COLLABORATION AS A TOOL FOR WISCONSIN LAW ENFORCEMENT TO ADDRESS CRIME

by

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Executive Summary

Law enforcement, similar to many other professions, is a constantly changing field. Unfortunately, all too often law enforcement can be slow to adopt new methods of performing their duties. Community policing and problem oriented policing are just two examples. While there is ample evidence that these approaches can be very effective at addressing the challenges faced by law enforcement, and these approaches have been around for decades, many agencies have resisted these approaches.

This research sheds light on another approach to policing that has been around for decades and that has been successful at reducing crime in cities where it has been implemented. This approach explores numerous collaborative efforts of varying sizes used by law enforcement where they worked together with outside entities to attack crime problems and were successful. This article also explores the challenges faced in these efforts and develops a list of “best practices” for law enforcement to use when considering this type of approach.

The results indicate the following are essential to successful collaboration; just doing it, looking everywhere for opportunities, shifting and sharing responsibility, the presence of a proper convener, support from the top of the agency, doing research before beginning, persistence with patience is the key to success, collaboration breeds more collaboration and measurement is important.
It is the hope of the author that by laying out a roadmap for others to follow, the anxiety that may accompany the thought of undertaking such a collaborative effort will be reduced and more law enforcement agencies will recognize and utilize this potential solution to crime problems.
Terminology Defined

When speaking about collaboration, certain terminology is unavoidable and sometimes used interchangeably. Terms such as “community-oriented policing”, “problem-oriented policing” and “collaboration” or “collaborative effort” are common in discussions of any one of the above topics. This can lead to confusion; therefore it would benefit the reader if these terms were defined beforehand. Furthermore, the term “community-oriented policing” has been utilized to describe just about any new policing strategy over the past few decades. Sozer compiled a list of various definitions used as well as a list of common components to a community policing program. (2008, p.40) Among the essential components identified are partnerships with public and private institution and adaptation to a problem solving approach by the agency.

The U. S. Department of Justice’s Office of Community Oriented Policing defines community oriented policing as “a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies, which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.” (U. S. Department of Justice, 2013)

Problem-oriented policing is a term coined by Professor Herman Goldstein of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He describes problem-oriented policing as “an approach to policing in which discrete pieces of police business are subject to microscopic examination in hopes that what is freshly learned about each problem will
lead to discovering a new and more effective strategy for dealing with it.” (Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, 2013)

Collaboration is defined as “the act of working together; united labor.” (C. & G. Meriam Company, 1998) When speaking of collaboration in regards to policing, it is generally referring to collaborative partnerships between law enforcement and the individuals and organizations they serve to develop solutions to problems and increase trust in the police. (U. S. Department of Justice, 2013)

Community policing, therefore, is a broad philosophy of which collaboration and problem solving are key tenets. Problem-oriented policing can be viewed as a separate policing philosophy of which collaboration is also a key tenet, or as part of an overarching community policing strategy. Therefore, whether the idea for collaboration came from an overarching community policing philosophy by a law enforcement agency which involved problem solving or as the result of a problem-oriented policing analysis, the end result should be the same as all three concepts are present when discussing collaboration between law enforcement and stakeholders in the communities they serve.
Can Collaboration Reduce Crime

The first and most important question that must be answered before looking at collaboration as a tool for law enforcement is whether it has been shown to be successful at addressing crime. There are varying results when looking at the literature as well as different collaborative efforts studied, however, a number of these efforts have proven to be very successful at addressing crime. In one suburban community, where a community policing approach was adopted which included collaboration with multiple entities in the community as part of its strategy, there was an “abrupt and permanent decline in the level of violent and property crimes”. (Connell, Miggans, & McGloin, 2008) Other examples of successful collaborations will be reviewed in more detail in following chapters, which solidify the proposition that collaboration can be successful at reducing crime.

Therefore, based on the assumption that can be made that some collaborative efforts have been successful at reducing crime, the next logical question becomes, what are the keys to a successful collaboration? That is the question that will be addressed throughout the remainder of this article.
Different Types of Collaborative Efforts

The various types of collaborative efforts are as numerous as the creative mind can be and as willing as law enforcement is to work with other entities and the community. However, there are a number of areas that have typically led progressive law enforcement agencies to seek out collaboration with outside entities.

Collaborative efforts with other law enforcement agencies such as local, state and federal agencies working together on a specific crime problem are a common type of collaboration. These efforts often are designed to address gang or gun violence. Many of these types of collaboration involve the sharing of information or intelligence to increase effectiveness at addressing them. This is due to these types of crime knowing no borders such as city, county or state lines. Often times, these efforts may also incorporate other government agencies outside law enforcement, such as probation and parole agencies as well as United States, state and county attorney offices.

One of the most noteworthy examples of this type of collaboration was Operation Ceasefire and the numerous reproductions of this effort in cities across the nation. Operation Ceasefire, sometimes referred to as the Boston Gun Project, was a problem-oriented policing strategy aimed at reducing youth homicide and youth firearms violence in Boston in the 1990’s. (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Piehl, 2001) The main groups who participated in the Boston Gun Project Working Group were the Boston Police Department; the Massachusetts departments of probation and parole; the Suffolk County...
District Attorney’s Office; the U.S. Attorney’s Office; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services; Boston School Police; and various gang outreach and prevention groups associated with Boston Community Centers. Analysis of Operation Ceasefire has shown it was responsible for significant reductions in youth homicides, shots fired calls for service and gun assaults in Boston (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Piehl, 2001).

