Branding for Police Agencies

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ANTHONY GUGLIELMI

Core values

Professionalism

Pillars

Voice

Public perception

Positive interactions

Cohesiveness

Unique purpose

COPS
Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

MAJOR CITIES
CHIEFS
ASSOCIATION

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Letter from the Director of the COPS Office

Colleagues:

We all understand that companies leverage branding and communications to persuade consumers to choose their products and services over their competitors' and that corporate imagery helps drive public perception. Public services do not have "customers" in the same way a company does; nevertheless, community members do consume the services public agencies provide. Even though individuals do not get to choose their public safety provider, organizational imagery and branding is still an important element for establishing and managing the community's expectations of and experiences with its law enforcement agency.

The Major Cities Chiefs Association has prepared this guide for law enforcement agencies to develop meaningful and consistent brands. It includes an overview of the importance of branding and brands in general; an emphasis on public trust as essential to the branding of law enforcement agencies in particular; and step-by-step guidance to help agencies determine whether their existing brands need minor adjustment or major ground-up overhaul.

Law enforcement agencies need to build and maintain strong relationships with the community to ensure public safety. It is our hope that this publication will help agencies manage their public images in ways that will facilitate community trust and positive police-community relations.

Sincerely,

Hugh T. Clements, Jr.
Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

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Executive Summary

P eople do not stand in line for hours or even days at a time to buy the latest smartphone just because they need a new device. People do not wait months for a reservation at a particular restaurant only for the food. And people do not buy a specific luxury vehicle just to get from point A to point B.

If your police agency's brand is not what you think it should be or not what you would like, you are not alone. Branding recognizes that products, services, or companies are more than their utilitarian features. This means that a brand is not a logo, or a certain color, or a badge or a uniform. These symbols are part of a branding package and can be powerful representations of a brand, even standing in for the name itself—like golden arches, an apple with a bite out of it, a "swoosh," or a smiling arrow. However, brands are deeper, richer, and more complex than these symbols suggest. Brands are about experiences, feelings, and promises. Both great and terrible brands evoke certain images and beliefs in people's minds that help determine how they feel and what they think about the products and services the brands represent. And because brands are perception-based, they are flexible and changeable based on new information or a different interaction. While brands are developed and shaped over time, major incidents—positive and negative—often have immediate impacts with lingering effects.

The promise at the center of any corporate brand reflects what an organization delivers and how people should experience it. A brand establishes the organization's persona, how it goes about its work, what people should expect from that work, and the difference it makes in their lives. Brands also communicate benefits and value.

As Seth Godin (2009) put it, "a brand is a set of expectations, memories, stories, and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer's decision to choose one service (or product) over another. If the consumer (whether it's a business, a buyer, a voter, or a donor) doesn't pay a premium, make a selection or spread the word, then no brand value exists for that consumer."

The other key characteristic of a brand, then, is that it is consumer created—your organization's brand is largely defined by the people who encounter, interact with, and experience it. This definition does not mean you have no power over your own brand; quite the contrary. People reflect what they get, so if people are not reflecting a brand that is consistent with how you or your agency want to be viewed, you can change the elements that contribute to it.

Police department brands involve community members' feelings of safety and security—not only that their communities are safe places to live, work, and raise families but also that no matter their race, age, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, or any other demographic variable, they feel safe and secure while receiving direct services from and interacting with police officers. In other words, the degree to which people can live without fear of victimization is part of the assessment of a police department's brand.

The value of a strong brand for a police agency is significant on several other levels as well. A strong and consistent brand can help make the information police agencies disseminate more credible and thereby more readily accepted by members of the community. It can improve community relations that aid the agency's ability to gather information about crimes. It can contribute to improving employee job satisfaction and provide a platform for more successful recruiting efforts. And it can aid efforts to secure funding, as community members weigh what they spend in taxes against the perceived value they get in return. The more favorable the perception, the more likely the support.

To be clear, even the best branding cannot make an organization into something it is not. It cannot "cure" officer bias, transform insufficient training, or address issues of officer integrity. What effective branding can do is establish the "true north" for a department that makes clear what is expected of officers and what people should be able to expect from their interactions with them. If a brand is a promise, you either deliver on that or you don't. There is no halfway, no "almost," no faking it.

The challenge for a department's branding efforts is to at once embrace and separate. That is, embrace the core functions, professionalism, and responsibilities all law enforcement agencies have while also separating from the lowest-performing among them. "It is your agency's brand that differentiates you from any one of the other 17,000 law enforcement agencies across the United States. In these trying times, it is imperative agencies develop and own their brands" (Phibbs 2017).

In an interesting field experiment on community policing and police legitimacy, Peyton, Sierra-Arévalo, and Rand (2019) conducted a randomized trial, including randomly assigning police-public contacts, with the New Haven (Connecticut) Police Department to examine whether positive, nonenforcement interactions with uniformed patrol officers cause meaningful improvements in community members' attitudes toward the police. The research found that a single instance of "positive contact with police—delivered via brief door-to-door nonenforcement community policing visits—substantially improved residents' attitudes toward police, including legitimacy and willingness to cooperate. These effects remained large in a 21-day follow-up and were largest among nonwhite respondents" (1).

Let that sink in. *A single instance of positive interaction substantially improved attitudes toward police.* This research is particularly enlightening when considering the following data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Tapp and Davis 2022):
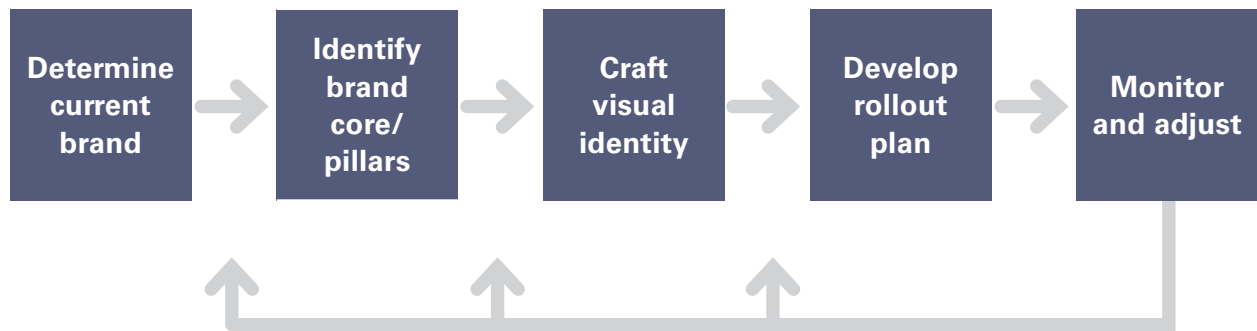
- The portion of U.S. residents ages 16 or older who had contact with the police in the preceding 12 months declined from 24 percent in 2018 to 21 percent in 2020, a drop of more than 7.7 million people (from 61.5 million to 53.8 million).

- The number of persons experiencing police-initiated contact fell by 3 million (down 12 percent), the number of persons who initiated contact with the police fell by 5.5 million (down 15 percent), and the number experiencing contact from traffic accidents fell by 1 million (down 12 percent).

- White people (22 percent) were more likely than Black (18 percent) or Hispanic (17 percent) community members to have contact with police.

