

A Problem-Based  
Learning Manual  
for Training and Evaluating  
Police Trainees



# pto:

an overview  
and introduction



POLICE EXECUTIVE  
RESEARCH FORUM

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

# **A Problem-Based Learning Manual** ■

## for Training and Evaluating Police Trainees

This document is intended as an agency guide to the new Police Training Officer program and its implementation.

It is a companion to these other training materials in the Police Training Officer Series:

- PTO Manual
- Trainee Manual
- Training Standard



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

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## acknowledgements

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Particular thanks go to the members of the core team that developed the program, which include Jerry Hoover, Chief of Police, Reno Police Department; Ronald Glensor, Ph.D., Deputy Chief, Reno Police Department; Gregory Saville, Research Professor, University of New Haven; Gerry Cleveland, Police Training Consultant; Lisa Carroll, former Research Associate with PERF; Steve Pitts, Commander, Reno Police Department; Dave Ponte, Officer, Reno Police Department; and Jim Burack, Chief of Police, Milliken (CO) Police Department (formerly with PERF). We also extend our thanks to Ellen Scrivner, Ph.D., former Deputy Director for Community Policing Development at the COPS Office, for her support and guidance in developing this program, as well as all of the training officers who participated—particularly those in the Reno Police Department—for their valuable assistance.

In addition to the Reno Police Department, we also extend our thanks to the following five agencies that participated in the field-testing phase of the PTO Training Curriculum. Their input and ideas helped shape the content of this model program. They include the Savannah (GA) Police Department; the Colorado Springs (CO) Police Department; the Lowell (MA) Police Department; the Richmond (CA) Police Department; and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC) Police Department.

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the pto  
program

## introduction

**C**ommunity-oriented policing and problem solving (COPPS) has quickly become the philosophy and daily practice of progressive police agencies around the country. Police<sup>1</sup> administrators have come to recognize the ineffectiveness of incident-driven policing as well as the economic costliness of random patrol, rapid response, and post-crime investigation. Officers racing from call to call may have appeal on television, but it does not provide effective policing.



In their implementation of COPPS, police executives have voiced a common concern about training, especially post-academy field training for new officers. Post-academy field training has not emphasized or promoted COPPS concepts and behaviors. To address this deficiency, the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) funded the development of an alternative national model for field training that would incorporate community policing and problem-solving principles. To accomplish the objective, the Reno, Nevada, Police Department partnered with the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF). The result of their collaboration is a new training program called the Police Training Officer (PTO) program. It incorporates contemporary methods in adult education and a version of the problem-based learning (PBL) method of teaching adapted for police. Most importantly, it serves to ensure that academy graduates' first exposure to the real world is one that reflects policing in the 21st century.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "police" is meant to refer to all law enforcement practitioners at municipal, county and state agencies.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

The main objectives of the PTO program are as follows:

- To formulate learning opportunities for new officers that meet or exceed the training needs of the policing agency and the expectations of the community;
- To have trainees apply their academy learning to the community environment by giving them real-life problem-solving activities;
- To foster the trainee's growing independence from the Police Training Officer (PTO) over the course of the program;
- To produce graduates of the training program who are capable of providing responsible, community-focused police services;
- To prepare trainees to use a problem-solving approach throughout their careers by employing problem-based learning (PBL) methods;
- To design fair and consistent evaluations that address a trainee's skills, knowledge, and ability to problem solve effectively.

Following are the members of the core team that developed the PTO program:

*Dr. Ellen Scrivner, former Deputy Director at the COPS Office;*

*Jerry Hoover, Chief of Police, Reno Police Department;*

*Dr. Ronald Glensor, Deputy Chief, Reno Police Department;*

*Gregory Saville, Professor, University of New Haven;*

*Gerry Cleveland, Education Expert;*

*Lisa Carroll, former Research Associate with PERF;*

*Jim Burack, Chief of Police, Milliken (CO) Police Department (formerly with PERF);*

*Michael Scott, Director, Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, Inc.;*

*Steve Pitts, Commander, Reno Police Department; and*

*Dave Ponte, Officer, Reno Police Department.*



This new approach to training provides a foundation for life-long learning that prepares new officers for the complexities of policing today and in the future. It is focused on developing each officer's learning capacity, leadership abilities, and problem-solving skills. This is very different from traditional police training methods that over-emphasize mechanical skills and rote memory capabilities. While static skills are a necessity in police work and are integral to any training program, they constitute only one set of skills needed in contemporary policing.



During the research for this project, police administrators and training practitioners raised many issues about field training programs. Two common concerns stood out: traditional field training programs have not changed significantly over the past 30 years, and protection against liability. This model speaks to both concerns, incorporating contemporary COPPS concepts and guarding against liability through an emphasis on effective training. Moreover, the program can be tailored to each agency's

unique needs. Because of its flexibility, future changes in policing can be easily incorporated into the program.

## adoption considerations

### Why read this report?

Police executives across the nation have been looking for a post-academy training program that stresses community policing and problem solving. This report describes such a program.

Numerous attempts have been made over the years to modify the traditional "field training" model so that it could facilitate the learning of COPPS concepts. Those modifications were not successful. The PTO program reflects a new design and not a modification of a pre-existing training program. Police executives who want to innovate their training programs and institutionalize community policing and problem solving in their agencies should read this overview of the PTO program and summary of the implementation experience of six agencies.

**What conditions must be present to implement the PTO program?**

Because of its flexibility, the PTO program can be successfully implemented by any agency. However, the program is designed to function under the umbrella of community policing and problem solving. To implement the program, an agency needs to designate a PTO Coordinator and PTO Supervisors, and will develop a Board of Evaluators (BOE). These positions are described in the PTO Manual—one of the implementation resources described at the end of this document that is available to agencies.

**What are the costs of implementing the PTO program?** The costs of implementing the PTO program resemble the costs of implementing traditional field training programs. The costs are related to the training of officers, the writing of manuals, and the creation of forms.

**What are the immediate and long-term benefits of the PTO program?** The immediate benefits of the PTO program are many: patrol officers who understand and engage in problem solving; increased interest and involvement in community-oriented policing and problem solving (COPPS) on the part of new and experienced officers; greater trainee self-awareness; and a sense of area responsibility by new officers. An important long-term benefit to the agency is the further institutionalization of community policing and problem solving.

**What was the outcome of testing the PTO program?** As noted earlier, the PTO program was piloted by six agencies. The common outcome for these agencies, as the case studies in the next section make clear, was the development of a PTO program that improved the learning capacity of new officers. Agencies reported that the PBL method improved new officers' ability to handle basic policing tasks and responsibilities. Further, trainees learned to perform their duties more efficiently, effectively, and equitably and in a manner that reflects the principles of COPPS. The PTO program is designed to achieve the same results in any progressive police agency and the community it serves.

“trainees **learn** to perform their **duties** in a more **efficient, effective,** and **equitable** manner”

## implementation of the program

**T**o implement the PTO program, agencies will need to

- Philosophically support and educate trainees and PTOs in community-oriented policing and problem solving;
- Familiarize command staff and supervisors with this alternative national model for field training before they implement the PTO program;
- Educate trainees and Police Training Officers in the principles of problem-based learning;
- Introduce trainees to the model before they enter the PTO program;
- Train the PTO supervisors and PTOs in the new model. Further, because the program is based on problem-based learning, instructors should have a mastery of fundamental problem-based learning (PBL) and teaching principles. Resources that are available for agencies wishing to implement the PTO Program are described at the end of this document. These include PTO and PBL training manuals.

## what this document provides

**I**n addition to introducing the reader to the PTO program, this document summarizes the valuable experiences and lessons learned from the six agencies selected to participate in the PTO pilot project—Reno (NV) Police Department, Savannah (GA) Police Department, Lowell (MA) Police Department, Colorado Springs (CO) Police Department, Richmond (CA) Police Department, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC) Police Department. These agencies agreed to implement the developing

model so that it could be tested in real-world conditions and improved based on their input and experiences. The summary of their experiences provides an honest and candid assessment of benefits and challenges that police executives, training officers, and trainees confronted during implementation of the PTO program.



# “six agencies tested the pto program in real-world conditions. This is their story.”

The following sections of this introduction describe the history of post-academy training programs, the problem-based learning method, and the PTO program’s content, phases, and evaluation process. The next section, entitled “Case Studies,” describes the specific experiences of the six police agencies that participated in the process of developing the PTO program. The section on “Lessons Learned” presents agency-identified ingredients for success and the final section describes the resources that are available to agencies that are interested in implementing the PTO Program.

## post-academy training: old and new

### The Beginning

**P**olice academies have been around in one form or another since the early twentieth century. However, post-academy training programs, often referred to as Field Training Officer (FTO) programs, were not implemented in the United States until the 1970s. The first FTO program was developed in San Jose, California.