Another common type of collaboration is a mixed collaboration where law enforcement teams up with multiple stakeholders from various facets of the community they serve. Some of the more common examples of this type of collaboration are in the areas of domestic violence and mental health issues. One such partnership was developed in Concord and Newton, Massachusetts. The partnership of the Concord Police Department and the Domestic Violence Training and Resource Institute led to a successful effort to reduce re-victimization of domestic violence victims by 80% in the first 6 months. (Defina & Wetherbee, 1997)

In Sheboygan, Wisconsin a mixed collaborative effort has emerged between the Sheboygan Police Department, local tavern owners, neighborhood groups, drug and alcohol treatment groups and others to address crime and disorder in and around taverns. This collaboration has led to the formation of the Tavern Safety Coalition (TSC). The majority of the effort and attention of the TSC is focused on taverns and the negative side effects on the community that sometimes are associated with them. The goal is to develop ways to reduce these negative effects.
Still another type of collaboration would be between law enforcement and citizens in efforts to improve neighborhoods. These efforts may also include local government agencies such as building inspection and planning departments within municipalities. Efforts such as this may be formal, such as in Sheboygan, Wisconsin where Neighbors Against Drugs (NAD) was formed as a partnership between the Sheboygan Police Department and citizen volunteers to address neighborhood drug houses (personal communication, 2013). It may also be more informal such as “neighborhood policing” which is being practiced in San Diego, California where citizens have a say in what the priorities of the Police Department are for their neighborhoods through community and police forums. (Stewer-Brown, 2001)

Yet another form of collaboration would be between law enforcement and private business to address crime issues specific to the type of businesses involved. One example of such a program is the Police/Business Empowerment Partnership (P/BEP) in Westminster, California. This program involved the partnership of the Westminster Police Department and businesses at a shopping center in an effort to manage crime, disorder and other safety-related issues. The results showed a significant reduction in the community’s perception of gang activity and fear of crime at the shopping center (Julia, Mitchell, & Kent, 2006).
Successful Collaborative Efforts

When considering collaboration as a tool to address crime, it is helpful to first look at examples of successful collaborative efforts. The purpose for this would be to learn from these past efforts to avoid similar mistakes as well as develop a successful strategy to use as a template for the effort intended. Because of the varying types of collaboration utilized in the past, this paper will discuss examples of each type listed above.

Operation Ceasefire

Operation Ceasefire was a collaborative effort put together to address the high rate of youth homicide in the City of Boston. Homicide rates in the United States were declining during the 1980’s and 1990’s, however, juvenile homicide rates, especially those incidents involving firearms were dramatically increasing. Juveniles as victims of handgun homicides increased 418% between 1984 and 1994. (Fox, 1996) In Boston, youth homicide (24 years old and younger) went from 22 victims in 1987 to 73 victims in 1990 and remained at an average of 44 homicides per year from 1991 to 1995. (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Piehl, 2001)

The Boston Gun Project was a problem-oriented policing approach aimed at reducing homicide victimization among young people in Boston. It was sponsored by the
National Institute for Justice and was designed to proceed by: (1) assembling an interagency work group of largely line-level criminal justice and other practitioners; (2) applying qualitative and quantitative research techniques to create an assessment of the nature of the dynamics driving youth violence in Boston; (3) developing an intervention designed to have a substantial, near-term impact on youth homicide; (4) implementing and adapting the intervention; and (5) evaluating the intervention’s impact. (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Piehl, 2001)

Research done by those involved in the project showed that the majority of the youth homicides, about 60%, were being committed by less than 1% of the population in that age group, or about 1,300 gang members. They also learned that many of the crimes were being committed with semi-automatic pistols that had recently been purchased or smuggled in from out of state. (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Piehl, 2001)

The work group conducted problem analysis and developed the intervention, better known as Operation Ceasefire, which included two main elements: (1) a direct law enforcement attack on illicit firearms traffickers supplying guns to youth and (2) an attempt to generate a strong deterrent to gang violence. (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Piehl, 2001)

A key part of the second half of the strategy eventually came to be known as “pulling levers.” The stakeholders; federal, state and local law enforcement; probation and parole agents; church and civic leaders; community leaders; would first call in the most prolific gang members and let them know explicitly that the violence needed to stop
and would back it up by “pulling every lever” legally available when violence occurred. At the same time, the work group offered a variety of services and other help. (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Piehl, 2001)

The results of Operation Ceasefire were very dramatic with a 63% reduction in mean average monthly youth homicides or a 60% reduction in youth homicide incidents, depending on which type of analysis is used. (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Piehl, 2001) The Ceasefire intervention was also shown through further analysis to be responsible for a 25% decrease in the monthly number of citywide gun assault incidents, a 32% decrease in the monthly number of citywide shots-fired calls for service, and a 44% decrease in the number of monthly youth gun assaults in a particular district. (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Piehl, 2001)

Though not all efforts to reproduce the effects of Operation Ceasefire in other cities were as effective, further analysis of the original effort in Boston verifies that at least much of the reductions in gun violence can be attributed to the efforts of Operation Ceasefire.

**Certified Peer Advocacy Program**

The Certified Peer Advocacy Program (CPAP) grew from a collaborative effort between the Concord, Massachusetts Police Department and the Domestic Violence Training and Resource Institute (DVTRI). The DVTRI is a local, non-profit, grassroots
organization that deals with crisis intervention for domestic abuse victims. (Defina & Wetherbee, 1997)

The reasons for collaboration efforts in this case are similar to those from across the country. Domestic violence investigations are common however, victims are often reluctant to press charges or follow through with prosecutions against loved ones. Because of this, repeat victimization is common.

