



**Seattle Office of
Police Accountability**

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN 2019-2020

Seattle Office of Police Accountability

JULY 2019

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In late 2018, the Office of Police Accountability (OPA) hired three Community Engagement Specialists to help OPA build relationships with community members through dialogue and information sharing and increase public awareness of OPA and Seattle's accountability system. The new Community Engagement Team collaborated to craft an Outreach and Engagement Plan that would provide strategic and intentional direction in meeting OPA's goals.

To create this plan, the team assessed OPA's past and current outreach and engagement efforts; analyzed the legal mandates that OPA must abide by and fulfill; reviewed OPA's strategic guidance to ensure alignment with its overarching goals, mission, vision, and values; and referred to the results of the public awareness baseline assessment conducted in early 2019. Please refer to section 3: PLAN DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE to learn more about each of these components.

The Outreach and Engagement Plan identifies and describes OPA's 2019-2020 external outreach and community engagement goals, strategies, tactics, and measures. While internal OPA communications are essential, and such initiatives are already underway, they are not addressed in this plan. This plan is also meant to be flexible; OPA may decide at any point to make modifications.

2. OPA OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Guiding Principles

1. Honor community by valuing their time and resources.
2. Support and maintain relationships with community on a consistent basis.
3. Use multiple channels and methods to communicate.
4. Communicate a balanced and objective view of police accountability.
5. Prioritize engagement opportunities that will have the greatest impact.
6. Convey the realities of what OPA can and cannot do as an organization.

Goal: Build community confidence in OPA.

Strategy 1: Raise awareness and understanding of OPA through education and outreach, focusing on communities most affected by policing.

Desired Outcomes

- People are aware of OPA and its role in Seattle's police accountability system.
- People report concerning interactions they had with Seattle police to OPA.
- People see OPA as a safe space where they will be heard and taken seriously.

Tactics

1. Develop and utilize key messages repeatedly in conversations with the community.
2. Communicate updates on OPA initiatives to accountability system partners.
3. Conduct "Introduction to OPA" sessions with at least 15 community-based organizations.
4. Explore the idea of creating educational videos or updates to share via social media and other communication channels.

Measures

- Compilation of key messages and integration into presentations, handouts, etc.
- Increased public awareness of OPA, as measured via surveys, interview follow-ups, etc.
- Number of "Introduction to OPA" sessions held.
- Number of OPA educational video views/social media impressions.

Strategy 2: Build community relationships by listening, receiving feedback, and offering support and service.

Desired Outcomes

- OPA builds/maintains collaborative relationships with community partners.
- OPA develops a network of individuals and community-based organizations that can help communicate information about OPA.
- There are more requests for OPA engagement with community groups and organizations.

Tactics

1. Identify key community partnerships and maintain consistent contact.
2. Attend community events regularly to be visible in the community, to listen, observe, and gather feedback, if appropriate.

Measures

- Number of community requests or invitations to attend meetings or events.
- Perception and trust of OPA among community partners, as measured via interviews, surveys, etc.
- Feedback on communication between OPA and community partners, as measured via interviews, surveys, etc.

Strategy 3: Improve communication with complainants during the OPA complaint process.

Desired Outcome

- Complainants are satisfied with the OPA complaint process, regardless of whether they agree or disagree with the final disposition.

Tactics

1. Evaluate the OPA complaint-handling process from the complainant's perspective. Propose changes to the current process based on the results of the evaluation.
2. Select approximately 20 complainants with whom to test additional methods of communication during the complaint process.

Measures

- Complaint process satisfaction, as measured via surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc.
- Evaluation of "additional communication methods".

Strategy 4: Provide support in developing and implementing an external communications strategy.

Desired Outcomes

- Established communication procedures are used during high-profile or serious incidents.

- OPA is accurately, fairly, and increasingly mentioned in the media.
- OPA is featured in more community-driven stories in local media outlets.

Tactics

1. Identify a small number of media contacts with whom to build relationships.
2. Create communication procedures to use in high-profile or serious incidents.

Measures

- Analysis of media portrayal of OPA.
- Number of mentions and OPA comments or quotes within local media.