The “San Jose Model,” as the first field training model has become known, helped trainees transition from the police academy to single-officer assignments in the patrol division. Academy graduates were placed on the streets with experienced officers. Standard evaluation guidelines (SEGs) were developed that described the actions and behaviors expected of the trainees. These guidelines then became the basis for a system to evaluate each trainee’s performance. Trainees were evaluated every day in 29 categories; the evaluators used checklists and Likert numerical scales. The overall learning strategy of the San Jose Model was loosely based on Skinner’s Behavior Modification method.

The San Jose Model became a mainstay in police training. It is reportedly used today by approximately 4,000 agencies. The original behavioral anchors written for the model were increased from 29 categories to 31 categories in 1981. Other than some peripheral changes, the San Jose Model has remained relatively unchanged since then. With little success, several attempts were made to modify the model so that it would reflect contemporary community-oriented policing.

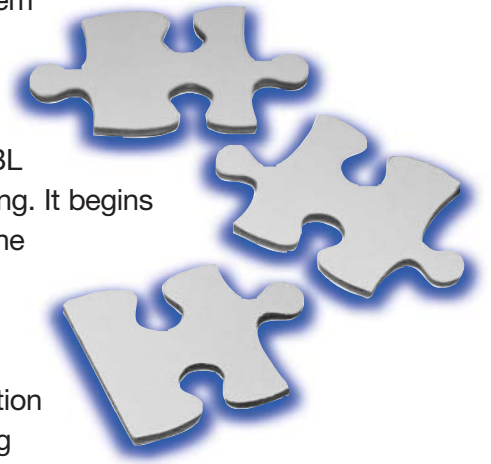


### **A New Model**

As previously mentioned, in 1999 the COPS Office funded a project to design, implement, and test a training model that would serve as an alternative to the San Jose Model. Several focus groups were convened, and more than 400 police and sheriffs' departments were surveyed to identify what agencies wanted in modern field training. After almost two years of design, the Reno Police Department was the first agency to apply the PTO model. Five other agencies subsequently adopted the developing "Reno Model" and lessons learned from implementation in all agencies were incorporated into the final model that appears here.

## a problem-solving training model

**T**he PTO program relies on adult learning strategies, in particular the problem-based learning (PBL) method. PBL is a learner-centered teaching method that uses problem solving as the vehicle for learning. Under the traditional field training model, a teacher or trainer (the content expert) delivered information to the learner or trainee. PBL departs from this traditional method of learning. It begins with presentation of a real-life problem that the trainee must attempt to solve. The trainee follows a pattern of discovery whereby he or she expresses ideas about solving the problem, lists known facts, decides what information to use to solve the problem (including naming sources for that learning), and develops an action plan to solve the problem. Several evaluation methods determine whether the action plan succeeded or failed.



PBL is the engine that drives the PTO program. The trainees learn to look at problems in a broad community context. The most tangible benefit of the new model lies in its application to street situations that have neither easy answers nor obvious solutions. It encourages trainees to explore, analyze, and think systemically. The PBL method encourages trainees to collaborate with peers, develop resources, and communicate effectively with the community. These are the hallmarks of good police work.

## the program: content, phases, and evaluation process

This section details the important features of the PTO program—features that distinguish it from traditional field training programs.

### Substantive Topics and Core Competencies

The PTO program covers two primary training areas: Substantive Topics (the most common activities in policing) and Core Competencies. The four **Substantive Topics**, that define the key phases of the training, are

- Non-Emergency Incident Response
- Emergency Incident Response
- Patrol Activities
- Criminal Investigation

**Core Competencies** are the common activities in which officers engage and the skills they use during the daily performance of their duties.

There are 15 Core Competencies:

- Police Vehicle Operations
- Conflict Resolution
- Use of Force
- Local Procedures, Policies, Laws and Organizational Philosophies
- Report Writing
- Leadership
- Problem-Solving Skills
- Community Specific Problems
- Cultural Diversity & Special Needs Groups
- Legal Authority
- Individual Rights
- Officer Safety
- Communication Skills
- Ethics
- Lifestyle Stressors/Self-Awareness/Self-Regulation







## Program Phases

Each phase of the PTO program is briefly explained below. Note that four of the phases are content-related or programmatic phases: Phase A on Non-Emergency Incident Response, Phase B on Emergency Incident Response, Phase C on Patrol Activities, and Phase D on Criminal Investigation. Additionally, the program calls for Orientation and Integration Phases and evaluation periods.

**Orientation Phase:** Many agencies have found that trainees graduating from the academy, especially from a regional academy, require additional training in agency-specific skills or information. The Orientation Phase is intended to provide this necessary training and information. Examples of this type of agency-specific training include computer literacy, specialized firearms training, defensive tactics, and policy and procedures. Orientation can also include trainee familiarization with the agency's PTO program. This "orientation" training must be completed before the Integration phase can begin. The length of or decision to include the Orientation Phase depends upon the needs of the agency.

**Integration Phase (1 week):** The Integration phase is designed to teach the trainee how to report for duty prepared. This is a period of time for the trainee to acclimate to a new environment while under the PTO's supervision. Areas of instruction include how to acquire necessary equipment, and familiarization with the department, other government organizations, administrative procedures, and the PTO problem-based learning processes, including evaluations. The trainee does not receive an evaluation during the Integration phase.

**Phase A (3 weeks):** Phase A is the initial training and learning experience for the trainee; it emphasizes **Non-Emergency Incident Responses**.

**Phase B (3 weeks):** Phase B, the second training and learning experience for the trainee, emphasizes **Emergency Incident Responses**.

**Mid-Term Evaluation (1 week):** Following Phases A and B of the learning experience, the trainee transfers to a Police Training Evaluator (PTE) and participates in a Mid-Term Evaluation. Switching from the PTO to a PTE for evaluation ensures that the training officer is not constantly changing roles from trainer to evaluator. The roles of trainer and evaluator overlap somewhat even in the PTO program, but not to the point of interference as has been the case in some traditional FTO programs. The PTE will use the Learning Matrix as an evaluation tool to assess the trainee's performance during the course of that week's activities. In the event the trainee is experiencing difficulties and does not successfully complete the Mid-Term Evaluation, he or she may need to return to a prior phase of the training program or otherwise receive remedial training.

**Phase C (3 weeks):** The third training and learning experience for the trainee, Phase C, emphasizes **Patrol Activities**.

**Phase D (3 weeks):** This final phase of training and learning emphasizes **Criminal Investigation**.

**Final Evaluation (1 week):** During the Final Evaluation, the trainee again transfers to a PTE. The PTE will use the Learning Matrix as an evaluation tool to assess the trainee's performance during the course of the evaluation period. If the trainee experiences difficulties and does not successfully complete the Final Evaluation, he or she may repeat a previous phase of training or receive other remedial training that focuses on the trainee's deficiencies.

If a trainee does not respond to training and is recommended for termination, the coordinator forwards all material, including recommendations, to the Board of Evaluators. The BOE conducts a review of the trainee's performance before providing a written recommendation to the Program Coordinator.

## Coaching and Evaluation Process

One of the major concerns about traditional field training programs is the effort spent on evaluation. In traditional programs, trainees are evaluated on 31 categories every day of a 14-week program. Those evaluations, commonly based on a one through seven numerical scale, often focus on the trainee's failure to perform certain tasks. Trainees become intimidated at the prospect of a failing score and are reluctant to extend themselves during training.



Although evaluation is a component of the PTO program, the program as a whole exists to support the training of new officers rather than the termination of the marginal few. The documentation used in the PTO program is extensive and adequate for use in the termination process, if necessary, but that is not its main purpose. The PTO evaluation process is meant to focus on success. If the trainee does perform poorly, and each does at some time, then the concept of “failing forward” is stressed. Trainees learn from their mistakes and are guided and coached through the training process. The PTO program encourages training officers to make the evaluation process a positive one. This approach can have a tremendously beneficial impact on the success of the trainees.

The evaluation process is not based on daily checklists, but it is fairly extensive nevertheless. Evaluation of trainees takes place in the following ways:

- Coaching and Training Reports (CTRs) at the end of each week: Reflections on a trainee response to a selected call for service pertaining to the theme of the current training phase (for instance, Emergency Incident Response, Criminal Investigation) and based on the fifteen Core Competencies reflected in the Learning Matrix.
- Problem-Based Learning Exercises (PBLEs) in each of the four program phases: Problem-solving exercises that apply the problem-based learning method to situations the trainee will confront in each phase of training.
- Neighborhood Portfolio Exercise (NPE) developed during all four phases: A detailed, trainee-developed overview of the area where he or she works, including the identification of key community stakeholders, a characterization of the social and cultural aspects of the area, and a description of key crime and disorder issues.

- Week-long Mid-Term Evaluation: Following the completion of Phases A and B, the PTO turns the trainee over to a Police Training Evaluator (PTE) who assesses the trainee's progress using as a guide the Learning Matrix described above.
- Week-long Final Evaluation: Same process as above occurring at the end of the training.
- If the department chooses, an assessment of the trainee by the Board of Evaluators.

