

BOSTON:

Same COPS/Same Neighborhood

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BOSTON

Same Cops/Same Neighborhood

The Advancing Community Policing Grant

Background

The department's full-scale commitment to the philosophy of community policing dates back to 1992 with the development of its initial Neighborhood Policing Plan of Action. That plan sought to align and integrate both the service delivery and management models of the organization with the community policing philosophy being adopted by the total organization. In 1995, a BPD citywide strategic planning initiative paved the way for more extensive implementation of its neighborhood policing efforts. The commitment to community/neighborhood policing was a shift for

the whole organization, not the creation of a special unit or program.

BPD has created a strong, ongoing professional relationship with an organizational change psychologist. This rather unusual situation has had great influence on the projects and processes undertaken by the department in community policing and organizational transformation in recent years.

External organizational change consultants worked with BPD leaders to design and implement the strategic planning process, which involved more than 350 individuals. For more than six months, police officers, citizens, community leaders, politicians, clergy, and key municipal officials worked together on 16 teams, each of which focused on a set of community problems. The police commissioner chaired a planning team of police

personnel and community leaders that addressed broader organizational and citywide issues. A different eight-person core team composed of BPD personnel and external consultants managed the design, training, and implementation of the strategic planning effort.

The strategic planning teams at the district and citywide levels identified “having the same police officer in the same beat” as an important change needed to support neighborhood-level problem solving and the fuller implementation of community/neighborhood policing in Boston. This goal came to be known as Same Cops/Same Neighborhood (SC/SN). The intent was to have police officers know the geography and inhabitants of their beats and take ownership of the problems on those beats. The officers were expected to work with community partners to deal with the public safety issues identified by the police and the community.

In the course of planning for SC/SN, the department’s mission statement was revised to state, “We dedicate ourselves to work in partnership with the community to fight crime, reduce fear and improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods. Our mission is Neighborhood Policing.”

Grant funding under the Comprehensive Communities Program of the U.S. Department of

Justice supported this stage of strategic planning and community mobilization in Boston.

As the focus of its Advancing Community Policing (ACP) organizational change grant, BPD undertook the challenge of moving to SC/SN and shifting structures and strategies to implement beat teams. The ACP grant funding provided needed resources for training, production of beat plans, assistance from outside consultants, and overtime to enable personnel to participate consistently in implementation efforts.

Because of collective bargaining agreements and staffing level issues, overtime was necessary to replace superior officers on shifts to enable beat team supervisors and commanders to participate in meetings on a change of shift. Thus, overtime enabled their participation in the multirank Beat Team Implementation Group and training. Civilian union contracts also necessitated overtime funding for key civilian employees who were involved in certain efforts.

The Project

Although the police and the community set the goal of SC/SN, changing organizational processes and practices was another matter. Major impediments to implementing neighborhood policing were administrative and other practices that created barriers to problem solving by beat

officers. Working to change them meant systematically identifying and modifying layers of organizational processes, functions, and mechanisms.

Discussions began regarding ramifications of the “beat team” concept. Issues included organizational implications of changes in assignments, changes in use of officers’ time, changes in the expected outcomes, and training and supervision issues. It became increasingly apparent that the initial success of the program depended on individual officers being consistently assigned to and kept in the same beats.

To strengthen their efforts, a SC/SN Working Group was formed and activated. They linked their efforts to work that was already being done on one of the police commissioner’s six Priority Change Initiatives, which related to building department competency models based on high performers in each rank and/or role. These models would be used to articulate the core competencies necessary for the department to evolve its neighborhood policing strategies, act on its mission, and shape the content of future training.

Realizing that such a wide-ranging organizational change would affect a broad cross section of ranks and roles in the organization, the SC/SN Working Group conducted a one-day offsite working session. It used a modified version of a whole systems change strategy called

DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

Founded in 1630, Boston is the state capital of Massachusetts and the largest municipality in New England. The city's 48.9 square miles are currently home to a resident population of slightly over 589,000, which increases to 2 million people during the day. The population is 49.5 percent white, 14.4 percent Hispanic, 23.8 percent black, 7.5 percent Asian, and 4.8 percent other.*

The oldest metropolitan police force in the Nation, the Boston Police

Department (BPD) was formally chartered in 1854. It has a current force of 2,169 sworn officers and 850 civilian employees. Boston is divided into 11 police districts, each of which is served by officers who work out of a local district station under the command of a captain. BPD operates 26 facilities throughout the city.

BPD is both a civil service and a highly unionized work environment with four

bargaining units that represent different groups of sworn personnel. Each union negotiates a separate contract for its members. Five distinct bargaining units represent civilian personnel. Overall, approximately 99 percent of BPD employees are members of a bargaining unit. This circumstance creates a challenging environment in which to undertake any significant organizational change efforts.

