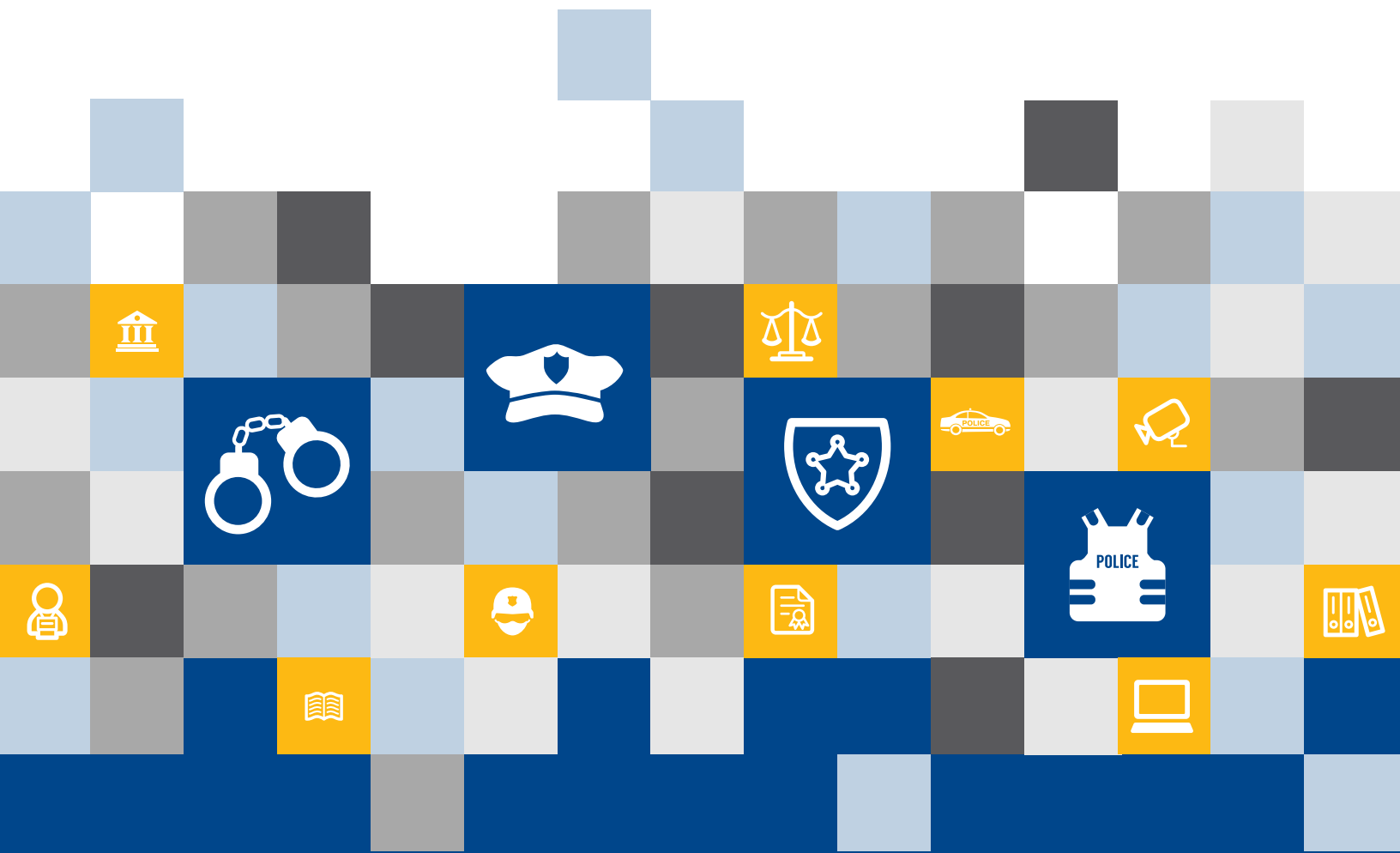




NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

# Policing Strategic Research Plan

2017-2022



**U.S. Department of Justice**  
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## Message From the Director

During my tenure at the National Institute of Justice, numerous high-profile incidents across the nation have illustrated the dangers and challenges of policing in the United States. The rigors of policing have become complicated by the expanding roles of the police that require officers to protect the nation against foreign and domestic threats; combat and deter crime; and respond to calls for service from the public. At the same time, the police have been subjected to unprovoked and premeditated attacks and hostility from various members of the community that they are sworn to protect. All of these factors have resulted in a broader discussion involving the need to support policing through science.

The challenges facing police officers today require evidence-based research that will advance police operations and practices. Through this strategic policing plan, we are focusing on promoting research that will provide the police with knowledge and tools that will support their workforce, promote better policing practices, protect officers, and support effective strategies designed and implemented to fight crime. Additionally, this strategic plan represents a call to the research community to provide policymakers and practitioners with the evidence they need to improve police practices, both internally and in the context of the community, and to provide police officers with effective tools that can protect them from harm and keep our nation safe.

Given the current discussions surrounding policing, NIJ understands the need for a comprehensive research plan that addresses a variety of research areas. In addition to research needed to support the police workforce through better hiring, recruiting, retention, and training of police officers, it is also necessary to develop a body of knowledge to understand how agencies can implement systems to advance police performance and adopt effective strategies to fight crime. Finally, a knowledge base should also be developed to better understand how policing practices can be initiated to promote strong engagements with community residents and support the delivery of policing services.



NIJ's longstanding history in supporting rigorous efforts to address issues confronting police executives and their officers, through this strategic plan, will build evidence that will contribute to a better understanding of policing, advance science needed to inform policymakers, and improve police-community relationships. By developing this policing research agenda, NIJ will build on its previous investments in policing, explore areas that will focus on effective and efficient policing, and promote community engagement and collaborations with other stakeholders to improve policing.