## conclusion

**T**he PTO program is the first new post-academy field training program for law enforcement agencies in more than 30 years. Its original design makes it one of the strongest training innovations in decades. The program, first tested at the Reno Police Department and subsequently tested by five other agencies, has produced outstanding results. New officers enter the field with problem-solving skills that are rarely seen at that career level. New officers also display remarkable leadership and a willingness to work as partners with the local community to fight crime and disorder. The PTO program is producing officers who have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude for today's law enforcement environment.







# case studies

Reno (NV)  
Police Department

Savannah (GA)  
Police Department

Lowell (MA)  
Police Department

Colorado Springs (CO)  
Police Department

Richmond (CA)  
Police Department

Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC)  
Police Department

The Reno PD was the first to test the PTO program. Five additional agencies were chosen as pilot sites, bringing the total to six. The selection of these agencies produced diversity across sites in terms of geography, size, command structure, and policing environment. Importantly, each agency was interested in improving its field training.

This pilot implementation in six sites was very important to the development of the PTO program. Feedback from each agency about its experiences helped the project team produce the high-quality PTO program that is now ready to be implemented in agencies nationwide.

## the reno (nv) police department



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**R**eno, a city of approximately 70 square miles, is located on the north-eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountains in Nevada. It has a resident population of about 187,000 and an average tourist population of 35,000 visitors per day. The gaming industry represents the major source of revenue for the City of Reno, and it generates a 24-hour culture for community and business services.

The Reno Police Department, with 340 sworn members and 520 civilian employees, has policing jurisdiction over the entire City of Reno, which is primarily urban with some rural areas. The police department's services are divided into three geographic areas of command: North, Central, and South. Each area of command is organized into several beats. Departmental command is administratively and procedurally centralized. The department is headed by a Chief of Police who is supported by an Assistant Chief and

five Deputy Chiefs of Police. Other ranks within the Reno PD include Commander, Lieutenant, Sergeant, and Police Officer.

The Reno PD ascribes to community-oriented policing and problem solving as its core policing philosophy. Department-wide training in COPPS began in 1986, and Reno re-certifies officers annually. The department requires officers to practice community-oriented policing in daily activities, and it uses the COPPS philosophy as a primary evaluation measure. Internally, the department employs problem solving as a management resource, and the Reno city government has adopted the problem-solving method to deal with larger issues affecting the whole community.

Prior to implementing the Police Training Officer (PTO) program, the Reno PD used a Field Training Officer (FTO) program that was based on a modified version of the San Jose



Model described above. The department's FTO program relied on Daily Observation Reports of a trainee's performance on more than 30 standardized performance guidelines. A trainee's performance was measured on a Likert scale of one through seven. To accommodate its policing philosophy, the department modified the FTO program to include the components of community-oriented policing and problem solving as appended performance guidelines.

The department discovered that encompassing COPPS in FTO training in the form of additional performance guidelines was not effective: new officers were not persuaded to practice the philosophy. Instead of being considered the foundation of policing, community-oriented policing and problem solving were considered by trainees to be merely two elements in the long list of standardized performance guidelines. Changing the task-driven orientation of offi-

cers in Reno to a problem-based orientation was essential because of Reno's burgeoning population and the attendant new policing challenges. Immigration and city expansion as a result of annexation created a more diverse population and a higher volume of calls for service. Reno's greater size and diversity made it all the more important that new officers be able to identify interrelated community problems. The increase in calls for service made the Reno PD's former incident-driven response burdensome and suggested the need for proactive problem solving. The traditional field training model formerly in use was not preparing Reno officers to handle the pace of change in the community.

The Reno PD was the beta site for the PTO program.

### Academy Structure and Training

- Two academies per year are given at the Regional Training Center for Public Safety. Each academy graduates 10 to 15 officers per cycle for the Reno PD.
- Officers receive 12 initial hours of classroom training in community policing, problem-oriented policing, and problem-based learning.
- Recruits reinforce this training through practice during the 15-week continuous academy.

### PTO Program

#### Selection

- The Reno PD evaluated any interested personnel—including those who had served as Field Training Officers—according to the principles of learning, education, and leadership found in the PTO program.

#### Reno Police Department's PTO Selection Criteria:

- Three years of service in law enforcement
- Prior training experience
- Demonstrated COPPS abilities
- Knowledge of adult-learning principles

#### Reno Police Department's PTO Selection Process:

- Make a department-wide announcement
- Request a letter of intent and resume from each candidate
- Convene candidate assessment board
- Review personnel file, resume
- Evaluate professional training history
- Evaluate leadership ability
- Conduct a suitability review of the candidate



- Of the 32 officers selected to become Police Training Officers, approximately 75 percent had prior experience as Reno PD Field Training Officers and 25 percent were new to field training.
- Selected PTOs had all received the standard, department-wide COPPS training.

### Command Structure

- Location – Patrol Division
- Command Responsibility – Division Commander
- Program Management – One full-time police officer as Program Coordinator
- Personnel Structure – 20 PTOs report to 5 Police Training Supervisors (PTs) who hold the rank of Sergeant
- Board of Evaluators – 2 to 3 active PTOs, PTO Supervisor, Program Coordinator, Program Commander

### Incentives

- By contract, PTOs are entitled to a 10 percent annual pay incentive, which is not dependent on whether the PTO is actively training.
- PTOs are given preferential access to training opportunities and pre-authorized overtime while training.

### PTO Training

- Training was delivered over 40 hours in a five-day period.
- Thirty-one officers were trained as PTOs, and five Sergeants were trained as Police Training Supervisors (PTs). The Chief and two Deputy Chiefs of Police also attended the training.

- After that training, 20 officers and 5 supervisors were ultimately selected to serve as PTOs and PTs.

### Program Structure

- The agency-specific trainee orientation (Orientation Phase) prior to the program lasted two weeks and included instruction on problem-based learning and an introduction to the PTO model. Trainees also engaged in a one-week Integration Phase to familiarize themselves with the Reno PD.
- Reno, as the beta site, began the training phases with PTO-trainee teams in the Emergency Incident Response Phase, followed by the phases Non-Emergency Incident Response, Patrol Activities, and Criminal Investigation.
- PTOs and their trainees were assigned to both day and swing shifts. This gave the training teams maximum exposure to resources such as crime analysis, detectives, neighborhood meetings, and governmental services.
- Trainees were assigned to one of the three geographic areas of command, and they remained in that area for the duration of the training.
- Upon completion of the training, trainees may be re-assigned to serve in a different geographic area of command, but they take with them the ability to learn a geographic patrol district and its dynamics.

## Evaluation Structure

- The Mid-Term and Final Evaluation phases each lasted one-week and were based on proficiency in the 15 Core Competencies in the Coaching and Training Reports (CTRs).
- The Board of Evaluators was used to evaluate the trainers and the overall program operation. The BOE also was used at the request of PTO staff to evaluate certain trainees and recommend remedial training measures.

## Implementation Experiences

- Early involvement at all levels throughout the department enhanced cooperation and buy-in:
  - Officers in the Reno PD began receiving information about the PTO program one year prior to implementation.
  - Command staff was familiarized with the program at all stages.
  - All lieutenants and sergeants were given an orientation and executive summary.
  - Prior to their 40-hour training, PTOs attended workshops to engage them in decisions regarding the specific implementation of the program in Reno.
  - A committee of PTOs planned and implemented the program.
  - PTOs were encouraged to take time to explain the program to anyone in the department with questions.
- Including teaching abilities as one of the criteria for PTO selection proved valuable because of the program's intense emphasis on coaching.
- Bi-weekly PTO meetings kept the group cohesive and enabled participants to share training ideas and work through program implementation obstacles. Weekly team meetings of trainers and PTSs identified the immediate training needs of each trainee.
- Daily journal writing, when introduced in the PTO course, was a new concept initially resisted by trainers. It proved, however, to be one of the most important and useful tools for PTOs and trainees in the field.
- In the initial design of the program, PTOs and trainees were required to complete two CTRs per week – a workload that proved burdensome. Reducing the CTRs to one per week improved the quality of the reports, reduced the time burden on the training team, and did not negatively affect the training.
- PTOs recommended shifting the Emergency Incident Response phase from the beginning of the program to one of the later phases. Neither trainer nor trainee was comfortable initiating the program and its active learning philosophy under emergency incident circumstances.

## the savannah (ga) police department



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**T**he City of Savannah lies midway along Georgia’s Atlantic coast and contains one of the nation’s largest historic districts. The city covers 70 square miles and is home to 142,000 residents. Serviced by an international airport, Savannah welcomes over six million visitors per year. Tourism, one of the city’s main industries, is increasing, and crime during the past decade has slowly increased as well. The Savannah Police Department faces the challenge of protecting the city’s citizens and historic properties, as well as projecting an image of safety to prospective visitors.