The communities of Newton and Concord faced other obstacles. Both are wealthy suburbs and some victims were reluctant to call due to trying to preserve appearances in the neighborhood. They feared the loss of stature that might result from having a police car pull up to their house. Others feared that no action would be taken against the abusers as they were often influential members of the community. The willingness of victims to report domestic violence appeared to hinge on a variety of factors such as: whether the incident might be reported in the media, the amount of family pressure on the victim not to disclose information, whether the victim had peer support as well as their ability to sustain the possible emotional and financial strain of disclosure, and concern by the victim for the job status and community standing of the perpetrator. (Defina & Wetherbee, 1997)

The police in Newton and Concord were surprised to find that despite most residents being well educated, they did not view domestic violence as a serious problem. They also found that there were actually fewer resources for victims of domestic violence in suburbia than in the inner city. There were also issues where the possible assistance
for victims was only available during normal business hours which often led to up to 72 hour delays for these important services. Because of these concerns, the police realized they needed a multi-level response delivered during the critical window of time but they could not provide it themselves. This is what led the police chief of Concord to use a problem solving process, partner with the community and collaborate with the DVTRI. (Defina & Wetherbee, 1997)

The members of the collaboration recognized there would be obstacles to this partnership that are common when members of different disciplines join forces. The obstacles that existed included mistrust, a lack of understanding of police policies and procedures by civilians, and a lack of previous examples of collaboration to use as a model. The partners sought to overcome these obstacles by forging a style of communication and method of working together. They developed new policies and procedures for working together and followed that up with cross-disciplinary training between the advocacy group and law enforcement. The Concord Police Department even secured space at their station to be available 24 hours a day for the DVTRI peer advocates. They also established criteria to measure their success. (Defina & Wetherbee, 1997)

This partnership produced successful results statistically with an 80% drop in repeat victimization from April, 1994 through October, 1995. At the same time, the prosecution rate increased due to victims now having the support of the advocacy groups.
This support increased victims’ willingness to testify against the abusers as well as take out restraining orders. (Defina & Wetherbee, 1997)

**Tavern Safety Coalition**

In Sheboygan, Wisconsin, the Police Department has begun a collaborative effort to attempt to address a number of crime and disorder issues associated with licensed establishments. The effort was begun in early 2012 due to a number of factors including the frequent occurrence of major assaults or other violent crimes in or around the taverns. Often times these crimes were closely linked to either the suspects or victims being highly intoxicated and having recently been patrons at the area taverns. This resulted in a number of tavern owners and bar tenders being cited for over-serving patrons involved in these crimes.

Further evidence existed that there was a need for action. In late 2010 and early 2011, the Police Department had developed a compliance check program to test the effectiveness of area licensed establishments at catching underage individuals trying to procure alcohol. The police, as well as city officials were shocked to see a failure rate as high as 43% in the spring of 2011. It was evident that the atmosphere in and around taverns and other licensed establishments needed to be more closely regulated and monitored.
A traditional approach of strict enforcement of existing laws was begun and was supported by the members of the city’s Law and Licensing Committee which regulates licensed establishments. Furthermore, the city had a chronic nuisance ordinance which authorized law enforcement to take action against any property in the city which had three or more qualifying events, such as disturbances or other crime and disorder, in a 12 month period. Several problem taverns were called in under this ordinance and forced to examine their business practices or face possible sanctions up to and including having to pay for police services or even risk losing their liquor licenses.

As often happens with this type of approach, relationships between the police and tavern owners became more strained. Concerns arose and some evidence existed that certain tavern owners or employees would avoid calling police when disturbances occurred to avoid being held accountable for issues at their establishment. This can result in even higher amounts of crime and disorder at these locations and the neighborhoods around them as it helps to create an atmosphere of acceptance for disorder. Because the police cannot be in all places at all times, the people who would experience the largest portion of the negative consequences would be the patrons and people living in these neighborhoods.

A conscious decision was made by the Sheboygan Police Department to research and develop a collaborative effort involving all possible stakeholders. The first meeting occurred in February 2012 and as was expected, there was a great deal of distrust between the taverns owners and the Police Department. Despite this distrust, by clearly
the Police Department explaining to the stakeholders the negative consequences overserving and other issues related to the taverns that only the police were in a position to see, most present recognized the need for some action.

Over the next six months, volunteers elected by the tavern owners met with law enforcement, neighborhood associations, Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA) groups and other stakeholders and forged the Tavern Safety Coalition (TSC). The group of volunteers worked out membership agreements that all could agree to and approximately two thirds of the city’s taverns signed the forms, agreeing to work with stakeholders to address the concerns. A board was selected from among the members with all stakeholders having representation, but with the taverns having the largest number of seats on the board due to their representing the largest constituency.

There was a good amount of distrust in the beginning; however, through active listening and giving everyone a chance to air their concerns, agreement was reached on the need for action. This included the development of a system for banning troublesome patrons from all TSC taverns, a vision and mission statement that all members could support and the creation of a web page.

Furthermore, the Police Department heard the plea from the tavern owners that current bartender training programs, which were strictly conducted on line, were woefully inadequate. Because of this, the department took it upon itself to create an improved, classroom training which was offered to any licensed establishment. Later,
this was replaced with a nationally known bartender training program when one of the AODA members who sat on the TSC board became a licensed trainer.

One year from the date of the first meeting, the relationship between the tavern owners and the police are improving and the atmosphere in and around the taverns is also improving. While no empirical data yet exists, officers report a much improved working relationship with tavern employees, despite the department continuing to take a firm stance against over-serving and other disorder issues. When the Police Department presented a proposal for an ordinance to address public intoxication, the board of the TSC unanimously agreed to minor changes support the proposal. This type of cooperation would have been impossible one year earlier, a clear indication of the improvement to the relationship between the taverns and the Police Department. It also speaks volumes for the power of collaboration.

