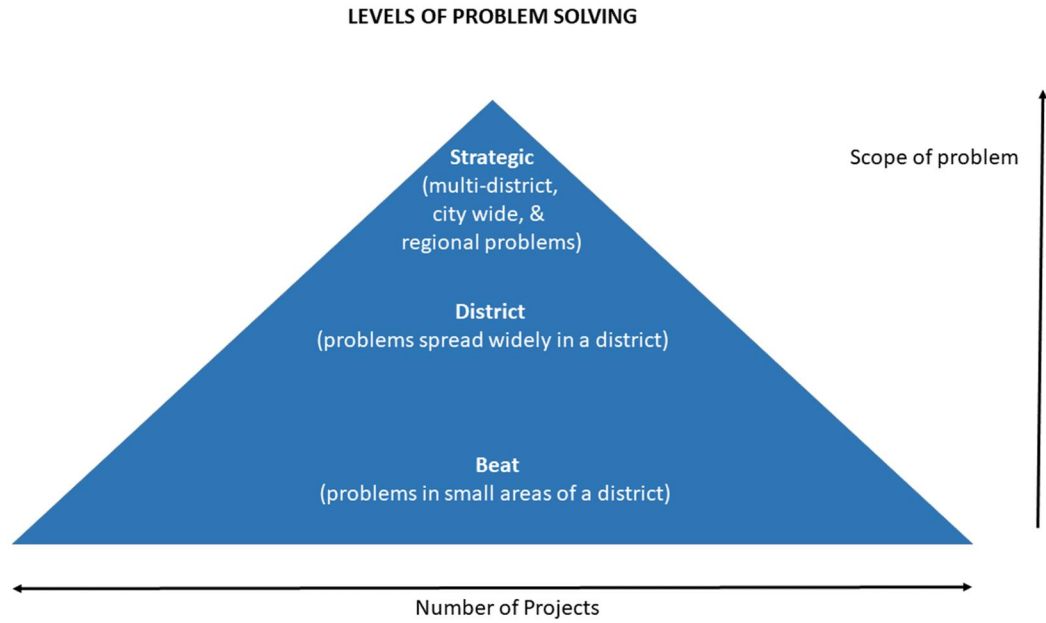
The district level problem-solving efforts (including the Central Business Section) describe a range of important small-scale efforts that are more routinely encountered when dealing with community problems. We refer to these as being small-scale due to their limited geographic scope, not because they are trivial. Indeed, many of these efforts deal with extremely serious problems involving violence, traffic related injuries, or significant disruptions to those affected neighborhoods. The descriptions did indicate that police officers and supervisors are reaching out to numerous city agencies, businesses, community-based organizations, and other entities. Many of the projects that have been completed show that efforts were made to document the efforts undertaken and to determine success. We were impressed with the city-wide efforts by the Criminal Investigations Section to employ problem-solving to improve investigative outcomes.

We must note, however, that all the efforts described in the reports from the districts are what might be called “beat-level” problem solving efforts. Beat-level efforts typically focus on a small area within a district. We found limited descriptions of either district level and city-level strategic problem solving being undertaken. District level efforts would focus on problems that are more wide-spread but would typically be restricted to a single district or geographic area. And strategic problem-solving would tackle multi-district problems, including city wide and even regional problems. The efforts by the Criminal Investigations Section, for example, are more akin to strategic level efforts. Similarly, PIVOT is a problem-solving response that has city wide application.

Problems obviously come in a variety of sizes, so it is critical for a police department to be addressing the full range of problems that are thrust upon it with commensurate resources. As the figure below suggests, we would expect many more of the beat-level problem solving projects to be underway at any given time than those that would be considered “district” or “strategic” in nature. But we would expect more district and strategic level problem solving efforts to be undertaken than were noted in the supplement or the full report on problem solving. The police command staff and supporting units should be examining large scale problems that are common across districts or that span district boundaries. These might very well require a year or more of sustained effort, but their impact would be large. They could make use of lessons derived from beat and district level efforts. For example, from time to time

in Cincinnati, there is a fatal shooting at a nightclub. Usually the public finds out in the next few days that the place had a history of troubles. Nightclub violence might be a useful strategic problem. Thefts from vehicles is a chronic problem in many cities, and it occurs in many locations throughout cities. A strategic effort designed to reduce these crimes is another example or candidate for this type of problem solving. In an earlier report, we mentioned the efforts of the Traffic Unit to reduce vehicular crash injuries and deaths. The CPD command leadership should proactively take on one or two such strategic problems every year. This ought to be done in collaboration with the Manager’s Advisory Group and other partners in the community.

District level problem solving could also be proactively undertaken as a strategic initiative. Based on community input, district commanders should identify medium scale problems (i.e., above the beat level, but mostly contained within a district). We expect these to require longer time periods to analyze, develop effective responses, and to assess than would smaller beat level efforts. This could be undertaken in the spirit of a R&D process to develop, test and field new problem-solving methods. If over the years, beat-level problem solving has dealt with numerous similar problems (even when each individual effort is successful), it is worth considering whether there are district or strategic efforts that might be more productive. There is value to be gained from aggregating the knowledge of what works and what doesn’t at the district level.



The CPD, in concert with the other partners in the Collaborative Agreement, has established the foundation for meaningful collaboration and an ongoing commitment to problem solving. The Collaborative Agreement Plan that was subsequently developed called for the Manager’s Advisory Group (MAG) to take the lead in overseeing the continuation of the reforms

undertaken. As we have recommended in our prior report, the MAG should now emerge as a central point of leadership in renewing the commitment to the CA principles and problem-solving processes. Further, we would suggest that the composition of this body and the role they already play makes them ideally suited to exercise responsibility for the prioritization and selection of the strategic problems to be taken on by CPD (while those at the District and Beat level would be more appropriately and efficiently determined by CPD staff). Given their existing role and the expectation that the MAG will ensure the CA principles are adhered to and the problem solving processes are carried out, we would also recommend they exercise responsibility for ensuring continuing evaluations of the effectiveness of this model (or whatever plan they choose to support) are conducted, and ongoing assessments and reports are provided to the community regarding their goals, progress and the results achieved.

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