- Police were less likely to initiate contact with Black (9 percent) and Hispanic (8 percent) individuals than White community members (10 percent).

Overall, only about one-fifth of the U.S. population older than 16 years of age have any contact with police in a given year. This means public perceptions of police are shaped not by personal contacts but vicariously, through friends, families, news reports, social media, television shows, and movies. And if positive nonenforcement interactions can improve attitudes toward police, focusing on strategies that promote positive police-public interactions would appear to pay dividends. Getting officers out of vehicles and interacting with community members provides positive attitudinal benefits and favorable reinforcements of a department's brand.

A long-term plan for developing a successful brand presence to achieve specific goals is called a brand strategy. It is more than the sum of individual pieces and parts, like logos and websites and uniforms. It's how officers are expected to carry out their work. It is how the recruiting section talks about the department and the approach the academy staff take during training. It is how community members, reporters, and elected officials describe the department. And it is how the department handles and reacts to some injustice in the community or within its ranks. It is how all the various elements align into a cohesive and consistent package that differentiates and defines the department and what people can expect from it.

That alignment is key. When there is a mismatch between what you say and what you do, people believe what you do. Still, what is communicated visually and verbally contributes to an overall brand strategy. The ways the department shares information, the types of public service announcements it promotes, what its recruiting material looks like, what aspects of the agency it emphasizes, how officers are trained to interact with community members and how they treat the civilian members of the department, and how those civilians deliver service are all part of a brand strategy. Sloppily dressed officers, grimy patrol vehicles, unreturned phone calls to victims or their families, lack of attendance at community meetings, and how people feel they are treated when interacting with the police—all of these things say something about the kind of agency a police department is and what people should be able to expect from the people and the systems set up to provide the services. When improvements are warranted, they can be accomplished without overhauling logos and changing uniforms, which is good news for departments that do not have much money to invest in branding.

Figure 1. Five steps to determining your department's brand strategy

Determine current brand	→	Identify brand core/ pillars	→	Craft visual identity	→	Develop rollout plan	→	Monitor and adjust

Think of a brand strategy as the blueprint for how you want the world to see your organization. It conveys the agency's purpose, its promises, and how it solves problems for people. The goal is to align people to the brand in such a way that it is consistently portrayed and backed up through behavior and performance. "A law enforcement brand . . . should emotionally connect and engage current officers, attract potential employees who will be a good fit, turn away those who will not, and energize residents and businesses within the community" (Phibbs and Tait 2014, 5).

The process we have adapted for this guide to help you refine or develop your department's brand and accompanying strategy has five steps, as shown in figure 1.

1. **Determine current brand.** To get closer to the brand you want, you must first understand the one you have. This helps establish the starting point and addresses the very nature of what a brand is—how the department is viewed and how it presents itself. This step involves researching how the department is currently described by others and asking a lot of questions of various internal and external stakeholders, through surveys, focus groups, or interviews. Brace yourself for learning things that may be diffi-

cult to hear. Honest assessments are essential for any meaningful change, so if you are not ready to hear it, you are not yet ready to start.

While the input from stakeholders is being gathered, collect examples of various tangible internal and external expressions of the department's brand. Uniforms, the website, forms, posters, social media—anything that carries a visual representation of the department should be included to give a comprehensive picture of how the brand is depicted across the spectrum of visual media. Identify brand core values or pillars. The results of step 1 are used to define (or refine) the agency's essential core values and pillars or brand components. The brand core values and pillars distinguish the department in the field of law enforcement and set it apart from other police agencies. What do you want to be known for? What distinguishes your agency from others? Focus on simple yet powerful emotions because that is the space in which branding operates.

Develop a brief description of what the organization stands for. This should be a concise expression of the unique purpose and profile of the organization. It is not a tag line or slogan meant for external marketing; that comes later. This description will guide everyday decisions about how the depart-

ment operates, what you expect, what people who interact with your department should experience, the "voice" of the agency, and other aspects of standard operations. It will be used to shape and make decisions about brand communication.

This step gets at the agency's "personality" and the value proposition it embraces as well as the attributes and messages formulated to differentiate it from others. If it were a person, how would people describe the department? What words do people use to talk about the organization? If "bad-ass" comes up more often than "helper" or "aggressive" is more common than "problem solver," that tells you a lot.

2. **Refine or develop visual identity.** It is common for brands of all types to periodically update, refresh, or modernize visual elements. From Starbucks and Kentucky Fried Chicken to the City of Boston and the Seattle Police Department, the landscape is full of examples of organizations that invested in new or revised logos, design styles, uniforms, or other visual components that better reflect the personality of the organization. As you work through the previous steps, whether and to what extent changes need to be made to your current visual material should become clear. Some of it could be as simple as making changes to content you periodically update anyway, like information on your website and in printed materials.

If more advanced design changes are necessary, get professional help from seasoned experts to help craft materials that are on brand. There are several low- or no-cost ways to do this. Check your city or county for in-house graphic design resources already on staff, ask local agencies for pro bono help, or invite a local university to provide design assistance through class projects or a student portfolio. Once you make decisions about the other components, you will develop guidelines and standards to ensure the brand is consistent throughout the department before introducing it.

3. **Rollout.** This step focuses on how the brand will be introduced to internal and external audiences. The more significant and impactful the changes, the more in-depth the rollout plan will be.

4. **Monitor and adjust.** A brand is a living, evolving concept that is shaped and matures over time. It requires routine monitoring to make sure the elements remain in alignment and are consistent with the brand. Evaluate departures from the brand and adjust as necessary.

Investing time and resources to develop your department's brand strategy can help solidify the organization's direction and values for both internal and external stakeholders, which can result in increased community support and improved employee morale, which can be as impactful as reducing crime and increasing public safety.

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Introduction

I n 2011, the COPS Office published *Strategic Communication Practices: A Toolkit for Police Executives* to help police executives and communication personnel think differently—more strategically—about the process of communication, how it supports operations and contributes to increasing transparency and improving relationships with community members. At the time, while departments were still heavily reliant on traditional news media outlets to share information with the public, many had begun investing in strategies and tactics that diversified their communication efforts and provided opportunities to connect directly with stakeholders.

Since then, we have seen agencies increasingly capitalize on—and even create—opportunities to tell their own stories. Departments' use of social media has grown exponentially, and more information, like calls for service and updated crime reports, is readily available via department websites. More than 60 percent of departments in the United States have invested in body-worn cameras (Miller 2019) and are making some footage public. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020, agencies were increasing use of livestreaming services, if only from cell phones. Everything from interviews and incident briefings to community meetings and recruiting events has been streamed or recorded to share with the public as part of efforts to make police operations more accessible.

All of this is welcome news for the advancement of police-community relations and in the quest for increasing transparency and accountability. And yet, as departments were adopting more contemporary communication strategies and investing in technology to aid transparency and efficiency, the rest of the world was adapting even faster; now everyone has their own storytelling platforms and can record or livestream events online. The ability to reach hundreds, tens of thousands, or even millions of people is no longer the domain of news media, the few, and the famous; Internet and social media influencers have emerged from the humblest of beginnings. Many have turned their spotlights on law enforcement—and for good reason.