* U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

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a "search conference." More than 200 personnel, who represented each rank that would be affected by the change, took part in working groups to recommend to members of other ranks what they would need to do differently for beat teams to succeed.

Applying the input from the search conference to the implementation of beat teams was the next challenge. One specific challenge in the next phase of the change effort was to balance the more localized authority and responsibility with the organizational need for coherence, coordination, and consistency. The SC/SN Working Group set the parameters for core elements for the beat plans, and district captains and members of their local planning teams developed plans for their districts' implementation efforts.


Each district's implementation plan had to specify:

- Name/neighborhood designation of each beat team.
- Rationale for composition of teams (some teams included detectives and other personnel).
- Names/functions of officers and the assigned beat team leader on each beat team.
- Communication protocols to be used concerning problems on the beat (among team members over shifts and timelines, among teams within districts, and with adjacent districts' teams).

- Specific planning processes for determining priorities of each beat team.
- Strategic planning goals to be implemented through the beat teams.
- Training needs.

The next implementation step called for beat team leaders to take part in an orientation and training session that focused on:

- Data on community perceptions about police services.
- Data on public safety from a citywide public safety survey.
- Underlying assumptions and success factors related to beat teams.



As part of the orientation, each team leader was required to create a profile of the beat. To create this profile, team leaders used the array of data that the organization had available and the more local knowledge of district officers. For clarity of expectations and content, the SC/SN Working Group provided templates for the profiles both in hard copy and on disks.

Challenges, Needs, and Solutions

As implementation progressed, several challenges, needs, and solutions emerged. One was holding sergeants (the beat team leaders) accountable for doing their jobs differently. Conventionally, paperwork sent to headquarters was seen as something that simply went into a file or pile unless it related to a violent crime or other critical incident. To change that, the chief of patrol and others in the SC/SN Working Group read, commented on, and questioned each beat profile they received. Sergeants quickly got the message that beat profiles were important.

Defining the nature of beat teams was another challenge. It became clear that police districts were using somewhat different definitions. Although individual efforts at decentralization were to be honored, consistency was needed. Officers had to have a clear understanding of what was


expected of them in their day-to-day work as part of beat teams. Beat Team Implementation Group members developed a definition:

A beat team is a designated group of sworn and/or civilian personnel assigned to a geographic area within a police district whose function is to address criminal and quality-of-life issues by sharing information and utilizing all BPD and community resources.

Throughout the implementation process, the Beat Team Implementation Group met monthly with the chief of patrol and the rest of the SC/SN Working Group and worked continuously on how to implement the beat team concept most effectively. The discussion focused both on what was working and what was not. Because they were living with the ground-level realities of the implementation effort, the group took on a vital role in the change efforts. As they grew confident that speaking the truth would not result in punishment by the chief of patrol, they grew increasingly forthright in sharing their views. This proved invaluable in the organizational change effort.

During this time, the emphasis shifted to reconsidering some of the organizational structures that affect patrol strategies. The existing patrol strategies, structures, deployment plans, and schedules were based on supporting rapid response. The

group began to work on how to integrate problem solving and technology into a new patrol model based on geographic accountability rather than 911-driven responses. Beat teams needed additional training to perform all the required tasks. More than 100 mid-level managers—beat team leaders on all shifts and other district sergeants—participated in a three-day training course on the scanning, analysis, response, and assessment (SARA) problem-solving method. In addition, senior managers held a retreat. For SC/SN and beat team efforts, the following key issues and action steps were identified:

- Ensure that beat team leaders and members have all necessary technology training and skills.
 - Enforce and implement the plans that the district commanders presented.
 - Review and evaluate call scheduling and stacking efforts.
 - Learn how to best facilitate cross-shift communication among beat team leaders.
 - Handle challenges that result from contractual and overtime issues.
 - Determine the most effective methods to foster beat team leaders' accountability for challenges on their beats.
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- Devise effective methods and strategies for sharing best practices and solutions to problems.
- Update mobile data terminal software and begin using laptops, beginning with beat team leaders.

In 1999, beat team leaders took part in presentations on crime issues by district commanders at biweekly crime analysis meetings (CAMs), which drove accountability for addressing crime and quality-of-life issues down to lower ranking officers. It was also a way to integrate beat team activities with other changes in the department. Linking the problem-solving efforts of beat team leaders to the reporting and analysis of crime statistics signaled a new level of seriousness about district-based problem solving.

Because such presentations represented an unfamiliar form of accountability and responsibility for beat team leaders, the Beat Team Implementation Group offered training in presentation skills and the preparation of visual presentations.

A CAM newsletter also began to include examples of best practices devised by the beat teams. A section related to each district's beat teams was included on the BPD intranet.