**City Heights Neighborhood Alliance**

The City Heights Neighborhood Alliance is a form of neighborhood policing that was developed by the San Diego, California, Police Department. Prior to this effort, neighborhood policing generally involved the community identifying problems and the police responding to solve them. Often, police tended to focus on crime data to identify problems, thus not always focusing on the same areas of concern as the citizens. The new approach exhibited in this alliance promotes a wrap-around, problem solving
approach where police and community residents work in a true partnership to solve crime and quality of life issues. (Stewer-Brown, 2001)

City Heights is in the central part of San Diego and has a very diverse community with a mean household income of less than $20,000 and 30 percent of the population below the poverty line. The violent crime rate in the area is double that of the city average and the San Diego Police Department serves one-third of its search warrants in City Heights. (Stewer-Brown, 2001)

Residents of City Heights identified drug-related crimes and juvenile delinquency as their primary concerns. Although the residents expressed a desire for positive changes, few residents actually participated in attempts to change. Surveys revealed a lack of trust between neighbors as well as for police. Other problems included fear of retaliation and urban deportation which led to silence, submission and acceptance of community crime and decay. (Stewer-Brown, 2001)

The San Diego Police Department wished to approach crime from a problem-resolution focus instead of in a reactive manner. To do this, community involvement would be imperative. The City Heights Neighborhood Alliance was made up of police officers and community organizers. They set out to solve drug-related crimes in partnership with community residents and to provide residents with the knowledge and skills to solve their own neighborhood quality-of-life problems. (Stewer-Brown, 2001)

The Alliance received a 2-year grant from a private, non-profit organization to cover training and expenses related to it, community computers, salaries and benefits.
Members of the San Diego Police Department were assigned to various positions of responsibility including oversight and involvement at the ground level. Community organizers mobilized community residents to get involved in problem-solving efforts, facilitate community meetings, and most important, to train a team of leaders to sustain the mobilization efforts. (Stewer-Brown, 2001)

Based on extensive research of community-oriented interventions, the alliance chose three top theories for program design; neighborhood collective efficacy, social learning and social control. Neighborhood collective efficacy is a theory of a dynamic that occurs when people develop a mutual trust among neighbors along with a willingness to intervene for the common good. The Alliance attempted to develop this by bringing neighbors together and facilitating relationship building. (Stewer-Brown, 2001)

Social learning theory is based on the idea that criminal behavior is learned the same way any other behavior is. The alliance attempted to bring together residents of the culturally diverse community for a common cause. Then they would achieve a common goal and celebrate the success. (Stewer-Brown, 2001)

Social control is the fear of social consequences which deters most people from committing crimes because they do not want to face the humiliation and stigma of being an outcast. There was very little social control in City Heights due to the lack of social relationships and social supports. Through community and police problem solving, residents were beginning to hold each other accountable for unlawful or disorderly behavior. (Stewer-Brown, 2001)
Community organizers also conducted door to door outreach efforts to engage residents in the efforts to solve problems with the police to address crime and quality-of-life issues. Though labor intensive, this effort allowed community organizers to learn about the concerns of residents. The Alliance held community meetings and conducted training and mentoring to over 200 residents on how to deal with most quality-of-life problems.

The accomplishments of the program can be seen in pre and post intervention surveys. Prior to the effort, survey results showed that 41.7 percent of residents said they trusted their neighbors. Post effort surveys showed a dramatic improvement to 68.5 percent. The public’s view of the police also increased so that residents feel much more confident that the police hear their concerns. (Stewer-Brown, 2001)

The San Diego Police Department’s neighborhood policing efforts with the City Heights Neighborhood Alliance are an example of how to effectively and efficiently solve many of the community problems that once required police involvement.

**Neighbors Against Drugs**

In Sheboygan, Wisconsin, a grass roots collaboration was created by the Police Department and citizen volunteers named Neighbors Against Drugs (NAD). The group was developed as a means to address the issue of neighborhood drug houses. The Police Department recognized that combatting local drug houses was a lengthy process at times
and often when search warrants were served, the suspects were soon released from jail and back selling drugs from the same house.

Through a problem-solving process, the department and volunteer citizens developed a process whereby peer pressure was brought to bear on the residents of drug houses as well as the property owners. The first step upon learning of a possible drug house was for volunteers to go door to door in the neighborhood and complete surveys with neighbors. This usually led to reasonable suspicion that the target house was involved in drug dealing. All the neighbors would put yard signs on their front lawns supporting safe neighborhoods without drugs. In most circumstances, the only house without a sign would be the suspected drug house. By doing this, peer pressure was placed on the residents of the problem property, leading to reduced or ceased activity.

The second phase of the process was to utilize the newly drafted chronic nuisance ordinance to hold landlords accountable for what was occurring on their properties. The ordinance was an incredible tool for forcing absentee landlords to pay more attention to their properties including improving their screening process for new potential tenants.

NAD considered it a victory if the problem tenants were evicted or the suspected drug activity ceased for a period of two months or more. Once victory was achieved, volunteers from NAD would host a victory party. This generally involved a block party on the block involved where the street was closed for an afternoon while music and food were provided. Everyone was invited and it was a means to increase neighborhood cohesion and communication in an effort to rebuild the social control.
NAD was recognized in community policing circles as a creative new initiative and was a runner-up for a Herman Goldstein Award. This award is given annual to innovative community oriented policing efforts chosen from across the nation. According to several key members of NAD, they were so successful they worked themselves out of business. In fact, in 2012, NAD officially resigned the organization due to their success at addressing neighborhood drug houses. This is in part due to an offshoot organization called Sheboygan Neighborhood Pride (SNP). SNP was formed by some of the same individuals who originally founded NAD to be a conduit between citizens, community resources and law enforcement. It was designed as a non-profit organization that, among other duties, assisted in the formation of neighborhood associations.

