

TO: Police Chiefs, Public Safety Directors, and Fund Commissioners

FROM: Chief Keith F. Hummel (Ret.)
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RE: Planning and Developing Strategic Partnerships
Law Enforcement Bulletin 2020-09

The local law enforcement community in the United States is a public entity that plays an essential role in our citizen's lives. Police Officers are often considered the most visible form of government. What other government organization has the exposure, contacts, authority, power, discretion, resources, and ability to affect a person's well-being. This responsibility cannot be taken lightly, and law enforcement leaders need to develop and initiate programs that are responsive, effective, and efficient. The core responsibilities of the more than 17,000 Law Enforcement Agencies that exist in the United States may be constant, but each community has different needs, law enforcement resources, and capabilities.¹ This is due in part because of the social, financial, and legal factors that play an important role in the community's perceptions and expectations. One of the significant benefits of decentralized policing is that each individual law enforcement agency can tailor their response to the needs of its community.² Changes will occur, and history will repeat itself, and the law enforcement community needs to prepare itself for change by seeking out leaders who are willing to commit their time and energy to a planning process that focuses on developing strategic partnerships.

Think locally! There is no need to bring large outside groups to the table who have their own agenda. They don't want to be partners; they want to control the partnership. Think about your jurisdiction, who are your community leaders, are they well respected. Can they communicate, are they reasonable, and are they committed? These are the true stakeholders and they will make a difference locally!

Personally contact everyone that you believe would be an asset to the partnership. Listen to their ideas and ask for additional contacts and recommendations as to who they believe would make a difference by being part of the partnership. Invite potential leaders, keep it between five to seven people, break bread with them, and explain your vision. Many individuals are suspicious, and you will have to overcome

¹ Moore, M.H., & Stephens, D. W. (1991). *Beyond Command and Control: Strategic Management of Police Departments*. Washington D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum.

² Berman, E. (1998). *Productivity in Public and Nonprofit Organizations*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications

these barriers by encouraging cooperation and collaboration.³ During your presentation, emphasize that the partnership will explore improving local services and preparing citizens for complex issues that involve arrest procedures, use of force, transparency, and other local topics that are of concern to both the department and the community.

Include a member of the governing body. Discuss the logistics of the partnership and draw upon the municipality's resources to help frame an agreement and pass a resolution identifying the members of the partnership. This will keep the partnership on track, identifying meeting dates, members, mission, rules, and an evaluation tool to ensure that the partnership is meeting its mission.

Focus on the future! Discuss training efforts and resources for both the community and the department. You may want to organize special events with trainers and speakers. Discuss ways to provide services that address local community issues. Mental health services, medical services, etc. Don't just focus on the police department, expand the conversation, identify local problems, locate services, and develop a plan of action. Keep the partnership on track; many people have unrealistic expectations of what the "police" can and cannot do. Provide guidance, and remember, this will take a lot of effort, but the outcomes will be beneficial. Law enforcement professionals understand that their agencies need the support of their community. Building support creates partnerships that lead to better relationships and understanding before a crisis occurs in your jurisdiction. If a crisis occurs in your jurisdiction before you build this bridge, your ability to convince your citizens that you are leading a professional organization will be questioned, and you, your agency's reputation and resources will suffer.

Additional Resources:

Bergquist, W., Betwee, J., & Meuel, D. (1995). *Building Strategic Relationships*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Bryson, J. M., & Alston, F. K. (2005). *Creating and Implementing Your Strategic Plan (2nd ed.)*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bryson, John (2004). *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations (3rd ed.)*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Steinhilber, S. (2008). *Strategic Alliances*. Cisco Systems, Inc. ISBN 978-1-4221-2588-5

U.S. Department of Justice. 2019. *Law Enforcement Best Practices: Lessons Learned from the Field*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

³ Osborne, D., & Plastrick, P. (2000). *The Reinventor's Fieldbook, Tools for Transforming Your Government*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.