Law enforcement as a profession has been grappling with serious issues that call into question its very legitimacy. Allegations of racial biases, selective policing, corruption, and use of excessive force have given rise to protests, riots, and other actions designed to bring about systemic changes. These issues are not new. The history of policing is replete with periods of controversy and reconciliation. Like other professions, it evolves based on changing expectations, societal shifts, and major events.

Confidence in and support for police has alternately soared and suffered, largely in reaction to highly publicized major events. Arguably one of the most egregious cases that marked a turning point in contemporary policing was the 2020 death of George Floyd, who died as a Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for more than nine minutes. That and several other incidents sparked months of protests (some violent) across the United States and dealt a serious blow to public confidence in the police. Rebuilding this confidence requires concerted, consistent, and widespread commitment to engaging communities in partnerships to change police practices.

What does all of this have to do with a guide on police branding? Everything.

While brands have logos and tag lines and other tangible evidence of their identities, branding is more than that. Branding encompasses the intangibles—the experiences, beliefs, and feelings a product, service, or organization evokes from people.

"Your brand is what other people say about you when you're not in the room" is a quote attributed to Amazon's Jeff Bezos (Arruda 2016, 2). So when people talk about police when you're not in the room, the brand is a mix of what they know, what they believe, what they have seen and experienced, and what they have heard from others. This means everyone in a department—from the lowest to the highest ranks, both sworn and civilian—is part of the branding equation. Every encounter an individual has with an element of a department says something about how you want them to view you. However and wherever someone interacts with your brand—in person, through your website, blog, email, phone, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or whatever tomorrow's technology may bring—they should all align and demonstrate a consistent representation of what the department wants to be known for (Decker 2019).

We can bemoan that all police agencies are being held to account for the actions of individual officers and departments hundreds or even thousands of miles away or for events years in the past. We are right to object when the actions of one or a few are used to condemn an entire agency or the whole profession. But the truth is, one's views of police are shaped by extraordinary experiences, whether real or fictitious, personal or vicarious, positive or negative. These experiences inform one's views not only of the department and its officers but also of any other agency. Fair or not, that is the nature of human reasoning: If it can happen there, it can happen here; if they can do it, you could do it. After one such experience, people often approach the next situation not as an isolated incident but as an example of a larger systemic issue. From New York to Seattle and from Dallas to Minneapolis, events have caused people inside and outside of law enforcement circles to question what is happening and what needs to be done to repair the damage.

Contemporary policing navigates complex circumstances. To be sure, every profession has problems, because every profession involves people and people are

notoriously fallible. What is especially problematic for policing is the power imbalance between police and the rest of society and "the enormous discretion cops have and how, for too many reasons to count, they apply it unevenly" (Illing 2020, 23). Few reports offer more compelling summaries of this situation than the investigation of the Ferguson (Missouri) Police Department that the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice completed following the 2014 killing of Michael Brown by a Ferguson police officer (USDOJ 2015). That investigation "revealed a pattern or practice of unlawful conduct with the Ferguson Police Department that violates the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, and federal statutory law" (1).[1] Sadly, this is only one of more than 40 departments that have been forced to address their policies or practices by the U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ 2017).

A 2011 paper published following the Executive Session on Policing and Public Safety, which the National Institute of Justice and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government had convened to help think through a "new professionalism in policing," described this new professionalism as commitments police organizations around the country were making to hold themselves to "stricter accountability for both their effectiveness and their conduct while they seek to increase their legitimacy in the eyes of those they police and to encourage continuous innovation in police practices. The traffic in these ideas, policies and practices is now so vigorous across the nation that it suggests a fourth element of this new professionalism: its national coherence" (Stone and Travis 2011, 1). The authors went on to explain:

Even as it remains a work in progress, the New Professionalism can help police chiefs and commissioners keep their organizations focused on why they are doing what they do, what doing it better might look like, and how they can prioritize the many competing demands for their time and resources. On the front lines, the New Professionalism can help police officers work together effectively, connect their daily work to the larger project of building a better society, and share their successes and frustrations with the communities they serve. In communities everywhere, the New Professionalism can help citizens understand individual police actions as part of larger strategies and assess the demands and requests that police make for more public money, more legal authority and more public engagement in keeping communities safe. From all of these vantage points, the New Professionalism helps all of us see what is happening in policing, how we got here and where we are going. (2)

This description concisely sums up elements central to the topic of branding in policing, for telling one's story is at the heart of branding and it is a cornerstone of this updated work.

The challenge for a department's branding efforts is to at once embrace and separate. That is, embrace the core functions, professionalism, and responsibilities all law enforcement agencies have while also separating from the lowest-performing among them. "It is your agency's brand that differentiates you from any one of the other 17,000 law enforcement agencies across the United States. In these trying times, it is imperative agencies develop and own their brands" (Phibbs 2017).

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1. The First Amendment (adopted in 1791) protects freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and the press. The Fourth Amendment (adopted in 1791) prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures. The Fourteenth Amendment (adopted in 1868) grants citizenship rights and equal protection to African Americans and former slaves.

Introduction

This guide does not ignore the hard work that is being undertaken to make policing worthy of the public's trust and confidence. Rather, it provides a framework to help communicate that hard work—to make those changes evident, tangible, and believable and ultimately bake them into the brand. This is a support tool to help departments develop plans for letting people know what they are doing, what is changing, and what people can expect. It shows how police departments can identify, develop, demonstrate, and communicate their brand personas and where investments in strategic approaches to messaging, tactics, and symbolism, in addition to training and other operational elements, help solidify an agency's brand. It's about show and tell, not "trust me." Departments must demonstrate, through their actions, a commitment to upholding the professional standards for law enforcement agencies.

Branding and Brands

T hink about your favorite products, services, and companies, those to which you remain loyal despite opportunities to select others. What descriptors do you use? What sets them apart from other similar products, services, and companies? Why do you continue to choose them when you have other options?

Branding recognizes that products, services, or companies are more than their utilitarian features. People do not stand in line for hours or even days at a time, to buy the latest smartphone just because they need a new device. People do not wait months for a reservation to a particular restaurant only for the food. And people do not buy a particular luxury vehicle just to get from point A to point B.

A brand is not a logo, or a certain color, or a badge or a uniform. While these symbols can be powerful representations of a brand and even stand in for the name itself—like golden arches, an apple with a bite out of it, a "swoosh," or a smiling arrow. Brands are deeper, richer, and more complex than these symbols alone. They are about experiences, feelings, and promises. Brands, both the great and the terrible, evoke certain images and beliefs in people's minds that help determine how they feel and what they think about the products and services the brands represent. And because brands are perception-based, they are flexible, changeable based on new information or a different interaction. Brands are developed and shaped over time.

The promise at the center of any corporate brand reflects what an organization delivers and how people should experience it. A brand establishes the organization's persona, how it goes about its work, what people should expect from that work, and the difference the organization and its work make in their lives. This means brands also communicate benefits and value.

