

LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

COMMUNITY SATISFACTION SURVEY: A STEP FORWARD FOR
THE SAN ANTONIO POLICE DEPARTMENT

A LEARNING CONTRACT
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
MODULE II

BY

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SAN ANTONIO POLICE DEPARTMENT

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#4

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INTRODUCTION

As policing moves into the 1990's, the challenge of the mission of most departments has changed dramatically over the past decade. Citizens are demanding much more from their police department. The tasks, the responsibilities, as well as the liabilities involved clearly dictate that all police agencies must keep the lines of communication open between themselves and the public that they serve. Citizen confidence and satisfaction, or the lack of it, can prove to have a tremendous impact on the enforcement abilities of a department. Though all indications are that overall, the police image has improved somewhat over the past 20 years, no one can soon forget the turmoil of the 60's and how badly the police were portrayed by the media. While the purpose of this document is not to revisit the mistakes of the past, clearly the lessons learned will assist in future programs and their implementation. Professionalism, that forever pursued, yet so elusive, badge of recognition, dictates that all police departments be responsive to citizen needs as well as worthy of citizen respect. A vast number of agencies, both large and small, rural and urban, will benefit by moving forward with the trend in community

oriented policing. No reputable company would place a product on the market without first testing the response and acceptance. As professionals, police agencies must examine this technique and utilize its effectiveness to their advantage and re-establish the partnership with the community that has long been absent.

Therefore, as this project was first developed, the intent was to examine and evaluate existing programs, both locally and nationally. Then, moving to the second phase of information gathering, request input from the citizens of the community served as to relevant questions which would be utilized in the final product. The final phase of information collection involved the solicitation of input from within the department as to what was perceived as vital to complete the assigned goal or departmental mission. Once assembled, each piece of information was blended with others gathered and the final evaluations were made. Based upon these findings, the final document was drafted and submitted to the Research and Planning staff of the San Antonio Police Department for final consideration and approval prior to public dissemination.

PART I

Effective planning and resource allocation are both heavily dependant upon information. More than one police department has found itself providing services to their community which were perceived as vitally important. Then, they discover the fact that they have engaged in activities which, while  in the best interest of the general public, are ones for which officers are being held in contempt. These activities are not clearly presented to, or accepted by, the community for which the activity is designed to ultimately benefit. While information quality can be measured by numerous methods, there can be few arguments against simply requesting it from those most directly affected by the results. For too long, police agencies have depended upon statistical data such as; arrest records, clearance sheets, criminal trends and patterns, crime reports, response times to calls, etc. Subsequently, they miss the pulse of their community by utilizing these methods for designing and implementing their strategic plans.

While addressing program evaluation and assessment, a police administrator must keep in mind the final goals, as well as highlights of the program itself and those affected

by it. The following considerations must be made:

1. What are the current social trends within the community which may indicate the need for a revision of police programs or current activities
2. What effect does the police department have on the community's overall quality of life
3. Current problem areas or unresolved issues which are perceived as important by the community
4. Will the department be allowed the resources to implement any changes found to be necessary.

Having made the decision to in fact consult the community in regards to overall assessment and evaluation, an effective administrator must choose the most effective method to identify community attitudes, perceptions, concerns, and confidence level. Several widely used and accepted methods of information retrieval from community sources include:

1. Random sampling of citizens by either mail or personal officer contact
2. Target certain groups such as socioeconomic or ethnic areas within the community
3. Blanket community coverage, including business and learning institutions.

Once the information has been received by the requesting agency, it becomes no small matter to determine the most efficient and intelligent means for processing this

data into understandable, as well as usable information. Clearly this type of information may be used in less than honorable fashion to cover up inadequacies, shift blame, or pull political chains; even slanted to the point of where a glaring problem is glazed over and unrecognizable. Hopefully, all this aside, the information will result in a department moving in a pro-active direction and responding to both internal and external input.