Building momentum and maintaining morale is always a challenge for any change effort. The Beat Team Implementation Group suggested sending specific beat team leaders (sergeants) to the annual Problem Oriented Policing Conference in San Diego, California, to recognize them for their work. This suggestion was approved with the stipulation that, when they returned, those who attended would make a presentation to the group about what BPD could do differently based on what they had learned.

One member characterized the ACP effort as "a Rubik's cube, where if you change one thing, you find out it then doesn't work with how other things are positioned."

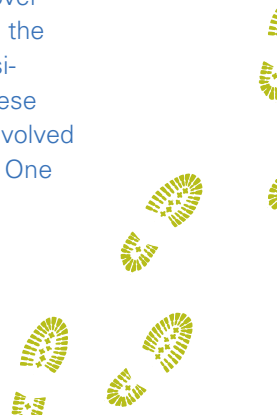
In January 2000, other organizational changes in BPD affected this change initiative. At that time, the police commissioner made a number of changes in his senior command staff. Approximately one-third of the executive leadership of the department changed. As in any police organization, such changes led to intensive scrutiny, discussion, speculation, and reaction.

During these staff changes, the chief of patrol who had led the SC/SN and beat team effort was transferred, which interrupted the momentum of that change effort. While the new chief of patrol became acquainted with his new role and responsibilities, the SC/SN Working Group and Beat Team Implementation Group were placed on hold.

Almost concurrent with the senior command changes, external circumstances necessitated a new focus. Priority had to be given to department-wide preparation, mobilization, and development of tactical plans for the upcoming International Bio-Technology Conference and demonstrations that were expected to follow protests in Seattle. Cross-bureau cooperation, planning, and coordination and updating the tactical skills of all sworn personnel became critical for the new senior command staff and the entire department.

Department Observations

The ACP process in Boston was seen as "overcoming organizational barriers and changing the organizational paradigm regarding doing business." After initially thinking that making these changes would be simple, many of those involved realized the process would be complicated. One member characterized the ACP effort as "a



Rubik's cube, where if you change one thing, you find out it then doesn't work with how other things are positioned."

Decentralization presented challenges. Chief of Patrol James Claiborne saw his role and responsibility as "changing to be one where I responded to the needs of those working under my command, facilitated change, and attended to process, as well as giving people room to make mistakes."

A further challenge was that, as in many departments trying to work with a decentralized model, tension between the field and headquarters could make systemic and systematic change difficult. This challenge was exacerbated by the lack of enthusiasm some district commanders felt for the changes that would be required to implement SC/SN; some were even apathetic.

Sergeants were not used to keeping the same officers working in the same neighborhood for extended periods. Assignments were to cars, not to beats. Neighborhood assignments had been a way sergeants could informally reward or punish officers. Further, the internal organizational systems provided little broader accountability regarding the system of assignments. However, as part of the SC/SN initiative, new beats were developed and monthly compliance audits were conducted by the chief of patrol's office.

The biweekly Change Management Working Group meetings provided consistent command-level focus on SC/SN and the other Commissioner's Priority Change Initiatives. At a minimum, these sessions provided a forum where the top 25 leaders of the department came together and built in follow up and accountability related to their collective work on the change initiatives. Chief of Patrol Claiborne, a member of the Change Management Working Group, said, "No other community policing effort received the extent and range of persistent change planning and attention to learning from what we were doing as this."

Like departments elsewhere, Boston faced challenges in making such changes—these challenges were a mix of prior police practices and public expectations. The reform model of policing, driven by rapid 911 response and random patrol, continued to exert pressure in certain directions long after a commitment to the philosophy of community policing and efforts toward problem solving had begun. Most patrol structures and practices, including contractually negotiated shift schedules, staffing levels, and overtime assignments, were designed to support rapid response as the core function of patrol officers.

A common complaint heard from officers was that they were too busy handling radio calls and did

not have time to devote to problem solving. But the teaching team was equipped with the facts and data to dispel such notions. The chief of patrol himself cotaught the class to send a message that the BPD was serious about the change and to respond to questions and resistance.

Other issues included reaching agreement on key concepts and definitions, the question of staffing levels (for the agency overall, for districts/sectors, and for beats), and the sectoring of the city's police districts. It became apparent that a solid foundation would be needed and that this fundamental shift in patrol strategies would need to occur in stages over a period of years. It also became increasingly evident that some of the biggest challenges would involve dealing with the ingrained human behaviors and mindsets that maintain an organization's structures and systems.

Lessons Learned

The ACP program in Boston produced the following challenges and taught the following lessons:

- It was important to pay attention to "process," listen to those who were working to implement changes, and be willing to change tactics to achieve the intended outcome.