With respect to law enforcement and other government services, community members weigh what they spend in taxes against the perceived value they get in return. This analysis has played out quite literally in some people's demands to defund the police, most recently in 2020 following a series of high-profile events in which police killed unarmed Black individuals. While some activists insist defunding equates to abolishing police departments, others define it as redistributing funding or investing less money "in punitive structures and surveillance, and more money invested in resources that keep people safe from violence in the first place" (Zaru and Simpson 2020, 13). In some cities, like Seattle, Washington; Austin, Texas; New York; San Francisco; and Baltimore, Maryland, local elected boards took legislative actions to reallocate some funds from police to other services, like mental health services and employment or job training services. In other places, defunding discussions led instead to talk of police reform and reimagination (McEvoy 2020). The funding cuts were dramatic and short-lived. A year later, budgets had been restored and, in some cases, were larger than before (Adams 2021). Public concern in the United States about the increasing violent crime rate likely helped people shift their thinking about police spending. In fact, according to research by the Pew Research Center, "the share of adults who say spending on policing in their area should be increased now stands at 47 percent, up from 31 percent in June 2020. That includes 21 percent who say funding for their local police should be increased *a lot*, up from 11 percent who said this last summer [2020]" (Parker and Hurst 2021).

Each of these decisions was based, to greater or lesser degrees, on assessments of perceived value weighed against costs and benefits. As a 2009 blog post put it, "a brand is a set of expectations, memories, stories, and relationships that, taken together, account for a con-

sumer's decision to choose one service (or product) over another. If the consumer (whether it's a business, a buyer, a voter or a donor) doesn't pay a premium, make a selection or spread the word, then no brand value exists for that consumer." (Godin 2009).

The other key characteristic of a brand, then, is that it is consumer created—your organization's brand is largely defined not by you but by the people who encounter, interact with, and experience it. This helps distinguish between a generic, umbrella brand for policing as a profession and the brand a particular agency cultivates. It also explains why the research that forms the basis of any branding strategy involves considerations of stakeholders' attitudes about policing in general and specific departments.

However, this does not mean you have no power over your own brand. Quite the contrary. People reflect what they get, so if people are not reflecting a brand that is consistent with how you want your agency to be viewed, change the elements that contribute to it.

If an agency has experienced serious harm to its reputation and is unable to do its job effectively because of diminished community support, rebranding can help refocus efforts on the agency's core mission and how it expects officers to perform their jobs. This is especially important when the reputational harm is so egregious the top cop is fired or resigns in the fallout.

To be sure, branding for police agencies is different than branding for most other types of organizations. For starters, branding in the business and nonprofit worlds typically focuses on trying to attract new clients. Police strive for the opposite: Reduction in crime means fewer "clients," both victims and suspects.

Another key difference is that branding for businesses (and to a lesser extent for nonprofits) often involves opportunities for consumers to make choices about the

companies and organizations from which they seek service. Whether it be cell phones or shoes, internet service or food, electronics or carpet cleaning, legal services or furniture, people have choices about where they get most products and services.

This choice is not really available with policing. People do not get to choose which department will investigate their crimes or complaints. This can be a source of frustration for community members. In other areas of their lives, people make choices to leave brands over bad service, poor quality, price, limited availability, or values disagreements. Someone may decide to stop using a product because it is harmful to the environment or uses animals in testing. Another person will move their banking to a different institution because of a good or bad loan application experience. Others will choose to stop going to a certain restaurant after being served food they deem mediocre or receiving poor service. The ability to choose is a given in most other areas of our consumer lives. Not so with policing. Without moving to a different jurisdiction, people do not get to choose their police department, just as they do not get to choose from which local governments they receive services.

On the surface, this lack of choice of providers may lead one to believe branding for police agencies, or any government agency, is unnecessary. After all, you already have a captive audience; why does it matter what they think of your department and the employees in it? What is the big deal about promoting a brand that evokes positive evaluations if yours is the only game in town? As David Cooper, former chief of police in Madison, Wisconsin, wrote in his blog, *Improving Police*, "While citizens may not be able to choose which police agency responds when they call 9-1-1, the quality of the response matters with regard to how citizens may or may not cooperate and assist police" (2016).

Organizations with well-established brands tend to have more credibility, create greater trust, build stronger relationships with customers, attract like-minded talent, and—in the case of for-profit companies—increase sales and market share (Erskine 2017). While the last two variables may not be applicable to law enforcement agencies, substitute "increase funding support," and it suddenly becomes a compelling proposition. In fact, this idea is what has been called the Willingness to Pay test (Erskine 2017), which could reasonably be applied to local government taxation in support of services. The connection between the tax dollars paid and services received is an especially important equation when an agency undertakes its branding development. Specifically, how do you create enough value that people are willing to pay more for the service? What are the elements that contribute to that willingness? Branding offers a way to crack that code.

A strong and consistent brand can help make the information police agencies disseminate more credible and thereby more readily accepted by members of the community. It can improve community relations that aid agencies' ability to gather information about crimes. It can contribute to improving employee job satisfaction and provide a platform for more successful recruiting efforts.

Effective branding also offers a way to build a "well of good will" that an organization can dip into for support and a reserve of forgiveness in times of misstep, trouble, or crisis. Apple seems to use this well of good will exceptionally well; how else could it get away with introducing new models of phones that do not include a charging brick or cord (Haslam 2021)? Coca-Cola learned about the importance of the well of good will when it tried to introduce a vending machine that would automatically raise prices on its products during warmer months (Kittur 2014), Starbucks when viral

videos showed Black customers being treated abomi-nably (CBC Radio 2018), and Volkswagen when it was found in 2015 to have been cheating on emissions tests (Colvin 2020).

While lesser companies might have been done in by these events, these companies ultimately (if not imme-diately) responded wisely and have bounced back, some even stronger than before. These and countless other examples underscore the value of a strong brand. And a strong brand usually means there is a consciously devel-oped strategy guiding it.

Police department brands involve community mem-bers' feelings of safety and security—not only that their communities are safe places to live, work, and raise fam-ilies but also that they should feel safe and secure while receiving direct services and interacting with police officers, no matter their race, age, gender, sexual orien-tation, immigration status, or any other demographic variable. In other words, the degree to which people can live without fear of victimization is part of the assess-ment of a police department's brand.

To be clear, even the best branding cannot make an organization into something it is not. It cannot "cure" officer bias, transform insufficient training, or resolve issues of officer integrity. What effective branding can do is establish the 'true north' for a department that makes clear what is expected of officers and what peo-ple should be able to expect from their interactions with them. If a brand is a promise, you either deliver on that or you don't. There is no halfway, no "almost," no fak-ing it.

Even the strongest brands have encountered problems: Machines fail, things break, and people are fallible. The difference is that when these organizations falter, "they have a 'home base' by which they can judge their own

performance and their customers can use to evaluate how it recovers from problems. Branding provides a beacon around which everything else revolves—every decision, every action. Any police executive who has dealt with instances of corruption within the ranks, claims of excessive force, or charges of racial profiling understands they are faced with the task of rebuilding their agency's brand. The police executive must respond with organizational and operational changes to rebuild the relationships damaged by a breach of trust" (Ste-phens, Hill, and Greenberg 2012, 50). Complicating the matter further is the reality that in 2022, departments are being pressed to answer for the actions of officers in other agencies hundreds or even thousands of miles away, such as officer-involved shootings, use of excessive force (or excessive use of force), or failure to quell riots. Understandably, this remote responsibility is a source of great frustration for police agencies that have enough to contend with in managing their own departments, let alone being held accountable for the deeds of officers outside their jurisdictions. Some argue that painting all police officers with the same brush ignores contextu-ally important differences among agencies in local laws, policies, procedures, and demographics. Others charac-terize the issue as isolated to a few bad apples, while still others argue that those bad apples have spoiled others around them. At best, it is guilt by association; at worst, officers everywhere are seen as complicit in the crime.

