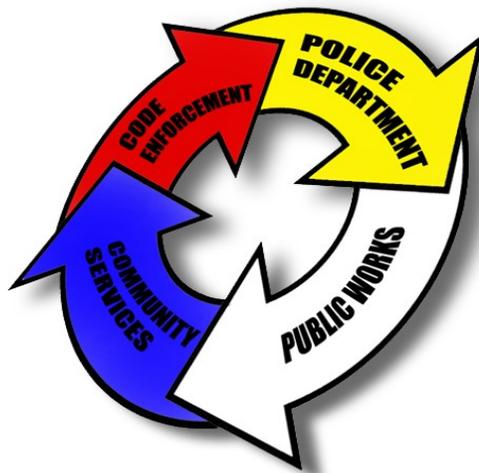


El Monte Police Department
2006 Herman Goldstein Award Application
I.M.P.A.C.T. Program
(Improving and Maintaining Public Awareness and
Community Teamwork)



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The El Monte Police Department is committed to community-oriented policing. For decades, this Department has collaborated with community partners to provide a safe environment and to promote security in our City. In 2002, Chief Ken Weldon recognized the most critical challenge that the Department faces: CONNECTIVITY with the residents. The IMPACT Program was devised to overcome impediments to a complete community policing model.

The IMPACT (**Improving and Maintaining Public Awareness and Community Teamwork**) Program began in September 2002. Primarily, the program is about teamwork and including the community in the decisions which ensure the public safety of this jurisdiction. The City was divided into 66 neighborhoods called Reporting Districts (RD's) to which an officer is responsible for quality of life issues and for the identification of long-term neighborhood projects. This meant that the neighborhood had its own Police Officer (also known as a "Neighborhood Officer") to help solve the long-term problems, to keep the community safer, and to assist with beautification efforts. The Neighborhood Officer is the coordinator for bringing the various city services together to solve a given problem in their neighborhood district.

The IMPACT Program has proven to be a great success for our department and the residents of El Monte. The goals and objectives of the program have been achieved and the IMPACT program is an integrated, vital component in the policing methodologies of our officers. The program has received State and National recognition as an innovative, grassroots program with negligible fiscal impact and the ability to be replicated in other communities. The department was recently awarded the prestigious 2006 James Q. Wilson Award from the California Regional Policing Institute, for having the most innovative and successful community oriented policing program in the State of California.

SCANNING

Identification of the Problem

When Chief Ken Weldon was hired in December 2001, he invited input from all members of the department encouraging suggestions for service delivery. Chief Weldon solicited innovative ideas regarding problem oriented policing techniques and how they could impact the city as a whole. Since the Chief has very strong ties to the community (he is a life-long resident and has a 30-year career in local law enforcement), he relied heavily on the input and opinions of fellow residents, local business owners, educators, fellow police officers, city department managers and elected city officials.

Most of the residents and local business owners cited the most important efforts would be to make El Monte a safer, cleaner, and more attractive city to reside, conduct business, and visit. Chief Weldon had a successful career while serving as an officer/supervisor as a member of the department's Community Relations Office and wanted to expand the philosophy of community-based policing to all department employees. Our Community Relations Office has been an accessible satellite location for citizens to respond in the event of on-going, non-emergency related problems. Field officers often refer citizens to this office to provide them with more specialized assistance and counseling services. Officers and volunteers are readily available to listen to the concerns of the residents and business owners and assist in resolving issues unique to them.

The Problem Oriented Policing (P.O.P.) Team was established in 1995 in an attempt to reduce crime and disturbance calls in targeted areas. As specific areas were identified, by a high volume of calls for service and blight, the P.O.P. Team would saturate the area with police in patrol cars, marked and unmarked, and on bicycles to provide an empowering presence. Citations, arrests, and code enforcement fines were the result and the solution was a reduced crime rate.

Despite the preliminary efforts of the department, the Chief and his administrative staff were still faced with the challenge of addressing those issues that were paramount to the residents and the local businesses: quality of life issues, blight and the appearance of the City in general.

