

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

**Mandated, Progressive Leadership Development
for all Texas Peace Officers across their careers**

**A Leadership White Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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Leadership Command College**

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ABSTRACT

Society in the United States is changing rapidly, and the demands on law enforcement are higher and more complex than ever before. The demand to solve complicated social issues in multicultural communities with limited resources is the challenge modern law enforcement faces. The only way to effectively meet these modern challenges is to capitalize on the human resource of the individual peace officer. Leadership development is a training concept traditionally reserved for supervisory, command and executive level law enforcement personnel due to a long-standing "top-down" management style. This leadership design is no longer able to meet the demands of modern society. Modern community policing models require line level officers to take a community leadership role in helping communities solve problems. Communities must be empowered to help themselves through law enforcement officers adopting a servant leader philosophy that produces transformational leaders in the communities. To achieve that goal, all peace officers must evolve into formal leaders through mandatory, progressive leadership development at strategic intervals throughout their careers. The cost-benefit of investing in this decentralized form of police leadership will increase public trust, reduce burnout in officers and allow for the type of flexibility, innovation and transparency that modern policing requires.

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INTRODUCTION

Formal leadership development in law enforcement is neither widespread nor comprehensive. Leadership styles vary widely from one agency to the next and are more a function of individual position or experience than the result of standardized training. When police leaders do receive training, it is typically after they have been promoted, rather than before, and focuses on technical supervisory skills as opposed to transformational leadership principles (TCOLE, 2015). Although upper command and executive level leadership courses exist, they are limited in availability and generally focused on the top management levels. This lack of focused leadership development has resulted in a less cohesive approach to community problem solving and missed opportunities of available personnel resources within the profession.

Formal leadership development can result in agencies that exhibit greater flexibility, a more collaborative approach to problem-solving and an increased network of individual relationships throughout the profession and in the community. Leadership development has been shown as a vital element in innovation, collaborative approaches and equipping individuals to contribute to finding solutions. Organizations benefit from developing leaders within their ranks who inspire innovation, increased effectiveness, and more satisfied employees (Johnson, 2004). Agencies would also experience a more stable succession plan model for future leaders in the organization.

Modern society is asking law enforcement to solve multiple problems beyond their traditional policing role. Community-oriented, problem-solving, and data-driven policing models are being employed to address these challenges. Ferrandino (2014) points out that traditional community-oriented policing models have serious limitations

because they still rely on a "top-down" management approach. Empowering line level officers to serve as community leaders in the neighborhoods they police is critical in addressing the challenges facing modern law enforcement (Flynn & Herrington, 2015).

To address these new challenges a change in the police leadership culture must take place. Implementing a leadership culture of self-development for all officers will enable the organizations to be more flexible, solve problems through innovative ideas and include greater community ownership (Reichard & Johnson, 2011). The only way to effect a permanent cultural change in police leadership development is to make it mandatory through the licensing entity of the state. As part of regular mandated continuing education, progressive leadership development should be mandated in specific intervals across an officer's career. This will allow officers to receive the same leadership training at the same points in their careers, bringing a more cohesive mindset to the way law enforcement organizations approach leadership and community problem-solving.

POSITION

Developing leaders within an organization and throughout a profession is a worthwhile pursuit. When leaders are developed early and progressively over the course of their career, the organization and the employee benefit. Research has shown that intentional, progressive leadership development of employees can make an organization more flexible, better suited to solving complex problems and increase the ability to perform at higher levels (Petrie, 2014). The largest and most successful companies in many industries are choosing to make significant investments in leadership development programs and plan to make them strategic priorities in the

future (Harvard Business Publishing, The State of Leadership Development, 2016).

Research has shown companies that have invested heavily in leadership development outperform other businesses and experience greater growth (Meinart, 2014).

As organizations invest in developing their employees, a natural succession plan culture is born. Employees are trained in the technical aspects of the job and then developed into individual leaders who will empower each other to create and implement innovative ideas. An ability for the employee and the organization to be resilient to change from either internal or external forces will also manifest. This developed resiliency solidifies an agency's ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment, an unforeseen event, or new responsibilities levied by the community.

As noted by Flynn and Herrington (2015), modern law enforcement agencies must develop leaders who see themselves as the power source for their employees to invent new approaches to complex problems and adopt a collaborative learning environment within the agency. Modern law enforcement is being asked to address a myriad of social issues. Increased terrorist threats from homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) have continued to challenge the law enforcement responsibility (Rasmussen, 2015). Changing social norms are legalizing previously illegal substances or behaviors and the trend indicates there is more to come (Fortenberry, 2016). Pillar 5 of Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing states, "Today's line officers and leaders must meet a wide variety of challenges including international terrorism, evolving technologies, rising immigration, changing laws, new cultural mores, and a growing mental health crisis" (IACP, 2015, p. 51).

An increasingly diverse population means policing a multicultural society that often has significantly differing views of the government, social norms, religious convictions, the role of law enforcement, and political priorities (Ben-Porat, 2008). These multicultural and even multinational issues can become even more complex due to the internet's ability to connect previously separated groups. Even differing languages are no longer barriers to communication and collaboration between groups with similar interests or agendas. Social media and the speed with which local incidents can become national or international issues have taxed the problem-solving ability of the current law enforcement leadership models.