SNP has taken NAD to the next level by helping neighborhoods develop the type of collaboration that best fits each individual neighborhood. Some neighborhoods choose to form a formal association while others are content to develop a loose knit group of individuals who look after the neighborhood. In this way, each neighborhood should have the ability to do in its neighborhood what NAD was doing city-wide (personal communication, 2013).

**Police/Business Empowerment Partnership**

The last type of collaboration to be examined is a simple partnership between law enforcement and business. The Westminster Police Department of Westminster,
California developed and implemented a community-oriented, collaborative effort known as the Police/Business Empowerment Partnership (P/BEP) at a business location to creatively deal with crime and the fear of crime. The program proved to be successful at reducing the perceptions of gang activity, auto theft activity and the fear of crime at a shopping center. (Julia, Fawn, & Kent, Community-oriented policing in a retail shopping center, 2006)

The program was designed from the understanding that community policing can apply to the business community as it can to the community in general. Business districts are unique in that they provide both stability (in terms of job creation and accessibility of products and services) and instability (by providing more targets for potential offenders. (Julia, Fawn, & Kent, Community-oriented policing in a retail shopping center, 2006)

Research into crime against business, especially small businesses shows that almost a third of business failures are because of losses due to crime. Furthermore, partnerships between police and businesses are recommended for several reasons. First, security personnel and equipment are often cost prohibitive for small businesses. Second, small businesses often suffer from high victimization rates, and last, many criminals start their criminal careers by committing retail thefts from businesses. (Julia, Fawn, & Kent, Community-oriented policing in a retail shopping center, 2006)

The Westminster Police Department developed a community-oriented policing program designed on the concept of “purchase of service” by the business district involved. The concept involves added police patrols above the normal amount,
covered by overtime which is compensated by the businesses that receive the service.

The ultimate goal of the collaboration was to create a positive business environment for merchants and customers by reducing perceptions of crime and the fear of crime. This was accomplished by the added police patrols, specifically foot and bike patrols. It also included monthly meetings with merchants as well as merchant and citizen academies. These are similar to police recruit academies though scaled down in time. They are designed to give the community a firsthand knowledge of what it means to work in law enforcement. The results of the collaborative effort were a significant reduction in the perceptions of gang activity and the fear of crime.
Best Practices

The purpose behind examining literature on successful collaborations is to learn from others efforts and determine what worked and why. Also, it is important to look at the struggles experienced by other collaborative efforts in order to avoid these issues, if possible, or at least prepare for these setbacks to ensure they do not sidetrack or stall the collaborative effort. This is supported by police management literature that encourages the development of best practices as they serve as a checklist for other organizations to assess if they are implementing what is currently known to be the effective practices (Anderson, 2000).

Furthermore, it is crucial that government entities learn from each other by sharing best practices it improve performance. This is one of three essential steps identified to make government more businesslike, more efficient (The Economist, 2013). This is equally important in law enforcement due to constricting budgets in recent years and ever increasing expectations for police to solve community problems. These expectations require that law enforcement entities become more business-like regarding efficiency and effectiveness.

As part of the effort to develop a list of best practices, interviews were conducted with five individuals from southeastern Wisconsin who had experience in two or more collaborative efforts. These individuals included members of law enforcement, citizen volunteers, prosecutors, and members of non-profit organizations. The interviews were
conducted either face-to-face or by phone, based on the availability of the individual. Respondents were asked to explain their experiences with the various collaborative efforts they were involved in. This included how the effort came to be, the problems experienced, how stakeholders were identified, how conflicts were resolved and any suggestions they had for future collaborative efforts.

Notes were taken during the interviews. The respondents’ experiences were compared to what was learned from the literature review and combined to create a list of best practices for law enforcement agencies, especially in Wisconsin, to use as a guide when considering collaboration as a means to address crime.

Just Do It

It may seem redundant to start out a list of best practices for collaboration by talking about doing collaboration; however, many in law enforcement are still reluctant to get involved in true collaboration with other entities and especially the public. This is for a host of reasons including law enforcements reluctance to relinquish any control over problems they see as their responsibility. Others simply do not buy into the philosophy of community policing or do not want to put in all the hard work needed in these efforts for what they may view as minimal gains. However, as one experienced prosecutor put it, “collaboration is essential” (personal communication, 2013). In other words, law enforcement must get beyond whatever obstacles may be inhibiting them from collaboration and just do it.
During the 1990’s, federal funding for community policing was considerable. However, since the early 2000’s, funding has become scarcer and is likely to go to larger municipalities with greater crime problems. (Connell, Miggans, & McGloin, 2008) This led one sergeant and a very dedicated group of officers from a suburban community to take ownership of their area of responsibility and implement a community policing approach which included collaboration with business owners, schools, other service agencies and even apartment managers. This was all done without any extra funding. The results were an “abrupt and permanent decline in the level of violent and property crimes”. (Connell, Miggans, & McGloin, 2008)

The Tavern Safety Coalition (TSC) is another example of a collaboration that was started with no extra funding or manpower. The Sheboygan Police Department recognized the need for it and acted. Thus far, there have been no donations from any public or private entity to cover the costs associated with it. The only significant cost thus far was development of the website which was covered by asking for a $20 voluntary payment from each TSC member tavern.