ANAYLSIS

Objectives and Anticipated Results

While the Community Relations Office and P.O.P Team helped address several crime issues within the city, the limited staff did not have the manpower to continue directed patrol at problem locations during their days off. The El Monte Police Department, therefore, implemented the I.M.P.A.C.T. (Improving Public Awareness and Community Teamwork) Program to specifically address long-term crime and beautification issues. The I.M.P.A.C.T. Program was created as a partnership between the police department and community to address long-term problems by assigning individual police officers to designated reporting districts. The police officers are assigned their reporting districts for the length of their patrol assignment and are expected to build long-term relationships with the residents and business members of their district. Officers build relationships that remain in effect until problems are addressed and issues are resolved by utilizing numerous city entities (code enforcement, public works, volunteers, etc). The officer then continues to monitor problems in the district in order to maintain the desired effect.

The primary objectives of the IMPACT Program are as follows:

RD Contacts: Each Officer must conduct ten (10) pro-active positive contacts per week with people residing in his/her RD. This does not include radio calls for service. However, a positive follow-up with a resident, who has been a victim of a crime, is a good example of the type of positive contact the department wants to promote. Officers also encourage residents to form Neighborhood Watch groups and can provide the materials necessary to organize this type of community involvement.

Graffiti: The goal of the department is to have all graffiti removed within 24 hours of the observation. The “broken window” concept toward community policing is the cornerstone of the IMPACT program objectives. Every Officer has access to the 24-hour graffiti hotline.

Shopping Carts: With many residents relying on foot traffic and local markets, stray shopping carts are a definite issue for our community. Despite the overall blighted appearance of a City strewn with shopping carts, the loss/theft of shopping carts also creates a significant financial burden to the local businesses. Shopping carts on the roadways also create a potential traffic hazard. All shopping carts should be removed within 24 of the observation.

Inoperable/abandoned vehicles: Vehicles on blocks in the driveway of a private residence or abandoned on a City street are a major concern for the department. Despite being eyesores, abandoned vehicles promote an image of distress in a

community. Neighborhood Officers must make every effort to work with the registered owners of vehicles to remove them from their properties and/or the City streets.

Short-term projects: Each Officer is responsible for at least two short-term community improvement projects every six months designed to enhance the overall appearance of a street, home, business etc. Most of the short-term projects are devised to achieve a specific cosmetic value to the neighborhood.

Long-term projects: Each Officer is tasked with maintaining at least one long-term community improvement project every six months. These projects vary in terms of the desired outcome. One example may be working with property owners to facilitate the eviction process for problem tenants.

RESPONSE

Actions to meet the objectives:

In the past 3 years, the El Monte Police Department has worked arduously to plan, develop, implement, document and evaluate the IMPACT Program. All Officers were presented with the tools and resources necessary to meet the objectives of the program.

Citizen Contacts: Officers were expected to park their police vehicles and walk their reporting districts. Officers were provided with promotional materials in several languages to distribute to residents during their door-to-door contacts. In addition, each officer was responsible for planning and hosting an RD meeting in his/her district. In addition, officers were encouraged to attend community meetings (i.e. PTA Meetings, Coordinating Council Meetings, Local Chapters of Service Organizations Meetings). All Neighborhood Officers provide the residents in their RD with their department-issued cell phone number and a voicemail phone number to leave non-emergency messages. Most importantly, residents were informed of the Neighborhood Watch concept, VCAP (Volunteers Caring And Patrolling) opportunities, and dates/times for future RD meetings.

Graffiti: In order to meet the ambitious objective of removing all graffiti within 24 hours of the observation, the City established a special unit, the Beautification Team, and outfitted them with all of the tools and resources needed for the removal of graffiti. Officers call in to a 24-hour hotline to report the graffiti and location for removal by the Beautification Team. In addition, Neighborhood Officers collaborated with the detectives of the El Monte Police Department's Gang Unit to identify "taggers" and go straight to the source to prevent graffiti vandalism.