In the context of developing a branding strategy, then, a department needs to account for damages to its own reputation and community relations from events occur-ring locally as well as those in other jurisdictions. In other words, because police agencies are expected to account for what is happening in other departments and in the profession, how the department reacts to these situations needs to be incorporated into the over-all plan.

Public Trust is Fundamental to Policing Brands

The list of policing principles Sir Robert Peel developed when he established the London Metropolitan Police Force in 1829 still provides a useful framework for the issue of branding—one that speaks to the enduring nature of strong foundations. Among the more resonant points: Police operate in a democratic society based largely on community consent.

When trust deteriorates, law enforcement's legitimacy is questioned and officers' ability to fulfill their duties is hampered. Trust, essential for effective policing, is at the core of branding. As Dawson (2012) points out, "trust is the most critical component in building and maintaining a strong, emotionally driven and enduring brand. However, in a world of promotion-driven-marketing tactics, many brand owners forget that building trust is the only thing holding the relationship with the customer together" (1).

Trust in police has eroded through the years, and the result has impacted not only police-community relationships but also agencies' ability to attract and retain recruits; throughout much of the country, there has been a decline in the number of qualified candidates in the late 2010s (Cassaday 2020). A report by the Police Executive Research Forum claims "fewer people are applying to become police officers, and more people are leaving the profession, often after only a few years on the job. These trends are occurring even as many police and sheriffs' offices are already short-staffed and facing challenges in developing a diverse workforce. The workforce crisis is affecting law enforcement agencies of all sizes and types—large, medium, and small; local, state, and federal. And it is hitting departments in all parts of the country" (PERF 2019, 7). Among the reasons cited is what has been called the "'post-Ferguson effect,' in which members of the public lose trust in the police" (13). Survey results that focus on issues of trust and people's confidence in institutions appear to mirror this trend.

Gallup, a global analytics firm, conducts an annual poll to gauge public confidence in key institutions, including the police (see table 1 on page 17).

Sir Robert Peel's Policing Principles

Sir Robert Peel established the London Metropolitan Police Force in 1829. He became known as the "Father of Modern Policing," and his commissioners established a list of policing principles that remain as crucial and urgent today as they were two centuries ago. They contain three core ideas and nine principles.

THREE CORE IDEAS

1. The goal is preventing crime, not catching criminals.

2. The key to preventing crime is earning public support.

3. The police earn public support by respecting community principles.

NINE POLICING PRINCIPLES

1. To prevent crime and disorder, as an alternative to their repression by military force and severity of legal punishment.

2. To recognize always that the power of the police to fulfill their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behavior, and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect.

3. To recognize always that to secure and maintain the respect and approval of the public means also the securing of the willing cooperation of the public in the task of securing observance of laws.

4. To recognize always that the extent to which the cooperation of the public can be secured diminishes proportionately the necessity of the use of physical force and compulsion for achieving police objectives.

5. To seek and preserve public favor, not by pandering to public opinion, but by constantly demonstrating absolute impartial service to law, in complete independence of policy, and without regard to the justice or injustice of the substance of individual laws, by ready offering of individual service and friendship to all members of the public without regard to their wealth or social standing, by ready exercise of courtesy and friendly good humor, and by ready offering of individual sacrifice in protecting and preserving life.

6. To use physical force only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient to obtain public cooperation to an extent necessary to secure observance of law or to restore order, and to use only the minimum degree of physical force which is necessary on any particular occasion for achieving a police objective.

7. To maintain at all times a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and that the public are the police, the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.

8. To recognize always the need for strict adherence to police-executive functions, and to refrain from even seeming to usurp the powers of the judiciary of avenging individuals or the State, and of authoritatively judging guilt and punishing the guilty.

9. To recognize always that the test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, and not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with them.

Source: "Sir Robert Peel's Policing Principles," Law Enforcement Action Partnership, accessed September 23, 2022, https://lawenforcementactionpartnership.org/peel-policing-principles/.

Table 1. Public confidence in key institutions

	2019 percent	2020 percent	2021 percent	2022 percent
Banks	30	38	33	27
Big business	23	19	18	14
The church or organized religion	36	42	37	31
Congress	11	13	12	7
The criminal justice system	24	24	20	14
The medical system	36	51	44	38
The military	73	72	69	64
Newspapers	23	24	21	16
Organized labor	29	31	28	28
The police	53	48	51	45
The presidency	38	39	38	23
The public schools	29	41	32	28
Small business	68	75	70	68
Technology companies	—	32	29	26
Television news	18	18	16	11
The U.S. Supreme Court	38	40	36	25

Source: Brenan 2021, Jones 2022

In 2020, while public confidence in several institutions had increased, the police experienced a decline of five points (Brenan 2021). Confidence in the police fell to 48 percent for the first time in the 27 years the survey has been conducted. In 2021, the results improved by three percentage points for police while confidence in every other category fell by a little or a lot (Brenan 2021). In 2022, there were significant declines in confidence for 11 of 16 institutions included in the poll, and the average confidence across all institutions—including police—fell to a record low (Jones 2022). It is common for public opinion to swing widely and rapidly, especially in response to major events that cause outrage and result in demands for change. Still, this decline in confidence is a factor to consider when focusing on rebuilding a brand.

A paper published following Harvard University's 2015 Executive Session on Policing and Public Safety noted:

> "Most law enforcement leaders recognize that creating stronger human connections and community engagement will lead to improved public safety and more effective crime fighting. So how do we build the foundation of trust necessary to form a true partnership between the police and the people we serve? The research tells us that, despite three decades of falling crime rates—and improved training, technology, and tactics—public trust in the police has not improved. Instead, empirical assessments of trust and confidence in the police have remained generally unchanged in recent years. It turns out that people don't care as much about crime rates as they do about how they are treated by the police." (Rahr and Rice 2015, 2–3)

This may be oversimplifying the situation a bit. Logic might suggest that when given the choice, people probably prefer both less crime *and* improved treatment by the police. But given the state of police-community relations, this focus on what is called "procedural justice" emphasizes impartiality in interactions, public participation in the process, and perceptions of fair and consistent treatment of people (Rahr and Rice 2015). It strikes at the heart of what Peel was getting at with the policing principles: legitimacy.

In an interesting field experiment on community policing and police legitimacy, Peyton, Sierra-Arévalo, and Rand (2019) conducted a randomized trial, including randomly assigning police-public contacts, with the New Haven (Connecticut) Police Department to examine whether positive nonenforcement interactions with uniformed patrol officers cause meaningful improvements in community members' attitudes toward the police. The research found that a single instance of "positive contact with police—delivered via brief door-to-door nonenforcement community policing visits—substantially improved residents' attitudes toward police, including legitimacy and willingness to cooperate. These effects remained large in a 21-day follow-up and were largest among nonwhite respondents" (1).

