Together Lexington

Courageous Conversations
Police and Community Relations
February 20, 2017

Facilitation Services Provided By

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FUNNELING IDEAS INTO ACTION

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Purpose and Outcomes

Overall Purpose: To encourage meaningful discussion and awareness among all members of our community.

Meeting Purpose: To identify relationship concerns/issues between law enforcement and the Lexington community and share ideas on how to address them

Outcomes:

- Prioritized list of key issues that need to be addressed between law enforcement and the community's relationship

- List of ideas for how these concerns/issues might be addressed

- Recommendations for next steps

Introductory Activity and Opening Conversation

What Have You Seen Nationally In The Past Year About The Relationship Between Law Enforcement And Communities?

- Attacks on law enforcement

- Blue Lives Matter and Black Lives Matter

- Fear of arrest and deportation
  - Role of local police

- Ferguson become a springboard and many other incidents occurred

- Homelessness has been criminalized

- Legislation provides law enforcement and first responders protection

- Panhandling is a first amendment right

- People of color teach their children (particularly males) what to do when "driving while black"
  - Latinos also have this fear

- Police officers, drugs and corruption

- Racial tensions

- Social media can counter balance
  - Law enforcement reaching out to community

- Social media is focused on negativity versus positivity in the community

- Vilification of law enforcement based on actions of a few

Level Of Trust

When participants arrived, they were asked to answer an anonymous survey regarding their current level of trust between the community and law enforcement in Lexington. They were given a five-point scale to respond: No Trust (1), Some Trust (2), Moderate Trust (3), Significant Trust (4), and Complete Trust (5). 23 people completed the survey.

The average level of trust locally was ranked 3.02, how does this surprise or concern anyone?

- Admitting it and learning to move forward

- Building back D.A.R.E. in schools

- Commendable that officers show up to meetings like this

- Dispatch is an issue
    - Disconnect between police and dispatch and people reflect that on the police

- Failing grade
    - Expected it to be better in Lexington and more trust

- Glad to see results, but there is more work to be done

- National news can impact local perception

- Past experiences with law enforcement play a vital role

- Perception that police respond slower in some areas of the city

- Police/Law enforcement has to earn trust
    - Taking leaps and bounds to earn trust within the community

- Seeing things change and learning to move forward

- Social Services impact

- Stereotype label for police
    - Heard nothing but good things, Lexington is a lot better than most places; Officers are here to help

- Text to 911?

In A Perfect World, What Would the Relationship Look Like Between Law Enforcement And The Community In Lexington?

- Everyone is born with a book of ethics

- Hard to describe a perfect world
    - What does it look like?

- Inherent trust that everything was done right – everyone in the process did their job well and did the right thing

- No more guns and drugs

- Recognition that police officers have families too

- They're there in uniform when they need to be

Other Groups/Organizations Working On This Topic

- Coffee with the Chief

- Commerce Lexington

- Decriminalization of Mental Health (2012)

- Diverse Voices – Office of the Fayette County Sheriff

- Global Lex

- Homeless Commissions

- Lexington Forum

- Neighborhood Associations

- On The Table

What are the key issues that need to be addressed between law enforcement and the community's relationship?

Participants were asked to answer the key question within their small groups. Once all of their issues and concerns were listed, each small group was asked to identify the two most critical issues for the community to address. Their prioritized responses are presented below.

Critical Issues and Concerns

- Communication between both parties
  - Dissemination of information

- Diversity of officers

- Educating the public on the role of law enforcement

- Establishing mutual trust
  - Getting to know each other

- Lack of exposure
  - Only interacting with residents when there is a crime

- More opportunities for law enforcement to get to know community members and gain trust/respect

- More positive interactions with police as opposed to sheriff's office

- Ongoing diversity training

- Trust
  - Both the police and the community; Transparency

- Trust between communities
  - What we are taught growing up (cyclical issues)

- Trust levels/respect

Additional Issues and Concerns

- Awareness of how national events affect local perceptions
- Better communication
- Better response
- Bias
- Community engagement
- Confidentiality
- Cultural awareness
  - Language barriers, neighborhoods, racial tension
- Differences of perception of safety in different neighborhoods
- Educate community about do's and don'ts
- Educate police officers about cultural diversity
- General stereotypes of each other
- Legislation and policies
  - Between city and federal (secured communities)
- More diverse police force
- Need to know more options of how to access law enforcement services
- Perception of intention
  - Stereotyping
- Policies/Procedures of officers
- Racial biases
  - Acknowledge that it can exist; Factors
- Racial tensions
- Respect for each other
- Respect levels between law enforcement and community
- Role of community to inform law enforcement of ongoing issues
- Seeing officers in positive roles
- Stereotyping
- Transparency of police department
- Understanding cultural differences
- Visibility of law enforcement

What can be done to address these issues?