Shopping Carts: Since the Neighborhood Officers are responsible for shopping carts abandoned in their districts, the City contracted with a company to provide retrieval services. The company maintains a 24-hour hotline to which officers call in the locations of carts for pick-up. In addition, Officers established contacts with local grocery store managers to work with them to prevent the removal of carts from the parking lots/premises of the stores.

Inoperable/abandoned vehicles: In order to combat the appearance of blight and distress in the community the Neighborhood Officers are responsible for initiating contact with vehicle owners to facilitate the removal of inoperable/abandoned vehicles. If an owner cannot be contacted the officer will have the vehicle towed. The officer will also work with staff from the Code Enforcement Division to reduce the number of abandoned vehicles in El Monte.

Short-term projects: Most short-term projects involve a single property, residence or business, in need of cosmetic repairs and beautification efforts. For example, the Officer may work with the property owner to repair broken windows, fences, gates, etc. on his/her property. In addition, Officers used a community-wide clean-up day, "Operation Sparkle", to help residents paint their homes, do general landscaping and remove trash from the premises. Officers also work with Code Enforcement to ensure the proper documentation/citation process for those who are not compliant with the municipal code.

Long-term projects: Most long-term projects involve months of time and the cooperation of various city departments (Code Enforcement, City Prosecutor's Office, Public Works, etc.). An example of a long-term project is the eviction process. The Neighborhood Officer can work with property owners to evict problem tenants. The Officer can use the R.M.S. system to inquiry a location for calls for service. With this information, he/she can discuss the issue with the property owner. Usually the property owner is more than willing to work with the Neighborhood Officer to evict problem tenants.

Community Collaborators

All of the efforts described above would not have been accomplished had it not been for our dedicated officers and their community partners. This department has worked hard to foster strong collaborative relationships with the residents, local business owners, local school districts, local educational agencies (school districts) including teachers, administrators, parents and students. The scheduled "community clean up" operations are successful because we have a cadre of volunteers who believe in the goals of the IMPACT Program and have seen the value of the efforts of the Neighborhood Officers.

Some of the local businesses who have contributed include: Sam's Club and Home Depot. Although they are national corporations, the local store managers have worked with the department to provide tools, supplies, and other donations to support our neighborhood clean up days.

ASSESSMENT

Most of the objectives of the IMPACT Program provide “measurable outcome” data. The R.M.S. system provides the ability to inquiry calls for service, officer productivity, RD crime statistics and much more. The program is designed to be evaluated internally, at three levels within the department organization.

First, the Sergeant of each team must maintain a log book of all IMPACT activities per officer per month. This documentation process is in place to capture all data related to the program objectives. In addition, using the R.M.S. system, the Sergeant is responsible for verifying the number of RD contacts for each officer on his/her team.

After the Sergeant has prepared his/her monthly IMPACT team report, it is reviewed by the Lieutenant. The Lieutenant also conducts monthly IMPACT “ride-alongs” with each officer to become acquainted with the various projects (short and long term) and general appearance of the neighborhood. During these rides, the officer may ask the Lieutenant for advice and/or assistance with a specific project or problem.

Finally, the IMPACT team reports are evaluated by the command staff. The Chief, Assistant Chief, and Captains, meet to review the progress and challenges of the IMPACT Program. The command staff has used these meetings to redirect efforts, amend the program objectives and provide more resources to the officers. It is also at the command staff level that other city departments are recognized for their tremendous dedication to the success of the IMPACT program. Quarterly IMPACT reports are prepared by staff for submission to the Beautification Committee (which includes the City Manager). Annual reports and PowerPoint presentations are prepared for presentation to the City Council.

Other than R.M.S. program measures, the most important instrument used by the department to evaluate this program is the “customer” survey completed by residents. Random residents are selected to complete a one page survey with regard to the IMPACT program. The survey forms are compiled and tabulated by staff and a survey report is generated for the command staff.

In addition to the internal measures available for evaluation, the department has access to the number of calls for shopping carts removal, graffiti removal, and for vehicle towing (abandoned vehicles only).