A force of 425 sworn members police the largely urban area of the City of Savannah. The Savannah PD includes the ranks of Patrol Officer, Advanced Patrol Officer, Corporal, Star Corporal, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, Major, and Chief. The department is divided into four districts and a headquarters. Daily operations can vary slightly between districts. For example, some districts operate three shifts per day; other districts work on a “4-10” shift schedule. The department chose to implement the PTO program across all districts.

Community policing is incorporated in the department’s mission statement, and problem solving is expected of every officer. Its application in the field is not uniform: some officers implement formal

“projects” and others practice community-oriented policing and problem solving (COPPS) less formally.

Prior to the Savannah PD’s participation as a pilot site for the Police Training Officer (PTO) program, the department trained its new officers using a modified version of the San Jose Model. This model involved daily and weekly observation reports that measured trainee performance on a seven-point Likert scale. The Savannah PD had not formally modified its field-training model to incorporate COPPS, but many individual Field Training Officers (FTOs) had informally modified their training practices to include problem solving.

Savannah PD personnel felt that their field training system lacked department-wide uniformity, with training tailored to the abilities and inclinations of a particular trainer. There was a lack of uniform application of certain elements at specific times or phases. In order to instill in PD personnel needed confidence in new trainees, trainers decided to ensure that all trainees were covering critical material. Further, trainers felt that observation reports didn’t reflect accurately the abilities of trainees or provide for accurate evaluation. Extremely high or low scores on observation reports were seldom given since these scores required additional paperwork on the part of the trainer.

### Academy Structure and Training

- Five to six 10-week academies per year at a regional academy graduate 6 to 13 Savannah PD officers per academy.
- Community policing is taught for 8 hours in the academy, with a portion of that time devoted to problem solving.
- Academy graduates receive five weeks of additional department-specific training after the regional academy, including 12 hours of COPPS training.
- All officers who graduated from the academy before COPPS was an instruction topic received 40-hours of in-service training.

### PTO Program

#### Selection

- Selection of PTOs was informal, with each precinct taking its own approach.
- Forty-nine officers were selected for PTO training. Almost all of the participants in the first class of 25 were experienced FTOs, while the second class of PTOs was split evenly between experienced FTOs and officers who had not previously been field trainers.
- Selected PTOs had all received either COPPS training in the academy or a five-week in-service training.

#### Savannah Police Department's PTO Selection Criteria:

- Past performance on the force
- Shift assignment, to ensure even distribution

#### Savannah Police Department's PTO Selection Process:

- Sergeants submit candidate recommendations
- For the second class, some precincts had candidates submit applications

### Incentives

- Trainers are given extra overtime allowance while training.

### PTO Training

- To accommodate the department's size, Savannah trained two classes of PTOs over two five-day periods.
- The department trained 39 officers as PTOs, as well as 9 Sergeants and one Lieutenant. Senior staff at the ranks of Captain and Major demonstrated interest by attending segments of the training.

### Program Structure

- A one-week agency-specific Orientation Phase was part of the program.
- Trainees were assigned to PTOs in the district in which they would be stationed, but each training team rotated between beats in that district, covering a different beat in each three-week phase.
- An effort was made to assign PTO-trainee teams to daytime shifts, but due to shift rotation some PTOs were only available on midnight shifts.
- Precincts tried different variations of PTO-trainee assignment, with some assigning a different PTO for each of the four program phases and others switching PTOs at the Mid-Term point.
- The first group of training teams made Patrol Activities the focus of the first phase, but subsequent teams became most comfortable with executing the program phases in the following order: Non-Emergency Incident Response, Emergency Incident Response, Patrol Activities, and Criminal Investigation. This sequence enabled trainees to begin with the phases that involve more calls for service.

### Command Structure

- Location – Police Precinct
- Command Responsibility – Precinct Captain
- Program Management – One full-time Lieutenant serves as Program Coordinator.
- Personnel Structure – Precinct PTOs report to two Sergeants in each precinct.
- Board of Evaluators – The membership rotates, but the Board always includes a Captain and a Lieutenant from each precinct and three Sergeants.

### Evaluation Structure

- One-week Mid-Term Evaluation and, initially, a two-week Final Evaluation. Final Evaluation was later reduced to one week.
- Phase repetition was used as a remedial measure for trainees experiencing problems.
- The Board of Evaluators was used to evaluate the program, to evaluate the effectiveness of trainers, and occasionally to discuss remedial measures for trainees.

### Implementation Experiences

- Using shift and precinct assignment of trainees as part of the PTO selection criteria ensured even distribution of personnel, but it necessitated training some PTOs with lower experience levels.
- PTOs enjoyed the flexibility of allowing trainees time to return to the station to complete program assignments while the PTO still answered calls for service.
- The department developed a two-hour informational session about the program for Lieutenants and Sergeants who did not attend the PTO trainings, so they would understand why some trainees were off the street and in the squad room.

- PTOs found their own journal entries very helpful for reflection when passing the trainee to the next training officer. The nature and depth of trainees' journal entries varied, reflecting the varied emphasis placed on journal writing by each PTO.
- Shift schedules made communication and cohesion between PTOs and precincts difficult. PTOs were unable to meet regularly, and while some PTOs met together informally to share experiences and ideas, variations in program application were experienced across the four districts.
- Trainers need consensus to pass recruits. The PTO, Sergeant, Lieutenant, and Captain all sign off in the process. Under the previous system, trainers were reluctant to be responsible for giving the failing grade that held a trainee back. Now trainers must take responsibility for the passing grade.
- Savannah tailored the Problem-Based Learning Exercises (PBLEs) to reflect unique precinct problems. As a result, one trainee solved an eight-year-old crime problem while field training.
- Evaluators felt they had an accurate picture of whether trainees and trainers were performing well.
- Trainees are asking more questions, they are learning faster, and they are becoming more involved in the community. Their skills in problem solving also are improving.
- Officers' confidence in new recruits is improved.

## the lowell (ma) police department



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**T**he Lowell Police Department's 119 civilian personnel and 256 sworn officers, police a Massachusetts city of approximately 106,000 residents. The City of Lowell, 30 miles North of Boston, began as a textile-producing community. Since weathering an economic downturn, Lowell is restoring warehouses and experiencing an influx of new industry. It has an expanding Southeast Asian population.

The Lowell PD divides the city's 14 square miles into the three geographic sectors of North, East, and West. These sectors house the department's seven satellite precincts and centralized command. The Superintendent of the PD is supported by the ranks of Patrol Officer, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, and Deputy Chief.

Community-oriented policing is the operational philosophy of the department. Once the function of one unit, it is now expected of all officers. In the academy, recruits are prepared with a curriculum that is based on community-oriented policing and problem solving (COPPS), and they must complete a problem-solving project before graduation. The department wanted to move toward a post-academy training model that reinforced its policing model. Training was being conducted using the San Jose Model. This model had not been modified to incorporate

community policing concepts. The traditional Field Training Officers (FTO) program had lost the confidence of officers, who consequently were reluctant to become trainers themselves. One of the early obstacles overcome by the Lowell PD in switching from the FTO program to the Police Training Officer (PTO) program was convincing potential trainers that the new program would turn out competent, capable problem solvers.

### Academy Structure and Training

- The regional academy is annual and runs for 25 weeks.
- The Lowell PD graduates approximately nine officers per academy class.
- The academy curriculum is structured around COPPS, with recruits actively practicing problem solving.

### PTO Program

#### Selection

- Selection of PTOs was difficult for the department, largely because of trainers' dissatisfaction with the previous training model.
- Officers were asked to volunteer for the training positions.
- Half of those chosen had been FTOs; half had never been trainers.



- All those attending the training had received the academy COPPS training or, if they had attended the academy prior to the inclusion of COPPS in the curriculum, had received 40 hours of in-service training.

### Lowell Police Department's PTO Selection Criteria:

- Three years of duty as a Lowell PD officer
- Favorable training attitude
- No disciplinary actions within the past year

### Lowell Police Department's PTO Selection Process:

- Initially, the department selected PTOs from a short list of volunteers; because the list was short, the screening was not rigorous.
- A renewed interest in training produced a longer list of volunteer candidates, allowing the Lowell PD to implement a more rigorous selection process:
  - PTO Sergeants evaluate each applicant.
  - Criteria were expanded to include community policing indicators.
  - The selection continues year-round.

### Incentives

- The department offered the same incentives (listed below) that it had under the previous training program.
- A weekly stipend is provided for the duration of the program.
- PTOs who are actively training receive an hour of compensatory time for each day of training.

### PTO Training

- To accommodate shift scheduling, the department delivered the 40-hour PTO training over a four-day period.
- Twenty-eight officers were trained, including 15 PTOs, 5 Police Training Evaluators (PTEs), 6 Sergeants, a Lieutenant, and the Training Academy Supervisor.
- The agency's Superintendent attended part of the training.