Such a comprehensive approach will require a sustained investment and commitment from a variety of stakeholders dedicated to understanding how policing can be improved through science and effective collaborations. NIJ is aware that the numerous challenges in the policing profession are complex and that no one approach will work to improve policing. However, we will continue to emphasize the need to make investments in science through multidisciplinary research and evaluation efforts that feed into the ongoing development of programs and interventions to improve policing. To those with whom NIJ has already partnered in these efforts, my sincerest thanks for your wisdom and support, and I hope you will continue to collaborate with us moving forward. To those who have not yet joined our efforts, we look forward to working with you in these endeavors in the future.

Howard Spivak, M.D.

Acting Director, National Institute of Justice

# Introduction

## About the National Institute of Justice

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) — the research, development, and evaluation agency of the U.S. Department of Justice — is dedicated to improving knowledge and understanding of crime and justice issues through science. NIJ provides objective and independent knowledge and tools to reduce crime and promote justice, particularly at the state and local levels.

## Policing Mission

NIJ's mission for policing is dedicated to the development of knowledge and tools that will advance policing operations and practices to deliver policing services to communities more effectively and efficiently. The National Institute of Justice has been a leader in developing and advancing the research agenda for policing. This issue is at the core of NIJ's history: its own charter grew out of the 1968 President's Commission and the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to address crime and unrest in American cities and develop tools for law enforcement to target these issues in a way that enhances police-community partnerships.

## Policing Strategic Research Plan Purpose

NIJ has developed the Policing Strategic Research Plan to describe the current and projected efforts of NIJ to advance policing practices in the United States. The strategic goals outlined in the plan should be viewed as both interrelated and vital to better understanding and finding solutions to the challenges of policing. This document should be of interest to researchers (academic, governmental, and industrial); federal, state, local, and international government partners; and justice policymakers and practitioner communities. Findings from the activities that fall within this strategic plan will be disseminated among these constituents and partners in ways designed to achieve the greatest impact.