3: PLAN DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

A. Legal Mandates and Strategic Guidance

Two legal documents specify the need for OPA outreach and engagement: the 2012 Consent Decree and the 2017 Police Accountability Ordinance. These documents were both considered when crafting this Outreach and Engagement Plan.

In July 2012, a Settlement Agreement between the City of Seattle (the City) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) was signed. The agreement outlined specific requirements that the Seattle Police Department (SPD) agreed to implement to ensure that service delivery fully complies with the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States. Relevant language is excerpted below.

III. Community Police Commission C. Issues Identified by DOJ and the City (2)

Accountability iii. Public Education: The City and SPD will develop and implement, in coordination with the (Seattle Community Police) Commission, a program to broadly educate the Seattle community about the various methods for making misconduct complaints. The topics below should be considered for incorporation into the outreach program

- a. Making complaint forms and informational materials, including brochures and posters, available at appropriate city government properties and at the offices or gathering places of community groups.
- b. Continuing to require all officers to assist any person who wishes to file an OPA complaint and to provide their name and badge number upon request, if feasible under the circumstances.

- c. Making complaint forms and related informational materials available in the foreign languages appropriate to the local community.

In May 2017, Seattle City Council unanimously approved legislation to strengthen civilian- and community-led oversight systems and support constitutional policing efforts in Seattle. The ordinance also outlines specific community engagement functions for OPA, excerpted below.

3.29.100 Office of Police Accountability established – Functions and authority

J. OPA shall be responsive to community needs and concerns through means including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Maintaining frequent and regular communications with complainants and named employees about the status of their investigations, including information to complainants about disciplinary appeal and grievance processes and any outcomes that result in the modification of final findings and discipline determinations;
2. Using OPA complaint navigators, community-based organizations, and other approaches that reflect or take into account the diversity of Seattle’s communities in order to provide additional channels for filing complaints and support understanding of the system and how to access it;
3. Obtaining information about community perspectives and concerns germane to OPA access and OPA’s oversight responsibilities, including using the expertise of CPC;
4. Conducting community outreach to inform the public about the police accountability system and how to access it, in consultation with CPC, and receiving feedback from CPC on issues that surface as a result of the community outreach activities.

B. OPA Strategic Direction

The Outreach and Engagement Plan also aligns with OPA’s overall strategic direction, supporting its vision, mission, and values.

Vision

To safeguard a culture of accountability within the Seattle Police Department.

Mission

OPA’s mission is to ensure the actions of Seattle Police Department employees comply with law and policy by conducting thorough, objective, and timely investigations, recommending

improvements to policies and training, and engaging in collaborative initiatives that promote systemic advancements.

Values

OPA's values guide employee conduct and organizational culture in the pursuit of the OPA mission. These values include:

Independence

- Make decisions based on consistent application of facts, policies, and laws
- Maintain neutrality and exercises impartial judgement
- Ensure all viewpoints are heard and respected

Transparency

- Maintain honest and open communication with all stakeholders
- Communicate process, reasoning, and conclusions
- Accountable to our vision, mission, and values, both internally and externally

Collaboration

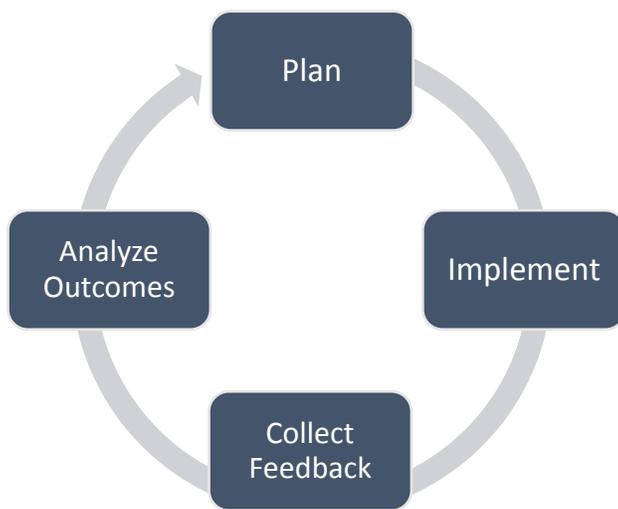
- Build meaningful and cooperative working relationships
- Solicit and values the community's perspective and expertise
- Work with system partners to advance accountability and improve SPD policies and training