The cyber world has created an entirely new kind of victim and suspect where geographical boundaries no longer apply. Victims and suspects are often not in the same country much less the same law enforcement jurisdiction which complicates the goal of apprehending criminals and seeking justice for victims. Corporate espionage, sexual exploitation of children, violent radicalization of citizens, identity theft and credit card skimmers all create new challenges for law enforcement in trying to protect the citizens (Heal, 2015).

Instances of civil unrest have increased over the last decade with citizens demanding a change in police methods and a call for a restoration of trust in many communities. Minority communities are calling for more transparency and greater citizen input in their local police departments. A return to older models of Community Oriented Policing has revealed weaknesses not noticed before (Ferrandino, 2014). Instead of police departments solving problems and rolling the solutions out onto the communities, there is a need for the community to be empowered into becoming a

network of invested partners who are responsible for their community development into collective efficacy (Nolan, Conti, & McDevitt, 2004). This approach will cause law enforcement agencies to change their traditional leadership models into a new paradigm.

One solution to addressing the constantly evolving modern world of law enforcement is to develop line level officers into leaders. Only through progressive leadership development at intervals throughout their careers can officers and agencies be equipped to respond to the future challenges and demands of modern society. A more decentralized approach to police leadership is warranted that relies on all officers to take on greater responsibility. As Flynn and Herrington (2015) point out, the organization is limited in its ability to effectively solve problems when it maintains the executive level as the group that works out and implements solutions to problems. Modern leadership requires a decentralized collaborative model that encourages innovative ideas and an environment where officers input is valued.

Officers exercise their authority to make decisions daily often in life or death situations and are required to arrive at legal, ethical and impartial conclusions with often less than adequate information. Even knowing this, typical law enforcement leadership models attempt to minimize that role; “traditional chain-of-command formulations had relegated police officers to the role of ‘privates’ not ‘officers’” (Flynn & Herrington, 2015, p. 7). Law enforcement officers should be trained as leaders from the beginning of their careers. The officer must be trained and encouraged to see themselves as a community leader. When officers are given the skills and the mindset to lead the citizens they police, the opportunity for a servant leader philosophy in the officer is

created. An officer with a servant leader mindset and a community leader self-image will then be able to form relationships with the community he or she serves from the perspective of caring for and empowering the community members.

Instead of a central authority detailing a plan of action that street officers implement, officers who are trained as community leaders, will have both the authority and the skills to collaborate directly with the citizens for solutions. They can encourage the community to have ownership in the solutions and the implementation. Officers who have developed a servant leader philosophy feel a responsibility to care for the citizens in their community. This model of policing places the leadership responsibility on the officers to work alongside the community. The advantages of officers being trained and utilized as community leaders extends beyond the individual community partnerships. As noted in the Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, "Law enforcement agencies should provide leadership training to all personnel throughout their careers" (IACP, 2015, p. 54).

Trained and experienced leaders would become common in the police profession. When promotions are needed to fill formal leadership roles, agencies will have a large pool of well trained, credentialed and experienced leaders. The transition from leading citizens to leading officers would be smoother and more efficient. The pool of candidates will all have previous formal leadership development training coupled with perspective gained through experience before being promoted. This pool of formally trained leaders is something that is sorely lacking currently (IACP, 2015).

COUNTER ARGUMENTS

Creating and implementing comprehensive, progressive leadership development for all peace officers at intervals across their careers would be a prohibitively expensive undertaking. Corporations and small businesses in 2013 invested an estimated \$15.5 billion on leadership development. Corporate leadership development programs that are less than two days in length can cost between \$21,000 and \$61,000. Even state-funded programs like the Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT) Leadership Command College (LCC) costs taxpayers approximately \$16,000 per participant (Rodriguez, 2018). The cost to develop or outsource leadership training is beyond the budgets of most law enforcement agencies. Training every officer in the state would increase the cost exponentially.

Local law enforcement agencies are experiencing budget reductions across the country and there are indications they will not return to previous levels anytime soon if ever (COPS, 2011). With current budget shortfalls and increased demand for police services agencies simply cannot afford to make long-term investments in leadership development. Although leadership development can be expensive, the return on that investment is well worth the price. As corporations have found, the return on investment has been studied and found to be a financially positive outcome (Avolio, Avey, & Quisenberry, 2010). In studying whether law enforcement should find ways to make this investment there is little question that the public is demanding it. The Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing has an entire pillar dedicated to training and educating with specific recommendations to include individual leadership development for every officer (IACP, 2015). In the same pillar, the federal

government is tasked with developing programs to assist with funding training initiatives relating to officer development.

In addition, the financial responsibility should lie with the state through The Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) (2015). Creation and implementation of the leadership development program would fall on the state licensing authority and be handled as continuing education requirements for officers. Working with the federal government through grants and other programs the state can handle the cost of the leadership development mandate without placing that cost on the individual agencies. This method would also ensure both consistency in the training as well as increasing agency networking across the state.