## A Call for Collaboration

The research directions included within this strategic research plan intentionally span many scientific disciplines. The breadth of research is driven by the magnitude of questions that need to be addressed within the criminal justice system. NIJ envisions that the research resulting from this agenda will require both interdisciplinary

collaboration and partnerships between traditional researchers and the practitioner community. Finally, mirroring the need for collaboration among researchers, NIJ will seek partnerships with other federal agencies and institutions that support research relevant to criminal justice applications. These partnerships should include co-sponsoring research awards, convening meetings to bring key players together, and providing criminal justice system expertise to discussions and meetings pertaining to policing.

## Definitions and Scope

Our focus is on three fundamental elements underpinning policing services: the workforce, the organization, and citizens and their communities.

Policing services cannot be delivered effectively if the officers and civilian staff do not have the requisite interpersonal and technical skills, particularly those skills needed for effective engagement with the communities served while ensuring officer safety and readiness. Policing services cannot be delivered effectively without the support of the community. Additionally, local governance and support from other agencies play a critical role in the co-production of public safety. Finally, policing services cannot be effectively delivered if the organization does not have the requisite resources and strategies in place to support officers and their activities.

Policing services refers to the myriad of functions carried out by police departments and other law enforcement agencies. Although the actual services that are delivered may differ between jurisdictions, fundamentally those services involve (1) crime prevention and investigation, (2) maintenance of public order and safety, and (3) enforcement of laws and regulations.

A policing practice is a general category of programs, strategies, or procedures that share similar characteristics with regard to the issues they address and how they address them.

A policing strategy refers to a variety of different activities to accomplish appropriate outcomes in policing.

Agency performance is defined as the fairness, effectiveness, and efficiency with which policing services are delivered.

## Strategic Priorities

- I. Promote and support research to optimize workforce development for officers and civilian personnel.
- II. Promote and support research on policing practices.
- III. Promote and support research on the relationship between policing and communities.



# Strategic Priority I: Promote and Support Research to Optimize Workforce Development for Officers and Civilian Personnel

NIJ is committed to promoting research that will build knowledge to develop and maintain a police agency composed of qualified and committed personnel as the policing profession continues to evolve over time. NIJ is particularly interested in factors that influence and motivate members of the workforce in policing today and attract viable candidates to the policing profession. NIJ will continue to promote research to assess the knowledge and skills of personnel required to work in diverse and constantly changing policing environments. NIJ will also evaluate the impact of training and education programs designed to develop and maintain an exemplary workforce.



## Background

NIJ's research investments in this area have included analyses of exemplary first-line supervisors, longitudinal assessments of the progression of careers of new officers and supervisors (including potential attrition), evaluations of factors that influence police decision-making and performance over time, skill sets required to advance police leadership, and reframing police agencies as "learning organizations." NIJ will continue to promote research on the recruitment, hiring, and retention of the "contemporary employee." The contemporary employee has familiarity with technology, social media, expectations regarding autonomy, and decision-making. Finally, NIJ will continue to focus on examining the role of training to advance personnel performance.

## Objectives

The objectives supporting Strategic Priority I build on the strengths of NIJ's past research and continue to focus on research that will inform and support the policing workforce. The research will involve a comprehensive assessment of a variety of police workforce components to identify the challenges and promising practices of workforce recruitment and development, examine the impact of academy and in-service training and education, and support practices and technologies to advance officer safety. NIJ has also noted the importance of safety, health, and wellness of the police workforce.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Additional information on the National Institute of Justice's efforts to support and advance officer safety can be found in NIJ's *Safety, Health, and Wellness Strategic Research Plan, 2016-2021*, at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/250153.pdf>.

# Strategic Priority I Action Plan

## OBJECTIVES

### **Objective I.1: Develop strategies to support the policing workforce.**

- Research the background skills, education, and experiences needed for today's workforce.
- Research the workforce cycle (recruitment, selection, retention, promotion, assignment, and attrition), identifying challenges and promising practices.
- Assess the impact of the availability of resources (e.g., time and funding) on workforce development.