**Look Everywhere**

This article reviewed a number of successful collaborative efforts ranging in size from very large to just a few businesses at an intersection. The opportunities for collaboration are numerous; one merely needs to be willing to look for them. An
effective community policing strategy includes looking for every opportunity to collaborate with the public.

Some important points to consider, however are that the larger the collaboration, the more important it becomes to have support within the organization at the top levels. In the suburban community mentioned above, the sergeant of the geographic area implemented and supported the effort. He undoubtedly had the support of his commanders as well which is essential to avoid a lack of support for special requests or manpower allocations.

In an interview with a former commander of a district in a Midwestern community, he explained how a collaborative effort developed by himself and a prosecutor was initially unsuccessful as the division commander did not support it. Later, however, after moving to a new division, he received the support needed from up the chain of command and the effort was renewed and became successful (personal communication, 2013).

**Shift and Share Responsibility**

One of the main goals of collaboration should be to shift and share the responsibility for the problem to other resources for assistance or even for them to take ownership of it. This is not always an easy thing for many in law enforcement to do.
Simply from the perspective of the historical personality type of person who enters law enforcement, its ranks are loaded with many Type A personality individuals. These are individuals who are highly competitive and self-critical. They tend to be highly involved in work to the point of life imbalance (McLeod, 2011). This is generally even more the case as one goes up the chain of command due to the natural competitive nature of these types of people. Because of this, they tend to not feel comfortable relinquishing control to someone else.

It is crucial that law enforcement agencies learn this important ability as resources become strained due to lack of funding and reduced manpower. In Sheboygan, Wisconsin for example, the approved table of organization for the Police Department has been reduced by 10% since the late 1990s. Despite this, the calls for service have remained very similar and even more is asked of the officers in terms of foot and bike patrols, neighborhood policing projects and community outreach. In order to complete all these other responsibilities, it is essential that the Police Department look for opportunities to shift and share responsibility for problems to other service agencies, businesses and the public. That is exactly what is being done with some of the successful collaborations mentioned above.

For example, the Police Department works more closely with building inspection than ever before, working together to address the physical decay that often accompanies the social decay in our communities. Officers regularly team up with building inspectors
to walk neighborhoods and make lists of problem properties. The duty for addressing the issues observed are divided up based on who is in a better position to address them.

Other examples of shifting responsibility of crime and disorder are the Tavern Safety Coalition, Neighbors Against Drugs, and the development of neighborhood associations to deal with the minor disorder that occurs, freeing up officers for other duties. No matter how it is done, shifting and sharing responsibility for the problems to other stakeholders is an essential part of collaboration.

This is not always an easy process from the standpoint of the stakeholders either. Often times, stakeholders must first be made to see and accept responsibility for the problems. Such was the case with the Tavern Safety Coalition. The lack of enforcement for many years that led to the lax environment surrounding the taverns in Sheboygan prior to the collaboration, caused most tavern owners and even some politicians to become skeptical when first approached by law enforcement about the idea. This required a clear presentation of the facts and a great deal of time working together on the development of the program to improve the level of trust and understanding by the stakeholders.
The Convener

In John Gardner’s book titled *On Leadership*, he indicates that “Often the process of coalition building fails to get started because there is no suitable convener, or those who could play the role decline to do so” (1990). Gardner further describes the type of person needed for such a role as needing to be viewed as neutral and trustworthy.

In most cases, the role of a convener and the act of leadership go hand in hand. When researching collaboration for their book, *Collaborative Leadership: How Citizens and Civic Leaders Can Make a Difference*, Chrislip and Larson came across the American Leadership Forum (ALF). The ALF was founded in 1980 by Joe Jaworski, a Houston trial attorney, as a means to address the leadership crisis of the 1970’s. The vision of the ALF has been described as an attempt to put in each community a group of strengthened leaders who would take responsibility for what happened in the community. (Chrislip & Larson, 1994) To put it in Gardner’s terms, the goal was to develop a supply of conveners to solve the problems of the community.

The concept of a convener was one identified as being highly important by the individuals interviewed who were involved in Wisconsin collaborations. They perceived that the success of the individual efforts they were involved in were strongly linked to how successful the convener was at gaining the buy in of the stakeholders and holding them together through any conflicts that arose. In most circumstances, there was one pivotal figure that played the role of convener, usually someone responsible for recognizing the need for a collaborative effort and in a position to call the stakeholders to
the table. In one case, however, several subjects from different stakeholder groups recognized the need for collaboration; however, one individual eventually gravitated to the forefront and assumed the role of convener (personal communication, 2013).

Based on the literature review and the interviews of those involved in collaborative efforts, it appears an appropriate convener is crucial for both identifying the need for collaboration as well as facilitating the collaborative process. It appears doubtful that an effort of the magnitude of most collaborative efforts would be successful without one.

In most cases, law enforcement is in the best position to recognize the need for collaboration first, therefore often need to serve the role as convener. This is due to most agencies using some sort of data collection to organize or direct their day to day business. Within the organization, the individual who steps into that role, according to interviews of those familiar with the different collaborative efforts, needs to be passionate about the problem the collaborative effort is intended to address. Otherwise the effort is far less likely to succeed.

**Supported From the Top**

It is imperative that before law enforcement embarks on an effort of this type, that there is support for the effort far enough up the chain of command to ensure support of
the department. In most cases this will mean the top executive needs to buy into the idea and be behind it completely, though in some cases such as larger agencies where the department is divided into divisions, support from the person in charge of the division may be sufficient.

Collaborative efforts can require a tremendous amount of time from the officers involved, usually more than what was originally believed. Most law enforcement agencies are under increasing pressure to be as efficient as possible with their resources, especially officers’ time. Time spent in meetings and problem solving is time off the road, not handling calls for service. Multiply that by several officers depending on the size of the effort and it quickly adds up. For this reason, it is important to gain full support of the top executive prior to embarking on an effort.