The background research involved in the design of a suitable citizen response survey, or community questionnaire, entails requesting, as well as receiving, sample documents from numerous parts of the country, as well as within the State of Texas. The documents themselves varied in numerous ways. Most obviously they require a great deal of time and research to create as well as utilize. These facts indicate the importance placed upon this type of instrument by the agencies by which they were created. An impressive fact also noted in this research was that the majority of the surveys were multi-paged documents that dealt not only with public satisfaction with officer contact, but actual feelings of self security within the home and community. Generally, most surveys also included a section which allowed for the respondent to explain his answer, as well as include suggestions for improvement within the particular topic question area. Another frequently included inquiry dealt with a prioritization of

police responsibilities and job duties. The respondent was asked to list in descending importance what he felt that the police should concentrate their efforts on most. While some surveys provided a listing of these job duties, others were left open for the respondent to write in whatever responsibility that was perceived as a police function as well as the importance of that function.

Time and space constraints will not allow for detailed listing of all of the varied topic areas, general responses, results, or conclusions. It must be stated, however, that from a review of these documents, the overall reaction to their use, by the public was indeed positive. Generally speaking, most agencies received an overall rating somewhere between fair and excellent in relation to their efficiency, public contact, and perceived concern. Most departments were believed to be understaffed; however, the citizens responding indicated that more patrol units and officers would have a positive effect on crime deterrence as well as their peace of mind. Several of the surveys asked if the respondent would support an increase in the number of officers on the force, thereby increasing the visible number of patrol units. Here again, the greatest majority of respondents indicated that they would be willing to bear the added cost. Of the documents reviewed in this study, most surveys listed as an optional response questions relating to race, age, sex, marital status, income level, address, and

the respondents name.

The methods of dispatch and retrieval of the surveys were also somewhat varied; however, the most frequently utilized method appears to continue to be the mail system. When utilized, the survey was mailed to a particular address and included were: a message from the chief, a note of thanks for participating, and a postage paid return envelope. Interestingly enough, one of the surveys was conducted over the telephone, while others were dispatched at community organization meetings. A number of departments made the surveys available to "walk-in" customers, or mailed them to the citizen upon request. The percentage of return, irrespective of the manner in which it was distributed, appears to fall in the 20-50% range.

Once received by the agency, the surveys would be analyzed and percentages compiled into statistical data presentable to either local government officials or police executives, as well as any other concerned group or individual. The majority of departments utilizing surveys published the results in their annual reports or interdepartmental communications network. Conclusions were drawn and policies or procedures modified as the need or request appeared in the survey results. The greatest number of departments indicated that, while a major change of mission or overall goal was not likely or mandated, noticeably apparent was the lack of citizen knowledge in

areas relating to what the department was actually attempting to achieve in certain areas, as well as the methods being used to accomplish the objective.

As indicated previously in this document, most, if not all, departments utilizing a citizen survey found them to be a well received communications vehicle between the department and the community. The mere fact that the department was concerned enough to create, and utilize a survey was found to in itself improve citizen perception of departmental commitment to service, as well as an indicator of overall professionalism.

A final observation made by the author is that the majority of the departments involved in community service inquiries have decided to utilize them in an ongoing process. While most of these departments are located within communities of less than 250,000 persons, two involve large metropolitan areas. This fact indicates that this approach to community interaction may become a process which is available to any pro-active agency; regardless of it's size, geographical boundaries, population, budget, or jurisdictional responsibilities. All of the indications point to a positive rapport resulting from the venture, as well as an overall increase in the community's performance rating of their police. Naturally, the costs of such a program must be considered prior to implementation; however, from conclusions drawn by participating agencies, the return

far exceeds the outlay and most are pleased to find just how much the community supports them and their task. The sample documents submitted are to a number professionally designed, prepared and administered, which is truly an indicator of the professional direction in which law enforcement in this country is moving.