### Program Structure

- PTOs are distributed between the day shift and the early night shift.
- The six trained Sergeants are evenly divided between the department's three sectors, with a Sergeant covering each of the two training shifts.
- Sergeants coordinate groups of PTOs, their trainees, and PTEs. Bi-weekly PTO meetings are held throughout the program.
- PTEs only serve as evaluators and do not function in a PTO capacity.
- Initially, trainees remained in a single sector throughout the training, but the program has been changed to expose trainees to each of the three sectors.
- The department modified the program schedule. Instead of four three-week phases, the department used three four-week phases so that the trainees could spend time in each of the three sectors.

### Evaluation Structure

- The Mid-Term and Final Evaluation phases each lasted one week.
- Because the department changed the schedule to produce three phases, it added a third evaluation. Now an evaluation follows each phase.

## Command Structure

- Location – Support Services Division
- Command Responsibility – Deputy Chief of Support Services
- Program Management – One Lieutenant acts as part-time Program Coordinator.
- Personnel Structure – PTOs report to PTO Sergeants, who in turn report to the Program Coordinator.
- Board of Evaluators (BOE) – Three Patrol Officers and three PTO Sergeants constituted the BOE for the pilot training. Its composition is presently under review.

## Implementation Experiences

- Participants found that it was difficult to learn all of the material in only a four-day PTO academy.
- Despite officers' criticism of the field training model in place before the PTO program, many remained attached to certain components of that model.
  - The clear-cut numeric evaluation of the previous model was acclaimed, until it became apparent that useful evaluation information could be gleaned through the PTO program's written evaluations.
  - PTOs moved to incorporate their "rook book"—or trainee task manual—into the Learning Matrix, creating a program hybrid.
- The Union requested involvement in program administration components, such as PTO selection and compensation, and in BOE activities.
- Bi-weekly meetings ensured that the trainer group was cohesive. Meeting topics included program modifications, new criteria for incoming PTOs, and the identification of potential problems with trainees.
- The program structure was modified to expose trainees to all police sectors, and the evaluation structure was modified to fit the three-phase schedule.
- The Board of Evaluators was used successfully to solve a PTO-PTE personnel issue that arose, demonstrating that Problem-Based Learning Exercises (PBLEs) can be useful not only in training but also in program administration.
- Trainees were allowed to work together in learning teams on Neighborhood Portfolio Exercises (NPEs). Exercises were done well and presented to the command staff at meetings.
- Journal writing was not emphasized as a learning tool by PTOs, who were concerned about the potential for "discovery" pursuant to court cases.
- Initial training teams left PBLEs and NPEs until the end of program phases, and then they felt rushed to complete them. Backing those components up into the heart of the program re-emphasized their learning value.
- Compared to the FTO program, PTOs found it easier to head off problems with recruits and to fix them before they became major. PTOs felt that they would not have detected these issues under the FTO program.
- PTOs respected the program's separation of evaluation and training.
- Recruits became involved in regular policing activities more quickly than under the previous program, and they gained a greater understanding of the communities they policed.



## the colorado springs (co) police department



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**A**longside Pike's Peak and the Rocky Mountains, the City of Colorado Springs, Colorado, is located 68 miles south of Denver. Colorado Springs covers approximately 200 square miles and is a hub for the U.S. military space industry, as well as for technology manufacturing and amateur sports training. Its geography and climate make it a popular travel destination.

The recently expanded force of the Colorado Springs Police Department oversees public safety for the city's population of 386,000. At the time of its participation as a PTO program pilot site, the Colorado Springs PD was in the process of increasing its force of 594 sworn officers by 117. (Currently there are 666 sworn officers.) As part of the adjustment, the department's three patrol divisions were expanded to four. Operations of the PTO program were decentralized to a degree in Colorado Springs. This produced variations in the program within the then three different divisions of the department.

The practice of community-oriented policing and problem solving (COPPS) is uniform throughout the department. Community policing is the Colorado Springs PD's core value, and it is the policing philosophy that underlies the execution of its daily police activities. Additionally, a neighborhood-

policing unit focuses on specific projects. The department was interested in switching to the Police Training Officer (PTO) program to better prepare new recruits for policing within the context of the department's COPPS orientation and to address trainers' concerns about the Field Training Officer (FTO) program then in use.

The department was using a field training model it had modified to include a neighborhood summary component. It had also added a problem-oriented policing project to the checklist of FTO performance guidelines, but command staff still felt that the program was turning out new officers who, while proficient at basic policing tasks, were not focused on solving crime and disorder problems. Further, the Colorado Springs PD was having difficulty keeping and recruiting training officers, despite overtime and other pay incentives, because officers found the daily paperwork requirements of the agency's existing training program too burdensome and time consuming.

### Academy Structure and Training

- The Colorado Springs PD training academy runs two classes per year, each lasting 21 weeks. With the proposed expansion in agency size, the academy and post-academy trainers faced greater-than-usual numbers of graduating recruits.

- Thirty-five to 40 new officers graduate per class.
- Community-oriented policing and problem solving are taught in an eight-hour instruction block, and they also are incorporated in exercises throughout academy training. Sixteen to 20 hours of instruction in problem-oriented policing (POP) are delivered, and recruits are required to complete a POP project while in the academy.

### PTO Program

#### Selection

- The selection process was formal and department-wide.
- All selected PTOs had received COPPS training. Some had received this training in the academy, and some received 16 hours of in-service training when the department switched philosophically to community-oriented policing.
- Three-quarters of the 28 Colorado Springs PD officers who were selected for the PTO program were experienced FTOs; the remainder had never been training officers.

#### Incentives

- The department maintained its five percent pay increase for training officers.

#### PTO Training

- The Colorado Springs PD trained 28 personnel in the PTO program. Among those trained were four Sergeants, including the Training Academy Sergeant, and three Lieutenants. One of the department's Deputy Chiefs also attended part of the training.
- Training was conducted over four ten-hour days.

#### Colorado Springs Police Department's PTO Selection Criteria:

- Rank of Patrol Officer, 2nd class, with at least two years of service
- No disciplinary action within the past one year
- Passing grade on the most current fitness test
- "Memorandum of Request" from the officer (stating why the officer felt he or she was qualified for the position) and a personal resume

#### Colorado Springs Police Department's PTO Selection Process:

- PTO positions were posted.
- All candidates, including those active as FTOs, had to apply for the PTO positions. The department felt this encouraged applications from officers who truly wanted to train.
- Applications and resumes were reviewed by the department's Board of Evaluators (BOE).

#### Program Structure

- Trainees in the PTO program were assigned to afternoon and swing shifts to allow them daytime opportunities to make community contacts.
- Training teams remained in a single assigned sector within a division for the duration of the training.
- Colorado Springs PD trainees went through the program phases in the order established during the Savannah training: Non-Emergency Incident Response, Emergency Incident Response, Patrol Activities, and Criminal Investigation. The department was comfortable with that order.

### Command Structure

- Location – Each Patrol Division
- Command Responsibility – Division Lieutenant
- Program Management – Division Sergeant
- Personnel Structure – Teams of nine PTOs report to a PTO Sergeant within their division.
- Board of Evaluators – An implementation committee that had been formed to direct the department's transition to the PTO program became the BOE. Members are a Commander, three Lieutenants, three Sergeants, and a representative from the training academy.

### Evaluation Structure

- PTEs used Learning Activity Packages and Coaching and Training Reports (CTRs) as evaluation tools.
- A one-week Mid-Term Evaluation and one-week Final Evaluation were conducted.
- The BOE met only when PTOs identified a problem with a trainee.

### Implementation Experiences

- The Colorado Springs PD pilot tested the PTO program while it was training a class of recruits using the FTO model. Trainers' instruction in the PTO model and a comparison of the FTO and PTO programs convinced trainers and command staff of the inadequacy of the traditional training model. By the next training cycle, the department had switched to train its entire post-academy class using the PTO program.
- The department has ranks of Chief, Deputy Chief, Commander, Lieutenant, Sergeant, and Police Officer. An additional rank of Master Police Officer – which

included FTO duties – was removed after Colorado Springs began to implement the PTO program.

- The department recognized variation between its three divisions in the manner of PTO implementation. After the initial training, the divisions cooperated operationally in the execution of the program. That is, the training was no longer decentralized.
- Supervisory oversight was identified as essential for program success. The department found that in the division where supervisors became directly involved, formed training teams, and oversaw logistical issues, the trainers developed cohesion and the program had consistency of structure and content. Effective division coordination included:
  - Face-to-face weekly meetings between the Sergeant and each PTO-trainee team
  - Bi-weekly meetings of all division PTOs and Sergeants to discuss the program
- Training relied heavily on the learning matrix, and each call for service was later related back to the matrix by the training team. Journal writing was used at these times, and it became a valuable reference.
- The PTO program significantly affected the training curriculum at the academy.
  - Instruction was reconfigured to adopt the problem-based learning (PBL) style of teaching used in the PTO program.
  - Initially, as a time-saving measure for trainees, some of the components were removed from the PTO training program and placed into the acade-

my. The department later realized that the components that had been moved to the academy program were a vital part of the learning that occurred during the PTO training. The department decided to move the components back into the context of the PTO training, but use the academy to introduce recruits to Problem-Based Learning Exercises (PBLEs) and CTRs. The early exposure to reports, forms, and exercises helps Colorado Springs' trainees to complete these components more efficiently once in the program.