In an interview with a law enforcement official from a larger city, this proved to be the case on one collaborative effort they had pursued (personal communication, 2013). There was recognition of the need for collaboration and support for the effort among the other stakeholders. However, in the end it failed due to lack of support from someone high enough up the chain. Someone was needed who could approve the allocation of all the needed manpower and the time away from other duties.

This scenario has played out many times over, unfortunately. For example, when Operation Ceasefire was brought to Baltimore, it was nowhere near as successful as the original had been in Boston. This was due in part to inconsistent support from high-
ranking officials of several of the stakeholder groups. Often, one group would try to sabotage the effort due to constant infighting and political maneuvering. (Kennedy, 2011)

However, as exemplified by the one suburban department mentioned above, having the full support of the immediate person responsible for the geographic area, in that case a sergeant, along with a handful of officers that buy-in to the effort, success can be attained at lower levels.

**Do Your Research**

There is ample research on many topics regarding law enforcement, though not as much of it pertains to collaboration. This is changing however, and more and more agencies are experimenting with collaborations and thus the literature is beginning to grow. More importantly, Wisconsin has an ample history in recent decades of collaborating to address crime and other social problems. Because of this, there are numerous individuals and agencies with knowledge to share on what has worked and what hasn’t when it comes to collaborative efforts. Milwaukee, Madison, La Crosse, Green Bay, Sheboygan and Appleton are just a few cities in Wisconsin that have utilized this tool for addressing crime or disorder.

Because of the number of departments and individual efforts that are documented, there are an increasing number of resources available to those agencies wishing to explore using collaboration as a tool to address crime. By tapping into these resources,
agencies can be ahead of the game by learning from others who have already attempted a similar effort. Often by doing ample research in advance, one can lay out a game plan based on past efforts, which is tailored to fit the community for which it is being developed. In this way, past mistakes can be avoided, time saved and it may be possible to achieve even greater results than previous similar efforts.

**Be Persistent, Yet Patient**

It is important when considering collaboration, especially formal efforts with multiple stakeholders, that the people involved be persistent, yet patient. When considering all the potential hurdles that may need to be negotiated such as the police culture of internalization, an apathetic public, distrust between stakeholders, and so on, persistence and patience are two key elements that will be needed in ample supply.

One way to describe it is similar to that described by Jim Collins in his book *Good to Great* (2001). In it he uses the analogy of a giant, 5,000 pound flywheel and trying to get it turning. He explains that you push hard and initially only get it to start moving a small amount and very slowly. However, with persistent pressure, over time, it starts moving faster and faster. Eventually, the momentum takes over and it is very hard to stop.

This is much like the type of effort needed to create a successful collaboration. In the beginning, it may appear to take a great deal of effort. Little if any progress may be
made in early meetings as stakeholders feel each other out or argue about issues such as who is ultimately responsible for the problem. Setbacks may occur and threaten the entire effort. Slowly as small progress is made, piece-by-piece, momentum begins to build. By persistent effort, more progress is made and with patience, the effort needed to make any progress becomes less and less. With enough patience and persistence, the momentum will eventually take over and things will really start to happen almost automatically.

When stakeholders were first called together in February 2012, for the initial meeting of the Tavern Safety Coalition, there was much trepidation on the part of tavern owners as to what was “actually” behind this idea by law enforcement. Despite this, a large percentage of those present were willing to commit more time to the idea, agreeing to meet again to discuss in more detail what this collaboration might look like and how it would benefit them. For the next few months, a group of representatives from the taverns, as voted on by the tavern owners, met with law enforcement and the other stakeholders to work out the details of what this group would look like and how it would operate.

After several months of meetings, this group began to become more comfortable with each other and worked out guidelines for membership, including a signed agreement to work toward the common goals of the group. This included designing a temporary sign to be posted in each tavern, banning subjects who violated the code of conduct, and other basics that needed to be addressed for this effort to continue.
After several months of progress, the group ran into its first major conflict. One of the tavern owners, a very vocal, somewhat influential and skeptical individual refused to sign the membership agreement. There was division among the group as to what should happen. Eventually, after several contentious meetings and on a very close, divided vote, the individual was voted off of the unofficial board and replaced with someone else. This turned out to be a strengthening moment as once he was out of the way, much progress began to be made.

Since that time the members of the group have created an official board, developed a vision and mission statement, developed guidelines for banning violators, and have convinced other members of the tavern community to join the group. Currently close to 70% of all the taverns in Sheboygan are members with others considering joining the TSC. The group has since added a large, regional convenience store chain to its membership with plans to reach out to other stores and taxi companies as well. All this, however could have been in jeopardy had the stakeholders not been persistent and patient throughout the process.

Collaborative efforts are rarely easy; however, the payoff, if done properly, can be worth the effort, not just in the results as they pertain to the key problem for which it was developed, but by building community trust and willingness to work with law enforcement. The latter could possibly pay dividends in future collaborative efforts.
Collaboration Breeds Collaboration

One of the best ways to promote collaboration is through collaboration. This seemingly circular argument simply means that the first efforts to work with other entities and the community are generally going to be the hardest for a variety of reasons. The first and most obvious reason is based inside the law enforcement agency trying to develop the effort. As described under the previous section, it is difficult to get the flywheel moving in the beginning. Many times, a number of failures may precede the first successful effort. However, with every failed or successful effort, the agency and those involved should learn from previous attempts and hone their skills and confidence in collaboration.