Innovation

- Set the national standard for police oversight agencies
- Explore ways to improve processes and services
- Use data and research to drive decision making

C. OPA Outreach Process

Outreach and engagement planning and implementation follows an ongoing cycle. The OPA Community Engagement Team plans for outreach and engagement that is informed by feedback from the community and analysis of the outcomes and measures of current and prior outreach strategies and tactics. These inform updates or new outreach goals, strategies and tactics for current and upcoming years. The team then implements the strategies, collects feedback, and assesses the outcomes once again.



D. OPA Outreach and Engagement Tools

Website

The OPA website is currently a stand-alone City website (www.seattle.gov/opa). It provides information on the office and staff, the complaint process, mediation, outreach, past OPA reports, closed case summaries, and Management Action Recommendations. Complainants can also access a tool—the Complaint Tracker—to track progress of complaints. The website is currently undergoing a content and navigation redesign, which will be finalized in summer 2019.

Informational Materials

OPA has materials that explain what OPA is and what it does (brochure, handout, and FAQ document), but they are outdated and inaccessible. There are also materials on the Citizen-Police Mediation program and more detailed literature on how to file a complaint. Some materials appear to have been translated into various languages, but placement, distribution, and usage of them is unclear. New materials will be created in 2019.

Social Media

OPA created a Twitter account in 2015. Tweets are posted an average of once to twice a week. Topics range from current issues around the country on police accountability to specific developments within OPA. Twitter has also been utilized to release important information to the public during high-profile incidents. OPA is working to update its social media plan and create tools to track and measure its social media impact.

E. OPA 2019 Public Awareness Baseline Assessment

OPA conducted a Baseline Assessment of current public awareness, perception, and knowledge of OPA during the first quarter of 2019. Through online and in-person surveys of about 200 people who live in, work in, or visit Seattle, as well as interviews with community-based organizations, the baseline assessment highlighted the following challenges:

Awareness

General awareness of OPA is mixed, and both assessment methods indicated there are still many within the community who have never heard of OPA. Among those who have heard of OPA, most are only somewhat familiar with the services OPA provides.

Perceptions

There are mixed views on how community members view OPA. Half of survey respondents expressed a favorable view; about 20% expressed an unfavorable view.

Additionally, only half of respondents said they would feel comfortable making a complaint, and a third reported they do not know how to file a complaint.

The interviews highlighted fear and mistrust of law enforcement among certain communities; their perceptions and reasons underlying those perceptions differed in each community.

Communication and Awareness

Interviewees highlighted a need for OPA to more frequently engage with and educate the community. They emphasized that outreach should take a tailored approach to address a community's particular challenges and perceptions.

Interviewees and survey respondents highlighted a need for more clear communication from OPA, particularly regarding high-profile cases covered in the media.

F. City of Seattle Outreach and Engagement Tools

It is beneficial for OPA to be aware of other outreach efforts taking place across Seattle. This can help ensure communities are not overwhelmed by the amount of feedback City offices and departments are requesting from them. The City of Seattle has various resources available to support community engagement efforts and create efficiencies where possible. Some City of Seattle resources include:

- **The Department of Neighborhoods (DON).** DON contracts with hired community liaisons, who are embedded community leaders from a variety of immigrant and refugee communities, communities of color, and communities of seniors, youth, and people with disabilities. In 2018, this program had more than 80 liaisons representing 40 different communities and languages who worked with 15 City departments on outreach and engagement projects.
- **Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA).** OIRA was established in 2012 with the mission to improve the lives of Seattle's immigrant and refugee residents. OIRA created a Language Access Toolkit to help City departments integrate language access into their programs. The toolkit provides information on translation and interpretation, identifies top tier languages spoken in Seattle, provides a neighborhood language map that identifies languages spoken throughout the city by region, and gives suggestions on engaging with ethnic media for outreach.