The department considers the IMPACT program to be a great success and a model for other departments facing similar challenges and issues. During the past 3 years, the Neighborhood Officers have collaborated with various city departments and community partners to achieve the goals of IMPACT, namely to promote a community that is clean, safe and where community members hold a vested interest in public safety and quality of life issues. Even heavily blighted areas in the City have been “turned around” by the catalytic efforts of the El Monte Police Department. The Neighborhood Officers deserve

all of the credit for the success of this innovative, community-based policing module. The results of our IMPACT efforts have been impressive.

No other program the city has initiated in recent memory has generated such enthusiasm from the public, the business community, and the City Council. Residents regularly contact their City Councilmember or come to City Council meetings to praise "their" Neighborhood Officer for the good deed he or she has done for them. The sense of community pride and spirit has never been higher in the city. Residents who once felt unsafe in their own communities tell us they now feel very safe and proud to call El Monte home. Even though El Monte still has many demographic "challenges" such as a low per capita income, a high resident occupancy to housing ratio, and a high renter to owner occupied property ratio, the immeasurable "feeling" in the community is that El Monte is a nice place to live and a community on the upswing.

Since the implementation of the IMPACT Program three years ago, property values in El Monte have risen 50%, from an assessed valuation of approximately 3.4 billion dollars to almost 5.1 billion dollars today. The median home price in El Monte has increased by 143% from \$169,000 to approximately \$410,000, and new homes are selling in excess of \$500,000 according to Dataquick Information Systems.

Since the implementation of the IMPACT Program in 2002 through the end of 2005, there has been a 12% increase in officer initiated calls (pro-active enforcement), a 28% increase in officer initiated vehicle abatements, and a 10% increase in officer initiated graffiti and vandalism abatement. There has been a 50% decrease in the number of transients and transient related criminal activities.

Our FBI Part1 Violent Crimes for 2005 compared to 2004 have decreased 10.4%, with a decrease in homicides of 42.9%, a decrease in rapes of 34.4%, a decrease in aggravated assaults of 14.4%, and a decrease in burglaries of 2.9%.

Total calls for service in 2002 when the IMPACT Program was initiated were 64,177; total calls for service in 2005 were 47,712, a decrease of 16,465 calls (45 less calls a day) for a 25.5% decrease. As a result of the large decrease in calls for service, response times also have dramatically improved. Average response times for emergency Priority 1 calls in 2002 were 4 minutes 56 seconds, for 2005-4 minutes 53 seconds; average response times for Priority 2 calls in 2002 were 26 minutes 45 seconds, for 2005-21 minutes 25 seconds (a decrease of 5 minutes 20 seconds); and average response times for Low Priority 3 calls in 2002 were 49 minutes 05 seconds, for 2005-33 minutes 38 seconds (a decrease of 15 minutes 27 seconds). Total arrests have increased 14.7% as the Neighborhood Officers have more time to pro-actively patrol their districts because of the reduced number of calls for service.

Overall, the El Monte Police Department has documented the results of the RD program in hardcopy team notebooks and in the R.M.S. system. Results are tabulated and reports generated every quarter for submission to the Beautification Committee and

Department Managers, and annually for presentation to the City Council during their regularly scheduled public meetings.

LESSONS LEARNED

The IMPACT Program was designed as a community policing model piloted by the El Monte Police Department. The intended goals of the program were to reduce blight in the City and address quality of life issues which were important to residents and city leaders to promote public safety and a sense of security in our community. These goals are being addressed by meeting our program objectives of: 1) positive citizen contacts; 2) removing graffiti; 3) returning shopping carts to local grocery stores; 4) removing inoperable/abandoned vehicles from properties and city streets; and 5) short and long-term community improvement projects. The cornerstones of the IMPACT program are networking with residents in one small geographic area (reporting district) and aggressive code enforcement. The demonstrated success of the IMPACT Program can be attributed to extensive planning, promoting officer “buy in” and offering support to officers at each organizational level in the department.

