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Approved By: _____

Date: _____
The National League of Cities

**Excellence in Community Policing Awards
1996, 1997, and 1998**

194117
Edwards

Overview

In October 1995, the National League of Cities (NLC) received a grant from the United States Department of Justice's National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to identify promising community oriented policing efforts at the local government level by working with our membership.

It was the intention of the National League of Cities to share this information with local elected officials throughout the country in an effort to improve the understanding of community oriented policing, its impact on the community, the law enforcement agency, and the commitment required of local elected officials. The information gathered is available on the internet to all NLC, ICMA, PTI and State Municipal League member-cities at www.algov.org and through the NLC award publications.

All of the winners over the three years of award competition were placed in our database of programs for cities used daily by NLC members and staff to identify premier programs for replication. The winners were also highlighted to our membership through articles in our newspaper, the *Nation's Cities Weekly*. The articles are attached.

The three main questions that underpinned the partnership and accomplishing the goals were: (1) How to surface promising activities? (2) How to disseminate and make readily available information for city officials enabling them to make informed decisions on community policing issues? and (3) How to provide NIJ with leads on community policing programs for further evaluation?

The awards program as the vehicle to identify the innovative programs at the municipal government level was chosen because NLC, a national public interest group, has demonstrated successes in utilizing recognition programs to surface innovation at the local government level in a variety of topic areas. NLC has proven its ability to surface innovative programs through awards as demonstrated by the Kennedy School utilizing our award winners in their mailing pool for their premier innovation awards program.

The awards program was implemented and administered over three years beginning in 1996 and finishing with the 1998 competition.

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Overall Program Objectives

NLC's five basic objectives were laid out in the application to NIJ. They were:

1. To surface information regarding promising activities in community policing and problem-solving initiatives with an emphasis on operational and police beat activities by local law enforcement agencies throughout the U.S. and its territories;
2. To assess the surfaced information for its basic value and limitations, identifying those that are most promising and innovative;
3. To give national recognition to programs judged excellent through an awards program;
4. To document and disseminate information regarding innovative efforts and best practices in community policing and problem-solving approaches; and,
5. To keep the searching, awards, and dissemination process up-to-date, timely, and focused on relevant issues that concern cities and law enforcement agencies.

NLC developed criterion for an award's program that was intended to draw on key elements of community oriented policing. Applicants were required to explain the "who, what, where, and why" of their community oriented policing effort. (See attached application) The judges looked for the collaborative effort between all departments, agencies, and citizen groups as stakeholders in the effort.

Key Factors

The Key factors in the administration of the competitive process included:

- 1) the expertise of researchers, evaluators, public administrators, and practitioners involved in community oriented policing and problem-solving approaches at the local, operational level;
- 2) a competitive awards process for identifying and recognizing promising community policing and problem-solving initiatives;
- 3) on-site assessments of programs and activities selected as finalists in the awards process;
- 4) program information in the Excellence in Community Policing database; and,
- 5) dissemination of program initiatives and information through a bi-monthly broadcast fax newsletter, *Nation's Cities Weekly*, and other publications.

Developing the Award Program

NLC staff selected twelve judges each year from the resource pool of members for the primary reviewing of applicants. These members included elected officials, police practitioners, researchers, and public administrators. Each judge reviewed fifty applications from communities and states other than their own. No two judges reviewed all the same submissions. An entry could receive a

maximum of 200 points in the initial round of scoring. After the first award year, 1996, the judges in subsequent years were selected from winning cities.

The evaluation team consisted of eight individuals who made up four teams of two members each. A team consisted of an elected official and a practitioner of community policing. These teams conducted site visits to review the finalist's actual program. The evaluation teams made written assessments of the finalists and submitted their findings to the panel of judges. Winners were selected by the judges based on the actual total score accumulated from both the judge's and evaluation team's reviews. Award applicants were evaluated by a judging panel who reviewed all applications. Then they selected finalists in each category. Finalists were assessed first hand by a team of experts. The award program surfaced many promising approaches and innovations in place throughout the United States. It should be noted that NLC built into the award program a mechanism to update the award criteria so it was current and timely in addressing issues that are of immediate importance to municipal and law enforcement officials.

Reaching the Competitors:

NLC has two types of membership, direct and indirect. Direct membership means a city is a direct member of NLC and not connected to a state league. There are currently over 1,500 villages, towns, and cities, as well as 49 state municipal leagues that are direct members. An indirect member belongs to one of the 49 state leagues that NLC represents. There are over 18,000 indirect members represented by NLC. An applicant did not have to be a member of NLC in order to enter the competition. The Excellence in Community Policing Awards Program disseminated 9,668 applications nationwide each year through the mail. A minimal amount of applicants were excluded from the competition due to the following factors:

1. Applicants did not follow program criteria;
2. Applications were not signed by required officials; or
3. Program summaries were not submitted as required.