- Resistance to ACP diminished over time, and members remained fluid, flexible, agile, and adaptable.
- A shared definition of SC/SN was needed. Defining the system required agreement on what the implications of SC/SN would be. For example, if such definitional issues and implications had not been clear, the new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) setup and operations could not have effectively supported the SC/SN and beat teams' effort.
- Both the organization and the police leaders needed to commit to change and the effort involved.
- Additional training was needed. During the annual inservice training at the Boston Police Academy, a half-day session was conducted to orient and educate all patrol officers, detectives, and superior officers up through the rank of lieutenant about the intended shift of the BPD patrol strategy to SC/SN and beat teams. The department also had to address the change in philosophy and practice of "how we do business" by 911 call takers and dispatchers in the Operations Division.

- Overlapping players (some of the same personnel working on a variety of aspects of different change efforts in multiple settings) provided "checks and balances" that supported a consistent message.
- Union-related challenges emerged. Part of the plan had called for patrol officers to attend community meetings related to problems on the beat. Overtime was available to enable officers to attend if the meetings occurred during a different shift. The department was unable to implement this part of the plan, however, because the patrol officers' union contract specifies that overtime moneys must be made available on the "lowest man principle."

Other challenges noted by those who worked on the SC/SN and beat team initiatives included:

- The impact of losing high-ranking officers who were committed to ACP's changes due to the changes in the command staff.
- The importance of thinking systemically, because these changes affected the whole organization.
- The importance of having a clear vision of the intended changes, and a clear understanding of what impact those efforts would have.

Other lessons learned included the need for:

- A "face to go with change" or a "champion."
- Explicit processes and mechanisms to maintain coordination.
- Time to compose teams to work on various aspects of change efforts.
- Winning over the "working cops" level of the department—informing them of the intended change, giving them a role in crafting the design, and welcoming their input into how it will occur and their feedback on the process.
- Custom-designed technology applications that support specific change efforts, not just "off-the-shelf" products. The effort should be "end-user oriented," and any technology must support officers' real needs. Ideally, there should be "killer applications" that are so powerful and effective that police officers will not want to work without them.

Panel Commentary

As the nation's oldest municipal police department, Boston has distinguished itself by approaching community policing and organizational change

in a progressive, comprehensive manner. Integration of the ACP grant into the department's strategic plan helped them implement the grant successfully.

Boston knew the strategic direction it wanted to pursue, and approached the implementation of its goal through a series of strategically developed steps. The personal involvement of the commissioner and the chief of patrol in key committees and initiatives was critical to the overall successes of the change effort. All agency personnel were viewed as critical to the success of the plan; thus, their involvement was planned throughout the change process. However, the panel notes that initiatives slowed upon the transfer of command of the chief of patrol.

The panel applauds the work done to ensure consistency of terminology and effort across the department and individual stations. This level of coordination is critical to demonstrating fairness between stations, creating accountability, and ensuring an even field against which all activities can be compared.

Boston's commitment to comprehensive organizational change was also evident in its use of outside expertise to guide the department through an extremely complex and long-term process. The panel noted the value of the chief of patrol's creation of a safe environment within the Beat Team

Implementation Group to enable them to share their views of what was working and what was not. This action by a top administrator is of incalculable value in fostering long-term support and participation. History is replete with examples of worthwhile change efforts thwarted by a clear message that unpopular views are discouraged. Boston faced significant organizational obstacles to change from the structure of its many and varied labor organizations. This structure naturally resisted some of the flexibility that a changing organization demands. That the department was able to integrate the varied interests and mitigate this resistance is impressive.

The panel notes the challenges Boston faced with the structure and rules of established collective bargaining units, particularly as they relate to the requirement that paid overtime be given to senior officers first, who may be less accepting of change. The challenge that this rule places on an organization that desires to become more agile can be significant. These agreements reflect the many individual cultures of the organization, the result of hundreds of years of experience. Few departments seeking change will ever face such a high degree of established tradition and culture.

Boston's use of competency models based on high performers in each rank/role is a smart approach to establishing a credible standard that raises the expectation for all personnel within the

organization and demonstrates clearly that higher and different performance can be expected. This component of the overall process demonstrates a high level of sophistication in the change process. Boston took risks with creative organizational change methods and demonstrated the qualities of a learning organization. It adapted to new needs to address making all members of the team stronger and more accountable. There was logic and depth in Boston's strategic planning, training, and implementation, always circling back to integrate needs and improvements.

Also interesting is how a change in the environment or a change in leadership can have dramatic impacts on the success of the effort. In Boston's case, changes to the senior command team, and an impending biotechnology conference, which promised to drain resources, impacted the progress of the change effort. Despite their careful planning, circumstances emerged that were either beyond their control or were unanticipated.

The panel notes that like other departments, one of the most challenging steps for the BPD involved changing the predominant police practices and public expectations that center around 911 response and random patrol. Despite their planning, this remained one of the biggest challenges and merits careful consideration from other agencies attempting to make organizational changes.