Let that sink in. *A single instance of positive interaction substantially improved attitudes toward police.* This research is particularly enlightening when considering the following data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Tapp and Davis 2022):

- The portion of U.S. residents ages 16 or older who had contact with the police in the preceding 12 months declined from 24 percent in 2018 to 21 percent in 2020, a drop of more than 7.7 million people (from 61.5 million to 53.8 million).

- The number of persons experiencing police-initiated contact fell by 3 million (down 12 percent), the number of persons who initiated contact with the police fell by 5.5 million (down 15 percent), and the number experiencing contact from traffic accidents fell by 1 million (down 12 percent).

- White people (22 percent) were more likely than Black (18 percent) or Hispanic (17 percent) community members to have contact with police.

- Police were less likely to initiate contact with Black (9 percent) and Hispanic (8 percent) individuals than White community members (10 percent).

Overall, only about one-fifth of the U.S. population older than 16 years of age have contact with police in any given year. This means public perceptions of police are shaped not by personal contacts but vicariously, through friends, families, news reports, social media, television shows, and movies. And if positive nonenforcement interactions can improve attitudes toward police, focusing on strategies that promote positive police-public interactions would appear to pay dividends. Getting officers out of vehicles and interacting

with community members provides positive attitudinal benefits and favorable reinforcements of a department's brand.

In the wake of the death in police custody of George Floyd, a number of polls explored people's views of police and alternative approaches to policing. A June 2020 poll by Data for Progress found that 37 percent of all voters—and 64 percent of Black voters—said the recent events had made them less likely to trust police (Winter, Swasey, and Ganz 2020). That poll also revealed considerable support for the formation of an agency of first responders that can deal with addiction or mental illness situations that need to be addressed but do not require police intervention.

Also in June 2020, two-thirds of respondents in a poll conducted by the Pew Research Center said that individual officers should be held legally accountable for using excessive force and favor providing community members with the ability to sue officers, but few of those polled said they would support cutting police budgets. Respondents also gave police lower evaluations in several key areas. (Pew Research Center 2020). The results were significantly skewed by race and political persuasion of respondents (figure 2). In fact, studies of police-community relations consistently reveal opposing views: Black community members are far more likely than White to say race is a factor in shootings and in court rulings deciding whether to pursue charges against officers. Black and Hispanic residents have

Figure 2. Declining share of Americans give police forces positive ratings for using force appropriately, treating racial groups equally, and holding officers accountable

Percent of respondents who say police around the country are doing an excellent, good, only fair, or poor job of . . .
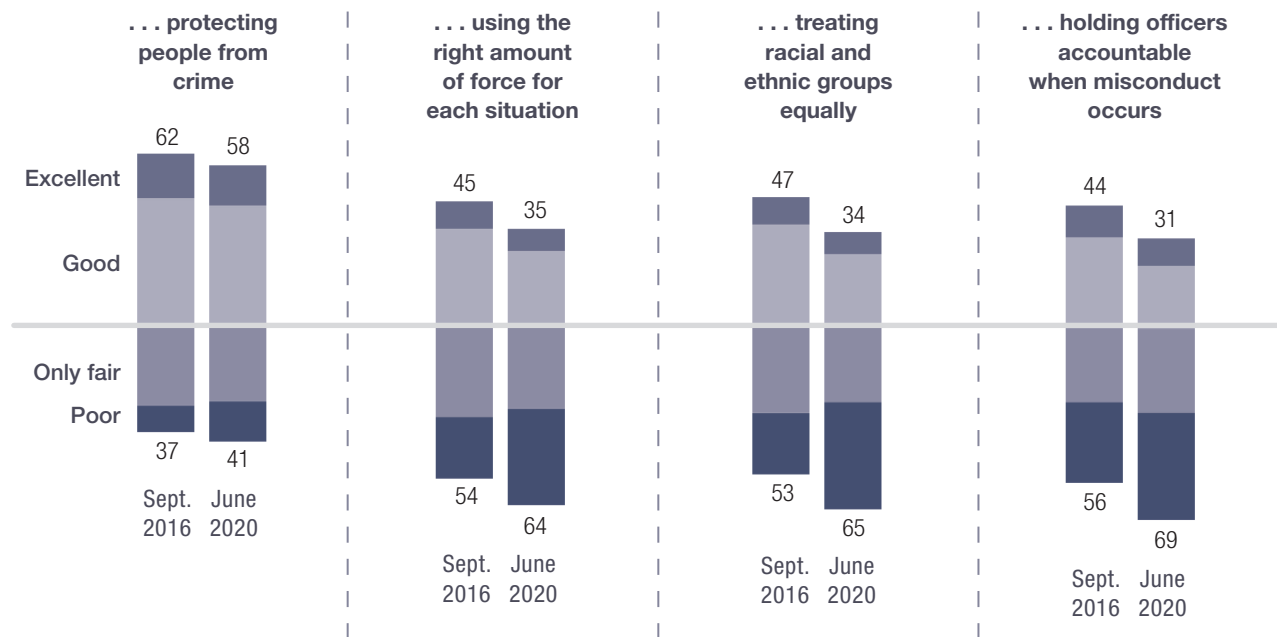
Note: "No answer" responses not shown

Source: Pew Research Center 2020

far less confidence in police than their White neighbors. And not surprisingly, the police and the public differ in their views about aspects of policing, certain policies, and officer-involved shootings involving Black subjects (Morin et al. 2017).

An April 2021 poll by the Washington Post–ABC News found that 6 in 10 Americans say the country should do more to hold police accountable for mistreating Black people, despite how those measures interfere with how officers do their jobs (Clement and Guskin 2021).

Some departments, including the Charlotte-Mecklenburg (North Carolina) and New Haven (Connecticut) Police Departments, are investing in customer service training to teach officers fundamental skills that can contribute to building trust and improving relationships. Others, like those in Denver, Colorado; Baltimore, Maryland; and Boston, Massachusetts, are adding peer intervention training to help officers know how and when to intervene when fellow officers cross the line. All of this speaks to steps departments are taking to shore up the core of their brands: their relationships with the communities they serve.

Developing Your Branding Strategy and Approaches

Margolis and March (2004) offer the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) as an example of a strongly branded police agency. "What feelings, images, and thoughts do police officers and citizens experience when they see a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer in a red dress uniform? Does the RCMP always get its man? The RCMP has created a strong brand identity. Canadians view their federal police force as a group to be respected, revered, and honored. They're seen as competent, effective, and extremely service oriented."

This description of the RCMP did not crop up overnight or without observable evidence, often revealed through stories told about RCMP officers and their deeds. It was developed over time and with a dogged and deliberate determination to develop consistent and reliable narratives. The foundations of these narratives help shape attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with the agency.

A brand strategy provides a deliberate, long-term plan for developing a successful brand presence to achieve specific goals. As we have established, it is more than the sum of individual pieces and parts, like logos and websites and uniforms. It's how officers are expected to carry out their work. It is how the recruiting section talks about the department and the approach the academy staff take during training. It is how community members, reporters, and elected officials describe the department. It is how all the various elements align into a cohesive and consistent package that differentiates and defines the department and what people can expect from it. "A law enforcement brand . . . should emotionally connect and engage current officers, attract potential employees who will be a good fit, turn away those who will not, and energize residents and businesses within the community" (Phibbs and Tait 2014).