- The Neighborhood Portfolio Exercise (NPE) was moved entirely into the academy and made part of its curriculum. Trainees in Colorado Springs had not remained in one division sector long enough during the PTO program to complete the assignment. This shift also gave the trainee more of an opportunity to focus specifically on the training phases of the PTO program while in the field. By giving trainees the time and the opportunity to complete the assignment while in the academy environment, the department found that the NPE quality improved. Once graduated and in PTO training, the trainee is still required by his or her PTO to use his or her NPE-developed skills.
- When the most significant weekly incident applied to a different phase of program training (for instance, an emergency response incident occurs during the Criminal Investigation phase), PTO-trainee teams chose to complete a CTR on that incident.

## the richmond (ca) police department



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**N**ortheast of San Francisco on the San Francisco Bay, the City of Richmond, California, spans 56 square miles of land and water area and has 32 miles of shoreline. The city has both residential and industrial areas and an estimated population of 100,000. The population is highly diverse—37 percent African American, 32 percent Hispanic, and 22 percent Caucasian.

Primary law enforcement jurisdiction for the city falls to the Richmond Police Department, with approximately 200 sworn officers and 80 civilian employees. The PD ascribes to the community-oriented policing philosophy as its primary method for delivering service. All officers (not specialized teams) practice community-oriented policing and problem solving (COPPS). Command for the Richmond PD is divided into five geographical areas, with each area subdivided into smaller beats. Each of the five areas contains a sub-station for the convenience of officers and citizens, but departmental control is centralized. The department is comprised of Police Officers, Sergeants, Lieutenants, five Captains, an Assistant Chief, and Chief.

The Richmond PD adopted the PTO program in order to teach its recruit officers methods for creative problem solving in a

city where calls for police service are high. The department's prior model of police training measured trainee performance across 25 dimensions, using a seven-point scale associated with Daily Observation Reports. The concept of community-oriented policing was added to the Daily Observation Report as a performance dimension; however, the department found that a daily evaluation of a trainee's COPPS application was not an effective training tool. Through the PTO training process, Richmond PD officers are taught to engage the community in problem solving, to seek creative solutions to neighborhood problems, and to utilize resources outside the department for the purpose of improving residents' quality of life.

### Academy Structure and Training

- The Richmond PD draws from three regional academy facilities: the Napa Valley Criminal Justice Training Center, Alameda County Basic Academy, and Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office Academy.
- Post-academy, recruit officers receive a three-and-one-half hour classroom orientation to the PTO program and the problem-based learning (PBL) method.

## PTO Program

### Selection

- The Richmond PD invited its 13 Field Training Officers to attend and evaluate the PTO training course.
- The PTO course was not open to officers interested in becoming trainers for the first time because the department preferred to use experienced trainers.

### Incentives

- PTOs receive four hours paid overtime for each week spent training a recruit.
- PTOs wear Corporal stripes to signify their position as a training officer.

### PTO Training

- Forty hours of training were completed in five days.
- An initial pilot site training of 13 PTOs was conducted.
- The Chief was involved and supportive at the implementation level and attended part of the PTO training.

### Program Structure

- PTOs and their trainees are mostly assigned to daytime shifts to facilitate resource exposure. However, since some PTOs are assigned to the graveyard shift, some recruits have been trained on this shift.
- Trainees' beat assignments are determined at the discretion of the PTO.
- The Richmond PD modified the pilot project training phases and now it trains in the following order: Patrol Activities, Non-Emergency Incident Response, Emergency Incident Response, and Criminal Investigation.

- The department extended each of the training phases by one week for a total 19-week police training program (four four-week training phases, a one-week Mid-Term Evaluation, and a two-week Final Evaluation).

### Richmond Police Department's PTO Selection Criteria:

- 2.5 years of service at Richmond PD
- Assignment to the Patrol Bureau
- A score of "Standard" or above in all categories on the two most recent evaluations
- A high degree of initiative and motivation, including willingness to work extended hours
- Demonstrated abilities in
  - interpersonal skills and teaching
  - prioritization of departmental demands and commitments
  - conducting preliminary investigations
  - writing clear and concise reports
- No substantiated force, racially abusive conduct, or sexual harassment complaints in the past two years

### Richmond Police Department's PTO Selection Process:

- A department-wide announcement is made.
- The candidate submits a request for consideration, endorsed by direct supervisor, Division Commander, and Bureau Commander.
- A PTO Selection Committee of PTO Coordinator, Training Sergeant, and at least one PTO is convened. This group
  - Reviews requests and files
  - Interviews applicants
- A list of successful applicants is forwarded to the Chief for a final decision.



### Command Structure

- Location – Patrol Division
- Command Responsibility – Patrol Bureau Commander
- Program Management – One full-time police officer is the Program Coordinator supervised by the Administrative Training Sergeant.
- Personnel Structure – PTOs report to the team Sergeant and to the PTO Program Coordinator.
- A Probation Review Board already in existence prior to the program served as the Board of Evaluators and was composed of a PTO Coordinator, an Administrative Training Sergeant, three PTO-trained Sergeants, a Patrol Bureau Lieutenant, a Patrol Bureau Commander, two officers, and an active PTO.

### Evaluation Structure

- One-week Mid-Term Evaluation was based on Core Competencies and included a trainee self-evaluation interview component.
- One-week shadow-oriented Final Evaluation was extended to two weeks. The Final Evaluation was used to determine comprehension, application, and synthesis of the 15 Core Competencies.
- The Board of Evaluators (BOE) evaluated the trainers, trainees' progress, and the overall program operation. The BOE also was used at the request of PTO staff to recommend remedial training measures.

### Implementation Experiences

- Chief Joseph Samuels, Jr., had the PTOs present him with a case for switching to the program after they had undergone PTO training. He then championed initial

program exploration. Project leadership responsibility was transferred from the Chief to the trainers who were motivated to make the program work.

- To minimize internal resistance to the program and to help supervisors understand the trainee balance between completing the training components and answering calls for service, PTOs made presentations to each patrol team and first-line supervisors. The PTOs also invited Patrol Sergeants to attend the second PTO training course. Further, each PTO took the time to describe the program to other officers in the department when asked.
- PTO group cohesion greatly benefited from dedicating one officer as a full-time PTO Coordinator.
- The PTOs met weekly to maintain enthusiasm and to share information on trainees' progress and issues.
- PTOs used the Learning Matrix and the "Course Development Problem" from the PTO training as tools for teaching their trainees.
- The department found the new program to be flexible. It allowed trainers and trainees to address training issues effectively.
- Journals were used on a daily basis, and they provided a strong record of reference for both PTOs and trainees.
- PTOs noticed trainees applying Problem-Based Learning Exercises (PBLEs) to daily calls for service.
- Training officers decided to create "essential learning packages" corresponding to phase themes to encourage trainees to study areas that the PTOs felt should be emphasized.
- New officers are demonstrating job proficiency and problem-solving skills.

## the charlotte-mecklenburg (nc) police department



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**C**harlotte-Mecklenburg is located along North Carolina's southern border and just hours from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the West and the Atlantic Ocean to the East. It is a major U.S. banking center and has an international airport. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department is the largest local law enforcement agency between Washington, D.C. and Miami, Florida. It polices the fifth largest urban region in the United States, with a population of 600,000 in the City of Charlotte and a population of 740,000 when combined with the residents of Mecklenburg County. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department polices this area with a force of approximately 1,535 sworn officers. The large area policed by the department is divided into six service areas. Each service area contains two districts, which are further divided into multiple response areas.

Community-oriented policing and problem solving (COPPS) is included in the department's mission statement. COPPS permeates academy training, and all officers are expected to practice community policing and to complete problem-oriented policing initiatives. Additionally, certain officers are assigned exclusively to community policing duties.

The initiative for the change to the Police Training Officer (PTO) program came from senior management. The department had

been using a 12-week field training program based on the San Jose Model, modified to include a problem-oriented policing (POP) project as a task on the Daily Observation Report. Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Field Training Officers (FTOs) had all received COPPS training, and each officer had been incorporating it into field training as she or he saw fit. Many were relying more heavily on the comment portion of the Daily Observation Report than on the checklist to evaluate trainees.

### Academy Structure and Training

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg runs its own 26-week training academy. Academy training is continuous and not split with segments of street training.
- The academy graduates three classes per year, providing the department with between 20 and 40 new officers per class.
- Recruits receive 80 hours of COPPS instruction in the academy, and they must complete a community project before they graduate.

### PTO Program

#### Selection

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg chose PTOs from each of its 12 patrol districts.
- Of the officers trained as PTOs, approximately 60 percent had previously served as FTOs.



### Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's PTO Selection Criteria:

- Acceptable prior personnel evaluations and ratings from direct supervisors
- Three years of service with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg PD
- Disciplinary record for the past five years is considered
- Letter of intent explaining reasons for wanting to become a PTO
- Written recommendation from a current PTO

### Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's PTO Selection Process:

- Department-wide announcement was made.
- All previous FTOs were relieved of training duties and invited to submit formal applications, as were potential new trainers, for the position of PTO.
- PTOs within each district were originally selected by each district's Sergeants and Commanders. PTOs are still selected within districts, but the selections are made by the Captain, the PTO Sergeant, and the current PTOs of that district.

### Incentives

- Pay increases of 3 percent offered under the FTO program were changed to 5 percent.
- The department is considering the additional incentives of take-home cars and first preference for training opportunities.
- "PTO of the Year" Award was instituted to generate enthusiasm.

### PTO Training

- Three PTO training sessions were held for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg PD.

- Each training lasted five days, with all three 40-hour trainings held over a period of six weeks.
- Eighty-four PTOs were trained, as were 12 Sergeants—one per district—and some members of the Training Academy staff.
- The Chief and the Command staff came by to observe segments of training.

### Program Structure

- The approximately 50 trainees forming the pilot class were assigned to districts according to the current staffing allocations.
- Shift scheduling varied by district, with some districts attempting to keep trainees off third shift (i.e., night shift) to ensure that they could complete the community interaction components in the program. Many trainees were assigned to day shift.
- The majority of trainees remained in a single assigned district throughout the program. In the event that a district did not have a sufficient number of PTOs available, a PTO from a neighboring district would voluntarily transfer to the training district to accommodate the additional training needs.
- Program phases were not switched from the then-established order (Non-Emergency Incident Response, Emergency Incident Response, Patrol Activities, Criminal Investigation), unless an excellent training opportunity arose in a different phase.
- Sergeants in each district were in charge of program operation, and they attempted to coordinate implementation by meeting together monthly.

### Evaluation Structure

- PTOs trade recruits during the evaluation phases, and then function as PTEs.

## Command Structure

- Location – District
- Command Responsibility
  - Program Commander
  - Service Area Major
  - District Commander (Captain)
  - PTO Program Coordinator
- Program Management – PTO-trained District Sergeant
- Personnel Structure – Seven PTOs per district report to the PTO-trained Sergeant.
- Board of Evaluators (BOE) – The BOE within each district is composed of the Service Area Major, the District Commander, the PTO Sergeant, and all PTOs and Police Training Evaluators (PTEs). They meet to discuss training issues, to evaluate the Neighborhood Portfolio Exercises (NPEs), and to make final recommendations regarding whether a trainee is ready for solo status, needs remedial training, or needs to be terminated.

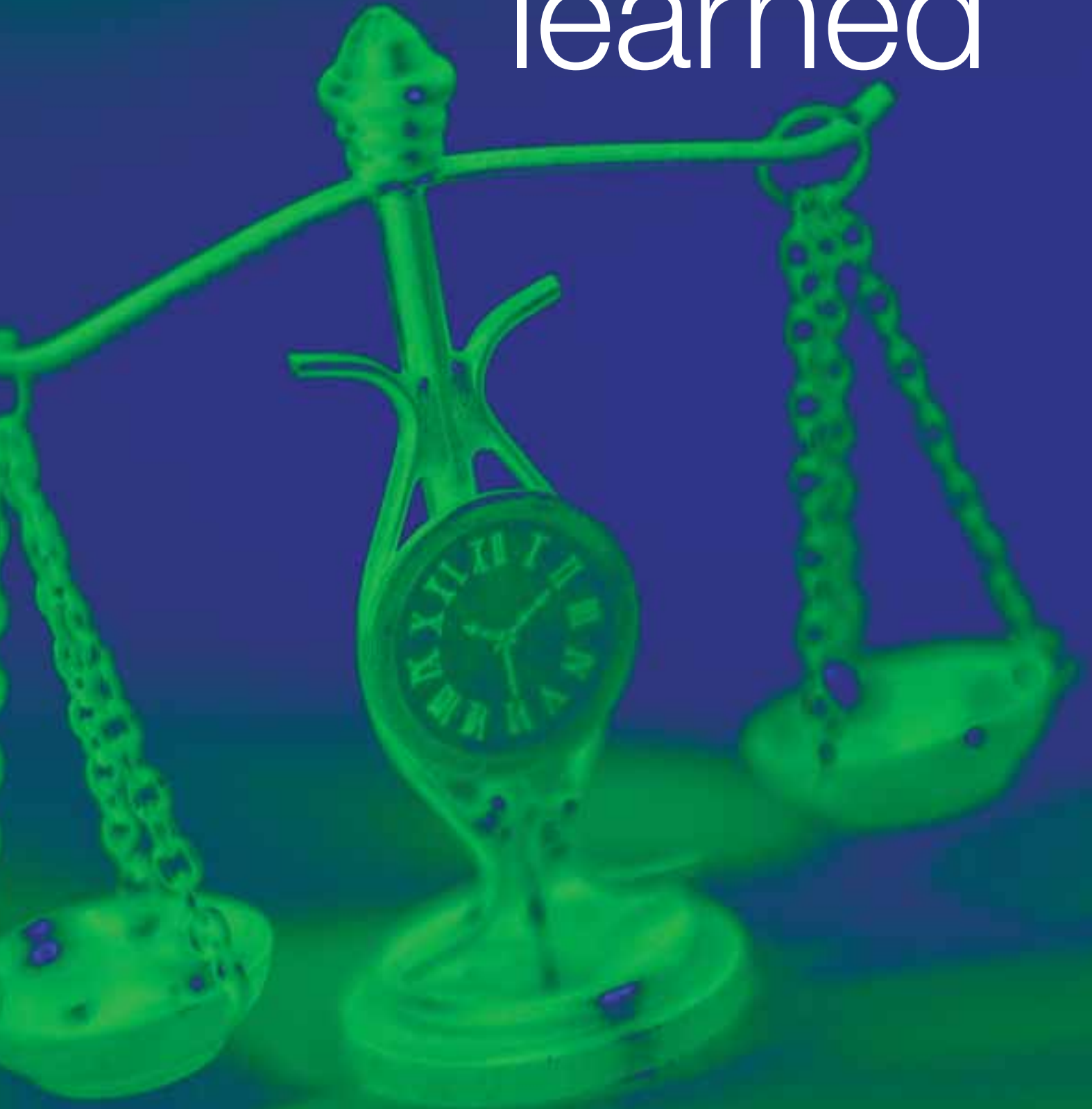
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg added a driving evaluation to each of the four program phases but later reduced the number of driving evaluations to two; these occur during each of the two evaluation periods.
- Week-long Mid-Term and Final Evaluations are conducted.
- The Learning Matrix is used as a reference guide for evaluations. The Problem-Based Learning Exercises (PBLEs), Coaching and Training Reports (CTRs), and NPEs also are used as evaluation tools to measure the progress of the trainees throughout the training phase.

## Implementation Experiences

- Key components of success were command staff support and central program organization.
- Sergeants met weekly with their divisional PTOs. PTOs also began meeting among themselves to exchange information informally as a learning cohort.

- PTOs found that they were well supported in instances where trainees were recommended for termination. The support came from senior personnel trained in the program and from a range of evaluation instruments, including trainee reflections on self-evaluations.
- Time management
  - The department has integrated into its Computer-Aided Dispatch System the ability of a trainee to “check-out” while he or she is completing the CTR.
  - Initially, CTRs took trainees three to six hours to complete, but trainees improved as training progressed. As a time-management component, PTOs now dispense with the CTR on weeks where the trainee is preparing the Problem Based Learning Exercise for a phase.
- For trainees who are lateral transfers from other departments, scheduling post-academy training is difficult due to part-day attendance in the academy and part-day patrol assignment. To remedy the problem, laterals complete Phase A in the academy, and the remainder of the program is completed post-academy.
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg PTOs heavily emphasize journal writing with trainees and reference the Learning Matrix for all daily activities. The journals functioned as an icebreaker and enhanced learning.
- The Problem-Based Learning Exercises have proved an excellent learning experience for trainees. Most districts have now modified the PBLEs to fit their unique environment.
- The department found that new trainers were more receptive to the PTO program than were trainers who had been FTOs.