Based on NLC's experience with award competitions the Community Policing award received a very strong applicant response. None of NLC's other award programs has had over 100 applicants for three consecutive years.

Who Entered:

During the three years the number of applications for this award were higher than our other awards programs. 1996: 398 applications; 1997: 219 applications and 1998: 117 applicants. The states entering over the three award cycles included:

Alabama
Alaska
Arizona
Arkansas
California
Colorado
Connecticut
Delaware
Florida
Georgia
Hawaii
Idaho
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Kansas
Kentucky
Louisiana
Maine
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Mississippi
Missouri
Nevada
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
North Carolina
North Dakota
Ohio
Oklahoma
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Puerto Rico
Rhode Island
South Carolina
Tennessee
Texas
Utah
Virginia
Washington
West Virginia

Wisconsin
Wyoming

The total number being 46 States and Puerto Rico applying over three years.

Breakdown of Applicants by City Type:

Initially in 1996, the largest response came from urban areas followed by suburban areas. By the final year 1999 rural entries led followed by suburban areas and lastly urban areas. NLC definitions are the same as the U.S. Census Bureau definitions. Urban cities are the central city within a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), suburban cities are defined as cities within the MSA that are not the central city, and rural cities are defined as cities that are not within an MSA.

Applications by Categories:

The Community Policing in Action category received the largest response. This was expected since this category was broken down into five sub-categories based on population so those entrants competed against other cities with similar population. The next highest response was in the category of Community Policing in Schools/Youth/Gangs, followed in order by: Community Policing and Businesses; Utilizing Volunteers in Community Policing; Community Policing and Violence Against Women; and, Outstanding Community Policing Officer/Deputy. One category had a very limited response each year: Community Policing and the Elderly.

NLC continued over the four years to identify the "best and brightest" programs in community oriented policing. Due to concerns about issues such as violence against women, and youth and gang issues, these categories were repeated each year. With consistently low responses to the Community Policing and the Elderly category, it was eventually discontinued in the competition. The Outstanding Community Policing Officer/Deputy category was eventually eliminated as well. These categories were problematic to applicants and did not fit into the overall effort or organizational commitment of NLC at the time. The determination by staff was made that the awards were best bestowed on overall community oriented policing programs, not on specific types of community policing efforts.

Least Successful Applications:

Each year there were a small number of applications that were scored low by the judges due to procedural errors such as not following established criteria, missed benchmarks, poorly organized presentations, or poorly prepared applications.

The remaining applications that scored under 100 accumulated points had more than one of the following reasons listed by the judges for their low score:

- No problem-solving or problem identification.
- No collaborative effort with citizens, outside agencies or businesses.
- No focus.
- No goals or objectives established.
- No apparent understanding of community oriented policing.
- No identifiable community oriented policing program.
- No identifiable commitment by city or police department.
- No mission statement for department's community policing effort.
- No identifiable community oriented policing training for officers or citizens.

Successful Applications:

A number of factors surfaced that were consistent in successful applications receiving over 100 points by the judging panel. A review of the winners and honorable mentions found these factors were even clearly evident from the application. In each application there was a:

1. Collaborative effort with the community;
2. Collaborative effort with the business community;
3. Collaborative effort with other agencies;
4. Clear identification of the problem;
5. Clear outline of the program or effort's plan and objectives;
6. Strong level of support in the community for the program or effort; and,
7. Specialized training for officers and volunteers.

Themes Identified through Awards Process:

- Significant citizens' support had a direct impact on the successful formulation and implementation of effective community policing efforts.
- The effectiveness of the community policing effort was directly connected to the clear problem identification utilized.
- Strategic planning was an effective and viable tool in implementing an effective community policing effort.
- Every community-policing program reviewed showed some level of public support. However, the top programs reviewed showed significant community support and involvement in the effort.
- Although specialized training in community policing seems to have become standard practice in all entries; the top programs indicated significant levels of training for all participants in the community policing effort. Additionally, the top entries had instituted formal training for citizens in their community policing effort.

Information Dissemination:

A comprehensive dissemination program continues to be available utilizing NLC's existing network consisting of a weekly newspaper, newsletters, publications, special reports, broadcast faxes and our examples database which includes the award winners and 40 other exemplary programs surfaced during the process.

The database of winners is accessible nationwide through NLC's website (www.nlc.org) the information is downloadable in an html format. Additionally, this report and other community policing information is available to all NLC members, ICMA and PTI members on Access Local Government, www.algov.org. through the Community Policing library. To date the information has been downloaded over 230 times by local government agencies.

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