Using their prioritized key issues, each small group was asked to answer the key question. Listed beneath each issue or concern are their ideas on how they can be addressed.

Communication Between Communities and Law Enforcement

- Keeping up with personal relationships – mutual effort
- More community outlets for information
- More neighborhood meetings
- Promoting Text-To-Tip
- Social media: Let's get more positive!
  - Share good personal stories

Educating the Public of the Role of Law Enforcement

- Activities within the community
  - Ideally not in uniform
- Citizens police academy
  - Market to community leaders
- D.A.R.E/Partnerships with schools and youth serving agencies
- Training of new officers who can actively clarify their role

Establishing Mutual Trust

- Be vulnerable together
- Being in the schools
- Community dialogues
- Community policing
  - Establishing relationships
- Law enforcement become visible; Be a part of the community

More Opportunities for Law Enforcement to Get to Know Community Members and Gain Trust/Respect

- Diversity trainings
- Hire/Recruit diverse officers
- More community meetings
  - Presence of law enforcement at street parties/picnics
- Officers more present in schools
- Transparency of local law enforcement cooperation with federal agencies

Ongoing Diversity Training

- Encourage involvement in non-profits

- What is the current training?
    o How often is the training to be implemented?
    o Various areas to be covered?
    o What does it consist of?

Positive Interactions

- Attend neighborhood meetings to interact and answer questions

- Participate in community events

- Participate/Be involved in youth programs and events

Trust

- Change needs to come from a higher authority (Mayor)

- Local law enforcement not enforcing federal immigration control (I.C.E.)
    o When local law enforcement officers participate with I.C.E. in deportations, it causes distrust of local law enforcement in the community

- Hiring officers that represent the community

- Invite police and sheriff's office to events

Key Next Steps

Participants were asked to provide recommendations for next steps based on the conversations.

- Adopt-A-Day with students/small groups

- Appreciation day for law enforcement

- Disseminate report/Information to local leaders and social media to broader communities

- Evaluation of the police departments budget – is it meeting their needs?

- Get information out to social media
    o Reach younger people

- Leaders set the tone

- More conversational events
    o Events at the park such as, Adopt-A-Park with the youth

- Posts on Facebook – others need to know

- Public knowledge (posters, etc.)

- Take it upon yourself to talk to officers

Meeting Debrief

Common Themes

After each group shared their ideas to address the issues and concerns, the participants identified the following common themes found in their ideas.

- Better communication
  - 153 languages spoken in Lexington
- Diversity training
- Don't be fearful, it takes time
- More public awareness
- Trust
- Visibility of police in positive environments

Evaluation Questions/Responses

To bring the session to a close, participants were asked to complete an evaluation. The complete evaluation results will be tabulated at the conclusion of the 12 conversations, but the closing three questions are included below to inform the remaining conversations. Duplicate responses are denoted with an asterisk.

1. **What worked for you during tonight's session?**

   - Enjoyed being in small groups***
   - Honest, open discussion***
     - Openness and diversity present
   - Diversity - seating arrangement*
     - Interaction with diverse groups
   - Everyone's voice was heard*
   - Answering specific questions
   - Comfortable atmosphere for sharing ideas
   - Hearing from others to understand how common our concerns are
   - Hearing ideas from diverse segments of the population
   - Location, having food, having law enforcement to talk to
   - Meeting the community
   - Meeting law enforcement and knowing they do care
   - Positive tone, sharing of perceptions, insights
   - The pace was just right
   - The transparency and vulnerability of everyone

Appendix A: Meeting Debrief

2. What would have made tonight's session better?

- Continue the conversation*

- Get the word out! Stumbled upon this event - needs to be better advertised.*

- None - good job!*

- Getting more people involved

- It was intimidating to have law enforcement in uniform

- Have more regular PUBLIC involvement

- Have meetings in churches, more familiar/neighborhood places - park, shelters, etc.

- Add a half hour

- More clarification/definition or information desired - lots of overlap

- To be able to change tables and hear more perspectives

- Maybe brief introductions of those in attendance

- No improvements of night, but I suggest follow up conversation and what was done

- Move tables allow us to mingle

3. Do you have any lingering comments and/or questions?

- Great - thank you!**

- Share information discussed with community; broader aspect*

- Thank you for doing this! Please make events like this more visible.*

- Create a Facebook page to spread the word

- Excellent meeting

- The average person need to attend these events

- Excellent, keep up the good work

- Many people in the room shared not having negative interactions with police. I think it would be most valuable to hear from citizens who have.

- Great discussion - I appreciated hearing diverse perspectives at the table

- Thank you to the Lexington Police Department for being at the meeting and for a job well done - keep up the good work!!

- I am one of the 1% who trusts our police/sheriff/law enforcement

- It was a pleasure to participate in this evening and hope to attend more in the future. Thank you!