Police departments cannot operate within a vacuum, and the need for both public support and confidence becomes vitally important to the beat officer as he attempts to carry out his assigned tasks each day amongst his very watchful and sometimes critical constituency. In an atmosphere of low confidence, citizens will sometimes not even bother to notify the police if they are either a victim or a witness to a crime. This phenomenon leads not only to distorted crime statistics, but to further erosion of support, and ultimately will magnify the crime problem itself. While it is agreed that no one form or inquiry will dramatically alter public image, this type of instrument, coupled with positive program implementation and full support from within the department itself, will more than likely receive affirmative reactions from most communities and the citizens within them. Both police and citizens, therefore, are required to work together, as neither group is able to operate independently in a free society without an ultimate failure of that society. Subsequently, those agencies with the foresight to create and utilize this type

of pro-active policing should well become the front runners in the race for the title of the professionalism in which all departments should be involved.

PART II

San Antonio has always been nationally recognized as a city rich in cultural diversity. City government, as well as the police department administrators have discovered specific factors which have a decided effect on departmental planning, in the areas of goal setting, resource allocation, personnel deployment, as well as its overall mission which is a commitment to community service. These factors briefly include, but are not limited to:

1. The community's overall ethnic make-up including their geographic concentrations, special needs and expectations, as well as differing social norms and value systems.
2. Growth within the private sector, especially the major importance of the tourist and convention industry and how to best incorporate the special needs of these "visiting citizens" as well as projecting the image of the city on national and international levels.
3. Liaison with the numerous federal installations located within the jurisdictional concerns of the city. This will include the employees of these facilities as well as the growing number of retired civil service and

military personnel who decide to remain in San Antonio.

4. Geographic location of San Antonio and its close proximity to Mexico insure a strong trade and economic bond to complement the existing cultural ties.

However, this location is also a well traveled path for the illicit drug trade in its route to the very lucrative northern markets.

Once these major factors have been incorporated into the overall plan, explicit details and considerations may also be evaluated and dealt with as the process moves from the general to specific phases. Realizing the diversity of the city and its input groups, designing a method or system of receiving or extracting information pertinent to planning from the citizens becomes a task, which if not judiciously designed and administered, will, in the end, estrange the very elements necessary for success.

As one of the nation's largest, as well as fastest growing metropolitan communities, San Antonio finds itself in receipt of a public mandate to provide an efficient, cost-effective police service. Prior to this time, it appears that selected interest groups, as well as politics have dictated the direction of the department. Moving into the 21st Century, these methods will no longer be accepted by a population which is both media and institutionally educated. Citizens are vitally concerned with their communities and the quality of life within them. This is

evident by the increasing number of neighborhood and civic groups which attempt to exert their influence upon the decision makers within local government. Rather than square off against these groups in a conflict that will only result in both participants becoming frustrated and even more hostile, experience has shown that while the methods of achievement may differ, the ultimate goals remain the same; moreover, cooperation will provide more positive results.

Reaching this point of mutual interest, the next logical step is how to best solicit further citizen input; and then, how to further incorporate this information into physical action. This is, of course, where the Citizen Satisfaction Survey will come into play. The theory being that the citizens of San Antonio will welcome the opportunity to supply ideas and concerns to their police department, observe their application, and finally, evaluate the results. The process must of course be an ongoing one, free of prejudice and selfish concerns. If this is not the case, the confidence in the procedure and the department itself will ultimately bear the cost.

The decision to create a survey for the San Antonio Police Department was reached after examination of similar surveys which were presented during study at the Module II of the Law Enforcement Management Institute. The basic concept of seeking citizen input, and at the same time measuring the levels of contentment with their department,

appeared to be an idea worthy of further investigation. Several departments in Texas, as well as around the country, had used the survey method and experienced positive results. The first step was to further examine the results from these agencies, by requesting information pertinent to the survey's creation, dissemination, retrieval, and impact upon the parent department. The second step in the process involved requesting from citizens of San Antonio their concerns and interests relevant to the content of the proposed survey. Inquiries were sent to randomly selected groups throughout the city, requesting that the recipient create a list of at least six questions that their particular group felt would be relevant to the proposed survey. Included in the request was an explanation of the proposed survey, why it was being created, and how it was to be used. These requests were mailed out with a stamped return envelope enclosed, along with a note of appreciation from the survey's creator. Five groups were targeted by these requests. These groups were:

1. Church groups, several various denominations, located in different areas of the city
2. Civic groups, examples being the Kiawanas Club and the Jaycees
3. Business associations such as the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce
4. Citizen activist organizations, including COPS:

Citizens Organized For Public Service

5. Neighborhood associations, generally a smaller unit located within a tighter geographic area.

The results received were both encouraging in some areas, and then again not so in others. The number of inquiries received was somewhat disappointing; however, those that were returned appeared to be well researched and sincere in content and purpose. From the requests received, the group with the highest response rate were the civic groups, which had a response rate of about 20%. While it cannot be stated that one particular organization or group appeared to be more community oriented, one may indeed speculate that the same inquiry presented in person by a departmental representative probably would have elicited a somewhat better ratio of response. It is recommended to any other agencies considering a similar survey, that several methods of information solicitation at this particular phase be utilized.

The final step in this phase of work was to solicit input from within the department itself. In an attempt to choose a broad spectrum of contributors, several officers of similar rank and position were chosen from the top to the rank structure to the line officer levels. The inquiries were sent as well as retrieved through the interdepartmental mail system. The inquiries were identical in content, irrespective of the rank of its recipient. Once again, the

results received were positive as well as informative, though in some instances brief and somewhat limited in their scope. This particular area proved to be interesting in a somewhat different way than the first two phases. While all police officers should indeed consider themselves a citizen of the community, the results of these requests were easily identified as coming from within the department.

From the experiences encountered in the creation of this phase of the survey, there can be no doubt that just about everyone has an opinion as to how their respective police department is doing its job, and was able to include suggestions related to service improvement. There is also no doubt that the broader the base of input, the more representative the results will be of actual community feelings. This is, of course, the intent and purpose of the survey in the first place, and as many facets of the community that can be included into the process should be reached if possible.

PART III

It would be a real injustice for a direct comparison to be made between the surveys that were the basis for the creation of the document for the San Antonio Police Department. Each, while having various differences in content, were all designed and utilized for the same purpose. Each agency which has created some form of survey has been extremely satisfied with the results, and plans are to utilize the program on a continual basis. One must be reassured to note that most all of the surveys examined used the same basic questions dealing with perception of service and confidence levels. To examine the work of agencies from different parts of the country, serving various sized communities, and with dissimilar population makeup and see the same basic questions appearing, indicates that not only do all of these agencies share a mutual level of concern, but it appears that each is faced with the same basic problems and concerns within their community. Policing itself can be at its best a difficult task, and at its worst, a disaster. The citizen survey is merely a tool with which to better complete the task involved; however, one that may be mistrusted as well as misunderstood. So many

well meaning programs are scrapped before any good is realized simply due to a failure to do a careful background study and mesh together all of the key players in the planning phase of the operation. As stated previously, information is vital to planning for any agency, no matter what service they provide. The task of providing police service to the community has a chance to communicate in a free manner with those who are there to serve them. There can be no doubt that the public will demand more and more service from police in general and at a cost that they are willing to bear. There can be little argument against increased citizen and police cooperation, and it appears that the community survey will emerge as one of the better methods for insuring the continuation of this beneficial relationship.

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APPENDIX I
COMMUNITY SATISFACTION SURVEY

July, 1990

Dear Citizen of San Antonio,

The San Antonio Police Department is always striving to do a better job of serving this community. To accomplish this task, we are asking for your assistance by conducting this Citizen Satisfaction Survey.

Please take a moment to respond to this survey by answering each question and returning the completed survey in the enclosed stamped envelope.