The branding process can seem complicated and overwhelming, which may explain why organizations of all types put off investing time and energy into it. There are always more pressing concerns and higher priorities and never enough time to do it all. Yet those that have committed the time, resources, and attention to the process have found not only that the investments have paid dividends but also that they already had components of their brand established.

Key to the effort is the top cop. Undertaking the development of a branding strategy is not something a department can effectively achieve without leadership, support, and commitment from the police executive suite. It also requires collaboration and outreach. While much of the work is internal to the department, the process requires inputs from a variety of external players.

There is no shortage of models, guides, and toolkits to help an organization establish its branding strategy. They range in complexity and number of steps. Some have just three major components while others have 10 or more. While the components are basically the same from one to the next, most models seem better suited to for-profit corporations that have competitors and products to sell than to law enforcement agencies. Others appear to reduce branding to graphic design choices.

Unless you are among the lucky few who can hire a firm that specializes in branding or can entice someone to take the work on pro bono, the intent of this guide is to make it relatively easy and painless to develop an initial branding strategy, thereby increasing the possibility the work will be done at all. There are a few assumptions here (which the authors acknowledge is a risk, albeit a calculated one).

First, we assume that, if you are reading this, you are convinced of (or at least willing to entertain) the premise that branding can aid your department where everything else you have tried has fallen short. Second, it is likely you are just not sure where to start. Third, we assume that most departments will need to use in-house resources who probably are not branding experts. Fourth, we assume the people who will be working on this have other responsibilities, which means this will be one more thing for them to do. Which leads us to the fifth and final assumption: The simpler and more streamlined the project, the better.

To accomplish this streamlining, we are providing a process designed to suit law enforcement agencies. This process offers simple but effective brand architecture, using worksheets and templates to lead you through the steps for creating a strategy. This model is designed especially for those who just want a way to start moving the needle on community support, engagement, recruitment, employee morale, and overall effectiveness. It reduces the time, money, personnel, and resources necessary to get an actionable plan. It uses some of what you already have and readily available tools that are free of charge or inexpensive.

First Things First—
Is a Brand Refresh,
Rehab, or Redo Right
for Your Agency?

While we are laying out a branding strategy development process in this guide, we would be remiss if we did not introduce related concepts you will find useful: branding refresh, rehabilitation, or redo. Each has its place, and you will be able to adjust the steps outlined in this book to meet you wherever you believe you are on the branding continuum.

The basic premise underlying this effort is that your department already has a brand; it just may not be well defined or one you want. The key is finding the right starting point to develop one with intentionality. If tackling a branding strategy for an entire department is too big an undertaking right now, shrink the assignment down to something more manageable, like focusing on a specialized unit or program. See how that goes and then move on to another component. While this is not the most desirable approach, it is nonetheless keeping you on the path instead of wandering off into the weeds. Starting somewhere is better than not starting at all.

How do you decide whether your situation calls for a brand refresh, rehab, or redo? Here are some rules of thumb:

Refresh. A refresh is suitable for organizations with generally favorable reputations and whose brands are well established but have elements that could use some updating.

As shown in figure 3, in 2008, the Major Cities Chiefs Association adopted a new logo. While its brand as a trusted leader in policing and law enforcement executive development was strong, its newly formed Public Information Officer section members saw opportunity to refresh the brand identity with a more contemporary logo that also was representative of its various member cities. The original felt dated (as if Julius Caesar might walk in at any moment). The update aimed to refresh the look and provide a mark that was more inclusive of the member cities. This was accomplished by creating an amalgamation of well-known landmarks from several cities (New York's Statue of Liberty, San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, Toronto's CN Tower, Seattle's Space Needle, St. Louis's Gateway Arch, and others) as a combined cityscape.

Rehabilitation. A brand rehabilitation is appropriate for organizations that are having issues beyond an outdated logo. Common approaches departments undertake in these circumstances involve aligning social media messaging with departmental goals, updating websites, and redesigning recruiting materials to better reflect the department's personality and expectations.

When the Virginia Beach (Virginia) Police Department (VBPD) reexamined its recruiting approaches, the department addressed several structural elements to make it more competitive in attracting candidates,

Figure 3. Major Cities Chiefs Association logo update 2008

Original   Updated

MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS

Figure 4. Virginia Beach Police Department recruiting materials, old and new

from increasing pay and benefits to streamlining the application process. Simultaneously, VBPD recruiting staff worked with the city's communications office to update the materials and methods they used to attract qualified candidates.

As shown in figure 4, the original material was dark, rather dated, undifferentiated from other departments, and lacked a consistent look and feel, while the new material focuses on three selling points the departments chose to highlight: (1) its investment in its personnel, (2) the specializations available to officers, and (3) the quality of life that Virginia Beach offers. All of these selling points were embodied in a campaign featuring contemporary design with flexible messaging that highlighted what "more" a career with the VBPD affords its employees. New messaging and collateral material unified the department's brand across various platforms. The work includes a new website, videos, brochures, event materials, social media posts, and a vehicle wrapped with imagery designed to highlight the department and aspects of the city that make Virginia Beach a desirable place to live, work, and play.

Before the new materials were introduced as part of a multimedia campaign, the department received an average of 21.7 applications per week, according to internal tracking data. After the launch of the "More" campaign, the VBPD received an average of 48 applications per week and saw a 25 percent increase in over-all traffic to the website from Fiscal Year 2021 to 2022. Further, there was a 38 percent increase in unique page views, and overall time on the site increased by more than 40 percent. For access to the videos and additional marketing material created in support of the recruiting campaign, contact the City's Communications Office at News@VBGOV.com.

Redo. A branding redo, or complete overhaul, may be necessary under the following conditions (Lischer 2015):

- If a brand is irreparably damaged or outdated and there is a need to disassociate a brand from negative perceptions

- If a brand is perceived differently than the established vision or inconsistent with established values

- To differentiate the agency from others, instill pride among agency members, and attract qualified recruits

As shown in figure 5, in 2015, the Seattle Police Department undertook a department-wide update that ultimately changed uniforms, vehicles, and its badge and patch. What drove these tangible signs was a larger effort designed to rebuild community trust and value in a department in need of change following years of turmoil and a 2012 court-ordered consent decree (Civil Rights Division 2022).

Figure 5. Seattle Police Department brand overhaul 2015

Core values

Professionalism

Pillars

Voice   Public perception

Positive interactions

Cohesiveness

Unique purpose

Brand Strategy Development Model

The process we have adapted for this guide has five steps, as shown in figure 6. They are briefly described here and explored in depth in the next section.

1. **Determine current brand.** To get closer to the brand you want, you must first understand the brand you have. This understanding helps establish the starting point and addresses the very nature of what a brand is—how the department is viewed and how it presents itself. This step involves researching how others currently describe the department and asking a lot of questions of a variety of stakeholders, both internal and external, through surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Brace yourself for learning things that may be difficult to hear. Honest assessments are essential for any meaningful change, so if you are not ready to hear it, you are not yet ready to start.

While gathering input from stakeholders, collect examples of various tangible expressions of the department's brand that are used internally and externally. Uniforms, the website, forms, posters, social media—include anything that carries a visual representation of the department to get a comprehensive picture of how the brand is depicted across the spectrum of visual media.