One of the most important aspects of this Program was the IMPACT Program Plan. To prepare for this ambitious program, the Chief of Police, and his command staff met with stakeholders, namely patrol officers, citizens, and the owners of local businesses. At the time of the IMPACT program planning, each of the planning committee members (the Chief and his command staff) had an average of 25 years of law enforcement experience in the City of El Monte. This accounted for approximately 150 years of experience in the community. These members had extensive historical knowledge with regard to socio-economic, cultural and demographic parameters. In short, these individuals had a strong understanding of the community in which they had worked, and in some cases lived, for the past three decades.

Despite this experience base, the planning committee held stakeholders interest meetings (town hall meetings), conducted citizen surveys, and relied heavily on the current experiences of the patrol officers and the extensive networking of the POP Team and Community Relations Office personnel. Civilian personnel were included in this planning phase as well. One of the most important aspects of the planning component was the inclusion of the City Manager and other city department managers. The proposed objectives of the IMPACT program were going to have some effect on several city departments (i.e. Code Enforcement, Public Works), therefore the police command staff wanted to include these key members in the planning phase.

During the first three months of the IMPACT program, the planning committee reconvened to address some of the issues affecting the implementation of the program. At this time, the command staff organized and hosted an off-site networking, team building workshop for all department supervisors, sworn and civilian. This three-day conference was designed to emphasize the mission statement of the department and

demonstrate how the IMPACT program was an integral part of the local law enforcement efforts of our department.

At this meeting, several break out sessions resulted in the following conclusions:

- The department must create a strong bridge between the command staff and patrol officers so that all are aware of expectations and limitations of each group.
- Supervisors (namely Sergeants) are the key to the success of the IMPACT Program since they have daily interaction with the Neighborhood Officers and their attitudes/concerns regarding the program can easily affect the front line personnel
- The command staff would have to provide leadership and stewardship for this program in order to convince the Neighborhood Officers that the IMPACT program is not a transient approach to community policing, it is the future of community policing for our community.
- All personnel will be accountable for his/her IMPACT activities, or lack thereof. Personnel evaluations will include a section to reflect the officers' performance with regard to his/her IMPACT efforts.
- The day-to-day endeavors of the Neighborhood Officers require as strong sense of commitment and willingness to be involved with the community.
- The Patrol Teams are by nature competitive and a mechanism to showcase the IMPACT "success stories" of each team will be beneficial to the program overall. In addition, the command staff initiated a formal mechanism to recognize outstanding IMPACT accomplishments by creating a policy to award RD pins to those officers demonstrating outstanding performance.

Agencies wishing to utilize the IMPACT program model for community policing in their communities should consider the global findings of our evaluation which include:

The community-at-large wants to be an active participant in meeting the public safety objectives of the department. Educational programs, such as the Citizens' Academy, are one aspect of this interest to become more involved. Since the onset of the IMPACT Program, the department has increased its volunteer program, Volunteers Caring and Patrolling (V.C.A.P.) to 63 individuals which represents a 286% increase as compared to 2002 when the VCAP program consisted of only 22 members. Additionally, there are 22 people currently in training to become VCAP's this month, which would bring our VCAP program to 85 members. The IMPACT program has proven successful at the community level due to the demonstrated commitment of the residents, local businesses, churches and faith-based organizations, and other community partners.

One of the most important aspects to the success of the IMPACT program is the fact that most officers want to be aware of residents concerns, want to help find solutions and implement change. Officers are now in a position to recognize the benefit of knowing the residents in their RD and understanding their unique concerns.

Finally, with extensive planning, strong commitment and aggressive networking, the Police Department and the community can work together to achieve common goals and illicit positive change to promote public safety and a sense of security in our City. The City of El Monte has always prided itself as being a *community* despite its burgeoning population and density. Despite these challenges, the El Monte Police Department has successfully designed, implemented and executed a plan, the IMPACT Program, to embrace this concept of community and provide community policing which is meaningful to the residents and meets the local law enforcement objectives of the department as well.