Another important aspect regarding how collaboration breeds more collaboration is in how it impacts community perception of the police. Studies show that 55% of people base their perception of police in general on specific attributes of officers as opposed to 32% from general notions about police not based on any specific contact with police or 11.8% of people who based their attitude of police on the outcomes of their police contacts. (Frank, Smith, & Novak, 2005)

When analyzing how that impacts collaboration, one need only focus on how most contact police have with the public is in some form of negative context. A citizen may be the victim of a crime, the perpetrator of the crime, violating some traffic law or other finable offense and so on. In a large percentage of modern day policing contacts, the police are taking some sanction against the citizen.
Collaboration is an excellent opportunity for the officers, the public and other stakeholder groups to have positive contacts which are significantly different from the norm. By having these contacts, police are reminded of the personal side of policing. They see that not all the public are “bad guys”. It helps to break down the “us versus them” attitude so prevalent in experienced police officers.

In the case of the public, they get to see the human side of the officers who serve their community. They also have the opportunity to learn that law enforcement is truly there to help them and cares about their neighborhoods and community. It is for this reason that collaboration is especially important for communities where relations between the public and law enforcement are already strained, as in the City Heights Neighborhood Alliance.

Once the community learns that law enforcement is willing to work with them to solve problems, the community becomes more willing and interested in working with law enforcement. Such was the case in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Neighbors Against Drugs was the first collaborative effort of significance in Sheboygan in recent decades. This effort helped pave the way for other forms of collaboration such as Sheboygan Neighborhood Pride and several neighborhood associations. With each effort, often a few core members from the previous efforts also get involved with the new ones. Other members of the community also become involved and are new resources for everyone working together. It is for this reason the Tavern Safety Coalition became a possibility.
Measurement Is Important

Lastly, just as in business, it is important in collaborations to show efficiency and effectiveness. It is important to be able to measure what amount of impact the effort is having on the problem being addressed.

Within the law enforcement agency, as discussed earlier, manpower and other resources are constantly in demand. This truth needs to be always in the forefront of the minds of those involved in collaborative efforts. They must have a means to successfully show what, if any impact the effort has, in order to continue to justify the resources being put into it. If this is not properly done, resources may be funneled elsewhere. Even with successful efforts, if they cannot show tangible data of how they are being successful, it may all be for naught and the resources withdrawn. This can have a devastating effect on those within the department as well as relationships within the community.

Furthermore, stakeholders outside of law enforcement are equally dependent on solid data to maintain their public support for collaborative efforts. They also generally have limited resources and time to expend on varies duties and need to see that their efforts are worthwhile or interest may wane, leading to apathy and reduced involvement, if not the end of the effort.

Some collaborative efforts are easier to measure than others and easy measurement tools such as crime rates will not always work or be available. In such cases, measurement tools such as citizen surveys may be important to support the hard work going into the collaborative effort.
Conclusion

There are many forms of collaboration between law enforcement and the communities they serve. This article reviewed several types of collaborative efforts including those between law enforcement entities, mixed collaborative efforts, collaborations with citizens or citizen groups, and those with business.

When looking at examples of successful collaborations, one can see that collaboration is one tool that every law enforcement agency should consider when attempting to address crime. The examples listed in this article clearly show that collaboration between law enforcement and other entities can reduce crime and other community problems. It also can have a positive impact on the relationship between law enforcement and the community.

Collaboration can be a frightening thought for law enforcement personnel who have never embarked on such a task. It is hoped that by laying out the following “best practices” that more officers, supervisors and executives in law enforcement agencies will take the step forward and attempt such collaborative efforts.

The research shows that it is important to just do it. The opportunities are all around and law enforcement needs to just take that first step and try it.
It is also important to look everywhere. Those interested in collaborating with the community should not be pigeon holed into believing it can only be done for certain types of crime or community problems.

Next, it is important that the agency try to shift and share responsibility for the problem to others who may be in a better position or willing to help. This includes members of the community.

When considering a collaborative effort, look for someone or be prepared to be the convener. It is crucial to the success of the effort that the person directing the effort be passionate about the issue at hand and not just assigned to it. It is also imperative that the convener have solid leadership and facilitation skills.

Efforts such as these must be supported from the top of the organization. This is important due to the high constraints on manpower and other resources. It may be possible to be successful as long as the support chain goes high enough to authorize the allocation of resources such as in areas of geographic responsibility.

There is ample research available for those interested in pursuing some form of collaborative effort and it is highly recommended that research be done prior to investing the resources needed for collaborative efforts. By doing research beforehand, law enforcement officials can minimize mistakes by learning from others and increase the likelihood the effort will succeed.
It is important that those involved in these efforts be persistent and patient when dealing with the other stakeholders involved in the effort. Often times it takes considerable time to work through the process of feeling out positions and earning the trust of those involved. Obstacles will arise and those who are persistent and patient will be able to overcome those obstacles and be more likely to succeed.

Collaboration becomes easier with practice and the community will learn from each effort. The relationship between the community and the law enforcement entity will improve and the community will become more willing to work with law enforcement each time a successful collaboration occurs. In this way, law enforcement can have a positive impact on their relationship with the community they serve. This is especially important in communities where this relationship may be strained.

Lastly, it is important to monitor the progress of the effort with some form of measurement. This will justify the allocation of resources by the formal entities. It will also keep volunteers engaged as it will be seen as a worthwhile of their time and efforts.

By following the list of “best practices” laid out above, law enforcement should be more likely to be successful when trying to work with the community to address problems through collaboration. Though this practice has been available as a tool for law enforcement for several decades, it has been underutilized by law enforcement. It is hopeful this article will make law enforcement more willing to seek to use this tool to address crime in their communities.
Bibliography