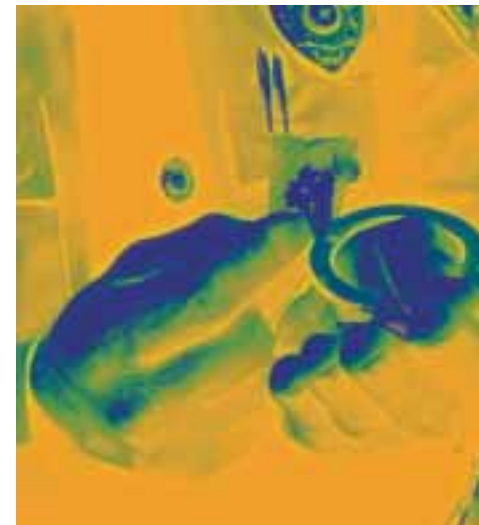
# lessons learned



**T**he experiences of the six pilot agencies described in the previous section were critical to the development of the final Police Training Officer (PTO) program. Most importantly, the piloting process proved that the new model for field training could be successfully implemented in a variety of departments and produce high-quality officers ready to serve their communities. The piloting process also showed that the program was flexible—allowing agencies to tailor it to their own circumstances. Summarized here are some of the lessons learned, lessons that will be helpful to other agencies that choose to implement the PTO program.

## personnel/management

- Adopting a new training program, such as the Reno Model, requires commitment at all levels of the organization. The most successful approach is to assign to program positions a cadre of individuals who both support the concept and have credibility with officers.
- Agencies experienced greater success when everyone in the program was clear about their roles and responsibilities and everyone understood the structure of the program.
- Agencies experienced greater success when they provided in-service training for supervisors and mid-managers who were not directly involved in the PTO program so that they could become familiar with the program and support it.
- Agencies experienced greater success when they held weekly or bi-weekly meetings of PTO supervisors and trainers. These meetings helped to standardize implementation of the program, and they helped the Police Training Officers to be more prepared and feel more confident. Agencies that did not have these meetings experienced less cohesion among personnel and more implementation obstacles.
- Program supervisors have a great impact on the extent to which program learning components are emphasized and promoted. If a program component—such as the Problem-Based Learning Exercise (PBLE), journal writing, or the Learning Matrix—is downplayed by



supervisors, PTOs are unlikely to execute that program component and, as a result, learning opportunities are lost. Agencies experienced greater success when they emphasized and utilized all learning components.

- Agencies experienced greater success when they used their Board of Evaluators (BOE) to its full potential. The BOE could identify trainer and trainee issues, identify programmatic/procedural issues, conduct exit interviews to produce feedback on the process, and determine whether a trainee needed remedial training or to be terminated.
- Although the Learning Matrix can and should be customized to reflect an agency's special circumstances and needs, the pilot agencies found that the universal matrix created as part of the PTO Program fit the general needs of each agency.
- Agencies found that, relatively quickly, they needed to train a second group of PTOs. The lesson learned is to have an ample stock of trained PTOs (and, ideally, trainers on staff who can train more) before implementation. Agencies learned they should forecast staff turnover (e.g., losing trainers due to attrition, transfer) to minimize program disruption.

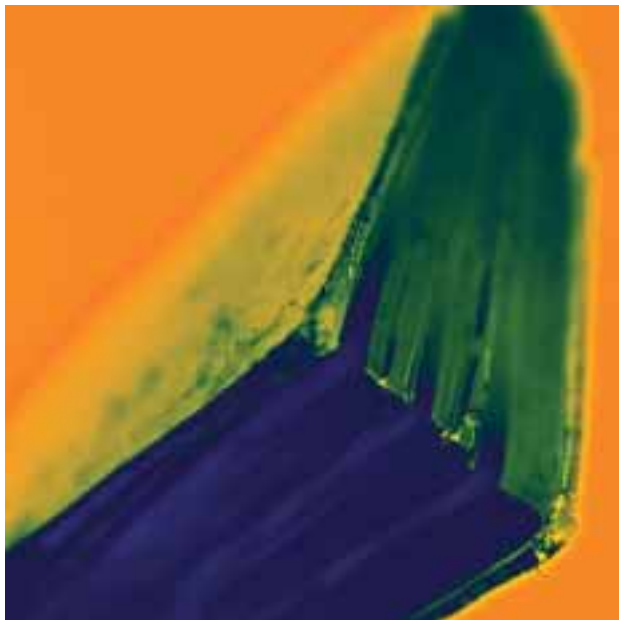
## phases

- Agencies ordered the four programmatic phases of the PTO program (Non-Emergency Incident Response, Emergency Incident Response, Patrol Activities, and Criminal Investigation) in different ways, but they determined that it was not advisable to begin training with the Emergency Incident Response phase. Starting with one of the other phases built the necessary confidence for trainees, so that later, when they received the emergency response training, they felt more prepared.
- Agencies experienced greater success when they allowed the programmatic phases to be flexible with regard to the content covered. For instance, an emergency response topic might be introduced during the Non-Emergency Incident Response phase as a result of a relevant incident. Even though the current phase is the trainer's primary focus, every opportunity to train should be explored.



## learning components/methods

- Problem-based learning (PBL) is an excellent training method for law enforcement. Initially, the method's lack of structure makes trainees feel uncomfortable, but the purpose and payoff of their dissonance become clear as training moves forward. The PBL method can be adjusted to fit the trainers and trainees. As a case in point, some trainees and trainers never became comfortable with the unstructured delivery, believing that more structure was preferable. At least one department has implemented a more structured approach.



- Agencies experienced greater success when they spaced out the PTO program's assignments—for example, Neighborhood Portfolio Exercises (NPEs) and PBLEs—over time, instead of saving them until the end of a phase or the end of the program. If PTOs delayed asking the recruits to complete the NPEs and PBLEs until the end of a phase, the trainees tended to complete them quickly all at once as *tasks* and not gradually as *learning tools*. Many learning opportunities were missed by not doing these assignments over the course of the program; daily activities contribute to the assignment, and the assignments inform daily learning, in turn.
- Agencies experienced greater success when their trainees wrote in their journals. The trainees in these agencies were encouraged by PTOs who provided guidance in how to use the journal and explained its purpose.
- Agencies experienced greater success when they allowed their trainees time to return to the station to complete assignments. This ensured that the assignments weren't rushed at the end of a phase or dropped entirely. The program assignments are time-consuming. Agencies that tried to lessen this burden by removing elements of the program or by making the elements part of academy training rather than post-academy training found that learning opportunities were lost or aspects of the training were not communicated. Some agencies, however, determined that it was effective to explain to academy



students the forthcoming PTO training; they would *introduce* PTO program assignments in the academy, but they would not require students to *complete* them at that time. Trainees then emerged from the academy familiar with the structure and content of their forthcoming PTO training, providing an important continuity between academy and in-field training.

- The Neighborhood Portfolio Exercise was very positively received by trainers and trainees in the pilot agencies. Agencies reported that trainees experienced accelerated learning about neighborhoods, local government, and community resources, and they developed excellent networks.

## evaluation

- Agencies experienced greater success when they used the Learning Matrix to guide evaluation of the trainees. Evaluations based on outcomes were found to be superior to traditional evaluations based on task standards. The matrix was particularly useful for identifying reasons a trainee was experiencing problems.

## outcomes

- The attrition rate of trainees in the PTO program was similar to that associated with the traditional field training program. Interestingly, however, the *type* of officer who failed the two programs was different. Under the San Jose Model, trainees failed who thought creatively or who did not excel with rote learning methods; under the Reno Model, trainees failed who were too regimented and could not think analytically or outside the box.
- Agencies found that the PTO program produced quality recruits. The recruits were resourceful, willing to take risks, and more willing to interact with senior officers than were the recruits who had completed previous post-academy training programs.



# implementation resources

**T**he implementation of the PTO program in the six pilot sites was tremendously important to the development of the new model. Each agency—impressive in its willingness to implement an untested training program—helped the project team enhance the quality of the program and make adjustments to ensure smooth implementation in real-life conditions. As the case studies and “lessons learned” make clear, the model can be adapted to the needs, priorities, and structure of the implementing agency. The PTO program was not uniform as implemented by the six pilot agencies; each one customized the program to produce the best fit.

What is uniform across the pilot agencies is their success at producing high-quality officers to serve their communities. Officers trained in the PTO program are not only proficient in the basic skills required of law enforcement personnel, they also are oriented toward the communities they serve, able to partner with key stakeholders, and able and willing to think analytically to solve problems.

To implement the PTO program, an agency should have one or more agency trainers receive instructor courses in PTO and PBL. It is also desirable for these same employees to sit through the 40-hour PTO course being conducted at another agency to become fully familiar with the content and methods.

Web-based resources are available to agencies that want to implement this new program. Guides developed by the Reno/PERF team include the

- **PTO Manual** to guide agencies implementing the program and the PTO Officers who train academy graduates,
- **Trainee Manual** for use by academy graduates undergoing PTO training, and
- **Training Standard** for use in training PTOs.

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services has also funded the development of an Instructor Development course in problem-based learning.

All documents are available for downloading in PDF-format on the websites of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (at [www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov)) and PERF (at [www.policeforum.org](http://www.policeforum.org)). These files can be used by agencies to produce multiple copies for personnel. Additional information is available at these sites regarding instructor-development courses. These include courses for instructors on both PTO and PBL.