Leadership development programs are lengthy and time-consuming. Taking officers away from their assignments for extended periods of time at multiple intervals across their careers is disruptive and places a hardship on the individual agencies as well as the officer. Agencies are already working with fewer officers than they need, and this would make those shortages even worse (Boetel, 2016). Leadership development is a different type of course than technical expertise training. In leadership development, the student must be given time to absorb the material in a more philosophical way. There are additional advantages to the time element of leadership development courses.

Officers can experience plateauing and burnout in their careers. Plateauing can occur because of having accomplished initial goals but then feeling like there are no more challenges. Burnout is a further decline of an officer's emotional health that can

include frustration, a lack of motivation, physical and intellectual fatigue and emotional isolation (Childers, 1991).

Technical expertise training does not feed the emotional development that leadership training addresses. Mitigating burnout can be done through the type of systematic, progressive personal development that leadership training provides. Coupled with the implementation of conducting the leadership development at strategic intervals across the career of an officer, the detrimental effects of law enforcement burnout can be reduced if not eliminated. Continued growth in an officer's personal and professional life can prevent and even reverse the effects of burnout (Scoville, 2006). The positive effects of philosophical development and personal resiliency can only be realized when an officer has enough time away from his or her daily responsibilities to experience the restoration that can take place.

Another benefit that outweighs the time away from the agency argument is the networking aspect. The opportunity for officers to interact with their counterparts at other agencies across the state cannot be overstated. An exchange of ideas in terms of policy development, how other departments addressed problems, and the realization that many officers are experiencing the same work-related challenges and successes is a valuable tool for maintaining officers' emotional health.

The networking also provides an extension of resources that may not have existed before. If officers are to be given more authority to be leaders and solve problems, then a larger number of resources to draw from, in the form of officers from other areas/agencies, must be part of that increased responsibility. The exchange of

ideas and differing perspectives can help all agencies broaden their capabilities to address the challenges they face.

RECOMMENDATION

The state of Texas should fund and mandate ongoing, progressive leadership development for all peace officers at strategic intervals across their careers. Leadership development in both government and corporate environments has been studied and found to be a worthwhile endeavor. Cost-benefit analysis and long-term positive benefits to the organization, as well as the employee, has been shown effective and repeatable. Research has shown leadership development results in positive results (Avolio et al., 2010).

Modern law enforcement is facing a myriad of new challenges that will require an entirely new model of leadership. The top-down, hierarchal leadership approach of community policing has been pushed beyond its capabilities. The way to address these new challenges is to tap into the leadership source previously unrealized in the form of the rank and file police officer (IACP, 2015).

Only by empowering the line level officer to address the challenges ahead can society properly address the issues. Officers must be taught and encouraged to see themselves as community leaders who are leading the communities they police. Developing a servant leadership philosophy in the street level officers is the key to the cultural change being demanded by modern society (Ferrandino, 2014).

Although the financial cost of creating, implementing and maintaining such a comprehensive development program will be high, research indicates benefits will outweigh the cost many times over (Avolio et al., 2010). In the Final Report of the

President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, the research has shown the citizens are demanding the change in traditional police leadership (IACP, 2015). A more decentralized approach with more community involvement is warranted and can only be accomplished through the force multiplier of giving the line officer the training and authority to be a community leader.

Developing personnel is a time-consuming endeavor to be sure. Leadership development programs can be lengthy to achieve their purpose. When considering the career long, strategic interval approach proposed here the total time commitment would be substantial. Cultural change is a process that takes time. Introducing new perspectives and allowing time for those perspectives to become philosophies require a steadfast commitment in financial and temporal resources. The results of this type of undertaking would result in a paradigm shift in the way policing has been done in the modern age. This shift would result not only in better relations between law enforcement and the communities they serve but a more emotionally healthy police force as well (IACP, 2015). When all officers are seen as servant leaders, society and law enforcement both benefit.

Following the recommendations set out in the Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, the program would begin with the legislature directing TCOLE (2015) to conduct research to assess the most strategically advantageous intervals in an officer's career for attending the leadership development training (IACP, 2015). Further research would establish a progressive curriculum that would develop an officer's learned leadership principles into servant leadership

philosophies. The program would include instruction on the decentralized leadership model that creates an image of the line officer as a community leader.

The officer is taught how to address community issues through leadership principles and empowering the community through problem-solving relationships. Tracks of instruction would include resiliency, personal goal development, constitutional principles, multicultural communication and technology with the flexibility to add or remove components as societal demands dictate. Funded through the state legislature and managed through TCOLE (2015) as mandated, continuing education to maintain a peace officer license would ensure that all officers attend the training no matter what experience level, certification level, or formal rank within their agency. Additional programs such as LEMIT-LCC would be part of advanced level programs in an application/approval type model the way it is currently. The State of Texas should take a leadership role in the nation by mandating progressive, strategic, leadership development for all Texas peace officers throughout their careers. This step could begin an investment in our law enforcement personnel and our communities that would represent the change demanded by the citizens across the country.

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