The purpose of this survey is to help the department learn the concerns of you, the citizens of this community and to determine how to best serve your needs through improved police service. Your input is of the utmost importance to this department as the results of this survey will aid us in the effective utilization of police resources. There is no need to place your name or address on the survey, though there is a space provided for this information should you desire to include it.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

William O.
Gibson
Chief of Police

SAN ANTONIO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Citizen Satisfaction Survey

July 1990

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: (For statistical purposes only)

1. Age:

<input type="checkbox"/> 19 or under	<input type="checkbox"/> 40-49
<input type="checkbox"/> 20-29	<input type="checkbox"/> 50-59
<input type="checkbox"/> 30-39	<input type="checkbox"/> 60 or over

2. Sex:

<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
-------------------------------	---------------------------------

3. How long have you lived in San Antonio?

<input type="checkbox"/> 0-1 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-10 years
<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 years	<input type="checkbox"/> Over 10 years

4. Why did you select San Antonio as your home?

<input type="checkbox"/> Job station	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational facilities
<input type="checkbox"/> Born here	<input type="checkbox"/> Standard/cost of living

Other _____

POLICE RESPONSE INFORMATION: (If applicable to your situation)

5. If you have phoned the San Antonio Police Department within the past 12 months, indicate your perception of the officer's response time.

<input type="checkbox"/> Very quick	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat slow
<input type="checkbox"/> Adequate	<input type="checkbox"/> Very slow

6. In your personal contact with the officer responding to your

call, indicate your impression of the officer as listed:

Officer Courtesy:

Assistance Level:

_____ Very courteous

_____ Very helpful

_____ Courteous

_____ Helpful

_____ Indifferent

_____ Minimal effort

_____ Rude

_____ Created further problems

Officer Appearance:

_____ Well groomed, professional looking

_____ Orderly, adequate appearance

_____ Needed improvement

_____ Did not notice

Level of Concern:

_____ Very concerned

_____ Somewhat concerned

_____ Indifferent

_____ Cold, uncaring

CRIME PERCEPTIONS:

7. If you have called the police within the past 12 months,
please indicate the reason for the call.

_____ Witness to a criminal offense or incident

_____ Victim of a crime

_____ Involved in a traffic accident

_____ To report domestic or neighborhood disturbance

_____ Request non-law enforcement assistance/information

Other _____

8. If you have been a victim of a crime within the past 12 months, did you notify the police and report it?

_____ Yes _____ No

If no, why?

_____ Fear of retaliation

_____ Loss of insurance coverage

_____ Frustration - police cannot help

_____ Anger - police do not care to help

9. Do you feel that you or a member of your household will be a victim of a crime within the next 12 month period?

_____ Yes, definitely

_____ Yes

_____ No

_____ Have not thought about it

10. How safe do you feel within your own home and neighborhood?

Day:

Night:

_____ Very safe

_____ Very safe

_____ Somewhat safe

_____ Somewhat safe

_____ Unsafe

_____ Unsafe

_____ Very unsafe

_____ Very unsafe

_____ Never thought about it _____ Never thought about it

11. In consideration of the past 12 month period, do you feel that crime overall in San Antonio has:

_____ Stayed at about the same levels

_____ Decreased slightly

_____ Increased slightly

_____ Increased alarmingly

12. How would you rate the San Antonio Police Department in relation to the overall job that is being done?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Satisfactory
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Very poor
- ☐ No opinion

FUTURE PROGRAMS AND MANPOWER ALLOCATIONS:

13. From the following list, select the concern or problem areas that you have observed within the community and believe require additional police action.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Murder | <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Armed robbery | <input type="checkbox"/> Gang activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Burglary | <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile delinquency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sex offenses | <input type="checkbox"/> Gambling offenses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drunk drivers | <input type="checkbox"/> Thefts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drugs | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle thefts |

Others not listed _____

14. In your opinion, do you feel that the San Antonio Police Department has sufficient manpower to provide adequate service to the community?