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### **Objective I.2: Promote research on police training and education.**

- Evaluate the impact of officer training (e.g., academy, in-field; re-certification; and specialized) and training curricula on police performance.
  - Examine the impact of police-researcher partnerships developed to improve police training programs.
  - Study the relationship between training and police culture.
  - Examine and assess the impact of police training on cultural competencies.
  - Research the impact of supervisory and leadership training on officer performance.
  - Study, develop, and evaluate training technologies (e.g., mobile, video-based, augmented and virtual learning environments) designed to advance officer performance.
  - Evaluate the impact of education on police performance.
  - Study, develop, and evaluate technologies designed to support learning among officers.
-

## Strategic Priority II: Promote and Support Research on Policing Practices

NIJ remains focused on supporting research that will advance policing practices. This focus entails a robust research agenda covering police operations, police performance, police decision-making, effectiveness and efficiency of police operations, organizational leadership, policing strategies, and partnerships.

### Background

The objectives supporting Strategic Priority II build on the strengths of NIJ's past research and continue to focus on research that will inform and support policing organizational practices.

### Objectives

The objectives supporting Strategic Priority II build on strengths of NIJ's past research agenda. NIJ is specifically interested in understanding and supporting policing practices for all the major aspects of a police organizational unit. These objectives focus on the organization, the officers, operations, leadership, strategies, and partnerships with external organizations. Additionally, the focus on organizational outcomes and performance cuts across all these topics.



# Strategic Priority II Action Plan

## OBJECTIVES

### ***Objective II.1: Research and evaluate crime reduction policing strategies.***

- Assess the impact of crime reduction strategies on communities.
- Examine the impact of police-prosecutor partnerships on reducing crime in communities.
- Evaluate the impact of technology on policing strategies.
- Assess the effectiveness of policing strategies on the threat of domestic terrorism.
- Examine the impact of deployment strategies on crime reduction.
- Examine the impact of police diversion strategies on crime reduction.

### ***Objective II.2: Promote research to support policing practices.***

- Research different shift and staffing schemes on police performance.
- Study the relative impact of different types of patrols (patrol car, foot patrol, bike, and alternative transportation methods) on the effectiveness and efficiency of policing practices.
- Research the impact of information sharing and other situational management practices on police response to critical incidents.
- Assess the impact of policing practices on investigative outcomes.
- Examine the role of forensic science in investigative processes.
- Research how communication and partnerships between different policing specialties impact policing practices.

## OBJECTIVES (CONTINUED)

### **Objective II.3: Study systems and organizational characteristics designed to advance police performance.**

- Study, develop, and evaluate systems designed to monitor or enhance police performance.
- Assess the impact of performance measurement systems implemented to evaluate police performance.
- Conduct research on the impact of the consolidation of policing resources across agencies and jurisdictions on police performance.
- Evaluate the impact of organizational structures, staffing levels, and internal processes on police performance.
- Study how police agency mission, culture, and structure impact programs, practices, and strategies designed to advance police performance.
- Study, develop, and evaluate technologies (e.g., communications, information sharing) to advance police performance.
- Study the impact of organizational culture on the resolution of conflict situations involving police officers and community residents.
- Evaluate the impact of management and administrative systems designed to facilitate the adoption of procedural justice as an organization-wide philosophy on police performance.

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### **Objective II.4: Study and evaluate police decision-making.**

- Identify the factors that inform police decision-making.
  - Assess the impact of technologies (e.g., information sharing, communications, record management systems, computer-assisted dispatch) on police decision-making.
  - Examine the impact of organizational and cultural change within agencies on police-citizen encounters involving police decision-making.
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## OBJECTIVES (CONTINUED)

### **Objective II.5: Study the impact of organizational leadership on performance.**

- Study the influence of early adopters of new technologies or practices on policing performance.
- Examine the role of organizational leadership in police performance.
- Study the role of partnerships across agencies, especially urban and suburban/rural agencies in the same region, in the diffusion of technologies, training, and policing services.
- Research the role of professional organizations in policy and practice diffusion in police agencies.

### **Objective II.6: Promote research to examine partnerships designed to increase public safety.**

- Study the impact of police-researcher partnerships on public safety.
- Assess the impact of police partnerships with faith-based organizations, community advocates, and non-governmental organizations on public safety.
- Examine the impact of regional mutual assistance agreements on public safety.

### **Objective II.7: Promote research on policing practices designed to address police accountability and transparency.**

- Evaluate the impact of police accountability systems on officer behavior.
- Study the impact of internal or external oversight on officer and organizational behavior.
- Examine the impact of internal investigative processes on police accountability and transparency.

## Strategic Priority III: Promote and Support Research on the Relationship Between Policing and Communities

NIJ is committed to understanding how police agencies can enhance police-community relationships. Of critical importance to this is the recognition that police are a part of the community, and how they engage in the day-to-day execution of their duties impacts the communities they serve. Police practitioners need to understand the entire range of potential impacts of their strategies and recognize that each community may have unique needs and expectations for police services.

### Background

NIJ's research investments in this area have included a comprehensive review of community-oriented policing programs, strategies to build and advance police-community relationships, to examine successful policing practices and develop and evaluate programs to reduce crime and enhance the quality of life of the residents in the communities that they serve.

### Objectives

The objectives of Strategic Priority III build on NIJ's past research agenda by promoting research on policing strategies and technological solutions to support community engagement. This strategic priority seeks to move research beyond investigating the characteristics of the organization towards a better understanding of partnerships between the police and the community. NIJ views community engagement as an essential element for the police to do their jobs effectively through information gathering and cooperation from the community. These interactions allow the police to better fight crime and advance public safety. Alternatively, the community needs to feel safe in coming forward and providing information to the police to support their efforts to reduce crime and violence in their communities.





# Strategic Priority III

## Action Plan

### OBJECTIVES

**Objective III.1: Research and evaluate community engagement strategies.**

- Evaluate and assess the impact of community engagement strategies on delivery of policing services.
- Research, develop, and evaluate technologies (e.g., social media and emergency alert systems) designed to advance police-community communication and interactions.
- Develop and assess performance systems adopted to evaluate officer and agency engagements with the community.
- Examine the impact of the use of school resource officers beyond enforcement and security functions on community perceptions of the police.
- Examine the impact of organizational culture or cultural change within police agencies on community engagement strategies.
- Examine and evaluate the impact of civilian training academies on community perceptions of the police.

**Objective III.2: Promote research to build trust and confidence between police and communities.**

- Study the impact of strategies and practices to enhance trust and confidence between police and communities.
- Assess the impact of different approaches to oversight on trust and confidence between the police and communities.
- Examine the role of technologies in building trust and confidence between police and communities.
- Study the impact of efforts to advance the community's knowledge of police technology and practices on building trust and confidence between police and communities.

## OBJECTIVES (CONTINUED)

**Objective III.3: Promote research on the role of individual and community characteristics on policing services.**

- Evaluate the impact of policing strategies designed to respond to survivors of crime.
  - Study policing strategies designed to respond to individuals with special needs.
  - Study individuals, families, and neighborhoods requiring multiple services and their impact on policing strategies.
  - Identify the needs for policing services in underserved populations or areas.
  - Assess service delivery gaps in urban, suburban, and rural policing to explore how partnerships may meet those gaps.
  - Examine the impact of fear of crime and disorder across neighborhoods on policing strategies.
  - Examine the role of race, class, ethnicity, gender, and culture on community perceptions of the impact of policing strategies.
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# Acknowledgments

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