- ☐ Adequate manpower
- ☐ Requires increase
- ☐ Requires substantial increase
- ☐ More than adequate manpower

15. If an increase in authorized manpower is allocated, where do you feel that these officers should be placed to best increase the departments effectiveness?

_____ Marked vehicle patrol

_____ Detectives, crime follow-up work

_____ Detectives, undercover for drugs, property recovery

_____ Support services, dispatchers, clerical, etc.

_____ Special service units, DWI patrol, footpatrol, etc.

16. Please list any programs which you feel should be created, and supported, to serve special needs: _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

(Above information is optional)

APPENDIX II

INQUIRIES

Questionnaire

SAN ANTONIO POLICE DEPARTMENT Community Satisfaction Survey

The San Antonio Police Department is always striving to do a better job of serving this community. To accomplish this task, we are asking for your assistance in designing a community satisfaction survey to be distributed to area residents. Please take a few moments of your time to give us your insight as to what questions should be included on this survey.

The plan is for the survey to be printed on a 5x8 size card to allow for ease of handling. Please list on this sheet (feel free to use the back if necessary) in your order of importance, six questions that you feel should be considered for use in the design of our survey. A self-addressed, stamped envelope is provided for your convenience.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sergeant Fred N. Balmos

San Antonio Police Department

Sgt. Fred Balmos
#3209
N.W. Substation
5020 Prue Rd.
San Antonio, TX
78240

Sir,

I am presently attending the TCLEOSE sponsored Law Enforcement Management Institute. As a partial requirement of graduation from this institution, each participant is required to complete several research projects. The particular project with which I am now involved with is the creation of a Citizen Satisfaction Survey. The project has the endorsement of the Research and Planning Bureau and is being considered for active use by our department. I am requesting input for this survey from within our department, as well as from outside groups. I would appreciate our assistance and request that you list at least six questions that you feel would be important enough to include on this survey. Once complete, please return your response to me via the departmental mail system. It is not necessary to identify yourself on the response and these replies will be viewed only by Research and Planning staff, TECLOSE personnel, and myself. Thank you for your time and assistance in this project, and if you have any questions feel free to contact me at the Prue Road Substation. I am currently assigned to PPC.

Sincerely,

Sgt. Fred Balmos

Sgt. Fred Balmos #3209
N.W. Substation
5020 Prue Road
San Antonio, TX 78240
(512) 299-7425

Sir,

Allow me a moment to introduce myself and then briefly explain this correspondence. As per this letterhead, I am Sgt. Fred Balmos and I am currently assigned to the Northwest Patrol Substation here in San Antonio. I have been with the department for 15 years and am currently attending The Law Enforcement Management Institute, which is sponsored by the Texas Commission of Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Education. This commission therefore sets the requirements for training of officers throughout the state, and the Management Institute is attempting to intensify study at the med and upper levels of police commands. One of the requirements for graduation from this institute is the completion of several research projects assigned between modules. The project which I have decided to handle covers the area, broadly described as; citizen input/satisfaction survey inquiry. One of the instructors at the institute, David Carter, Ph.D., indicated to me that your department has recently dealt with, or is currently addressing this topic. Dr. Carter also indicated that your department would be willing to assist me in my project by supplying data received by your department.

Specifically, information that I would find useful would be:

1. How the decision was made to create the survey/input inquiry
2. What were the target areas or groups
3. How the surveys were distributed and retrieved
4. Percentage of response
5. Expectations vs. results in information/input received
6. Were the overall results positive or negative
7. What, if any, changes were made as a result of the information
8. Is the survey/inquiry an ongoing program.

I plan to design and receive approval by my department to utilize the result of my work and will give due credits to assistance received in the paper that I submit to the institute. I will also furnish a copy of the paper, as well as the resulting document to your department as a small repayment for your efforts in my behalf. I appreciate any consideration to my request and am available at the above address or through our central departmental headquarters.

Sincerely,

Fred Balmos