Figure 6. Five steps to develop a brand strategy
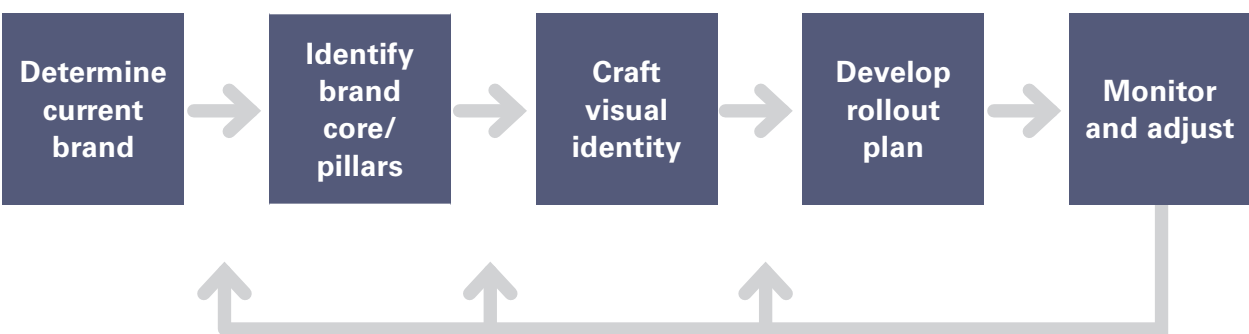
2. **Identify brand core or pillars.** The results of step 1 help determine the agency's essential core and pillars, or brand components. This core includes the agency's personality, the value proposition it embraces, and the attributes and messages formulated to differentiate it from others. The brand core and pillars distinguish the department in the field of law enforcement and set it apart from other police agencies. What do you want to be known for? What distinguishes your agency from others? Focus on simple yet powerful emotions, because that is the space in which branding operates.

Develop a brief description of what the organization stands for. This should be a concise expression of the organization's unique purpose and profile. It is not a tag line or slogan meant for external marketing; that comes later. This brief description will guide everyday decisions about how the department operates, what you expect, what people who interact with your department should experience, the "voice" of the agency, and other aspects of standard operations. It will be used to shape and make decisions about brand communication.

If the department were a person, how would people describe it? What words do people use to talk about the organization? If "bad-ass" comes up more often than "helper" or "aggressive" is more common than "problem solver," that tells you a lot.

3. **Refine or develop visual identity.** It is common for brands of all types to periodically update, refresh or modernize visual elements. From Starbucks and Kentucky Fried Chicken to the City of Boston and the Seattle Police Department, the landscape is full of examples of organizations that invested in new or revised logos, design styles, uniforms, or other visual components that better reflect the organization's personality. As you work through the previous steps, whether and to what extent changes need to be made to your current visual material should become clear. A word to the wise: Do not leave the development of new design in the hands of amateurs. This area is where you need seasoned experts to help craft materials that are on-brand. As you make decisions about the other components, you will develop guidelines and standards to ensure the brand is consistent throughout the department before introducing it.

4. **Rollout.** This step focuses on how the brand will be introduced to internal and external audiences. The more significant and impactful the changes, the more in-depth the rollout plan will be.

5. **Monitor and adjust.** A brand is a living, evolving concept that is shaped and matures over time. Routine monitoring makes sure the elements remain aligned and are consistent with the brand. Evaluate departures from the brand and adjust as needed.

Branding journey step one. Determine current brand

To get closer to the brand you want, first understand the one you have. This helps establish the starting point and addresses the very core of what a brand is—others' expressions of attitudes about your agency. This step involves asking a lot of questions of a variety of stakeholders, both internal and external, and collecting a host of materials that contain expressions of your brand.

Determine current brand → Identify brand core/pillars → Craft visual identity → Develop rollout plan → Monitor and adjust
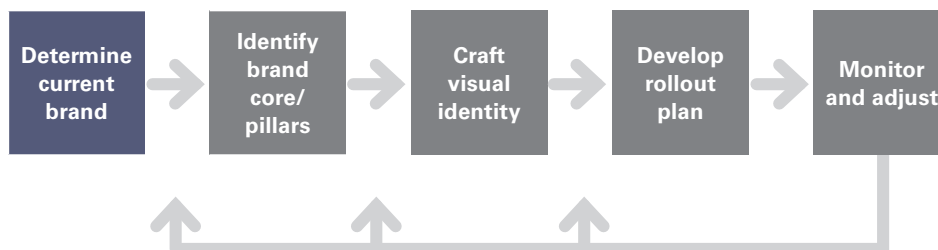
There are several ways to gather the insights and information needed at this stage. Following are a variety of approaches that will yield a useful overview of the current brand.

1. Surveys

Surveys can be as narrowly or as widely disseminated as you deem appropriate and are the most efficient method for collecting a lot of information from a lot of people in a relatively short amount of time. While you could spend a fair amount of money to develop a scientifically reliable and valid survey and have it administered by a third-party firm that specializes in market research, that expense is not necessary for this process. If you are looking for third-party help, check with a local university. Especially at research institutions, professors are often interested in taking on real-life assignments for their students because they provide meaningful work while also fulfilling course requirements. If the work is a good fit for the class or research project, the students will design the survey instrument, administer it, and analyze the results. Similarly, another department or division in your local government may already offer this type of service. Many cities have subscriptions to various survey tools, like Survey Monkey and Public Input, so check around before paying for a new service. There are plenty of low- and no-cost survey tools available, from the simple to the sophisticated, that allow a variety of distribution methods—online, at public meetings, by email, door-to-door canvassing, or over the phone. Whatever collection instrument you use, the key is to develop questions that will capture honest feedback from a variety of stakeholders that will inform your understanding of the department's current brand as well as opportunities to shape it in the future.

Examples of questions to ask include the following:

1. In the last 12 months, how many interactions have you had with members of our police department?

2. What was the nature or type of the interaction(s)?

3. How would you describe those interactions?

4. How did you feel when you interacted with police?

5. Did your opinion of police improve, stay the same, or worsen following the interaction? What contributed to this assessment?

6. How would you rate the service you received? (Provide respondents with a scale such as from 1 "Poor" to 5 "Excellent.")

7. When you think about the police department, what words come to mind?

8. How often do you come in contact with members of the police department? (Provide respondents with a scale such as from 1 "Never" to 5 "Very often")

9. What attributes do you associate with _____ Police Department?

10. How would you describe _____ Police Department to others?

11. Which of the following words best describe _____ Police Department? (Provide respondents with a range of options to choose from.)

12. Which of the following attributes do you associate with _____ Police Department? (Provide respondents with a range of options to choose from.)

13. How do you hear about the department and its work?

14. If you were a victim of a crime, how would you rate your satisfaction with police handling of the case? (Provide respondents with a scale such as from 1 "Very dissatisfied" to 5 "Very satisfied.")

15. If you were a victim of a crime, how would you rate your satisfaction with how police treated you? (Provide respondents with a scale such as from 1 "Very dissatisfied" to 5 "Very satisfied.")

16. If you were accused of a crime, how would you rate your satisfaction with police handling of the case? (Provide respondents with a scale such as from 1 "Very dissatisfied" to 5 "Very satisfied.")

17. If you were accused of a crime, how would you rate your satisfaction with how police treated you? (Provide respondents with a scale such as from 1 "Very dissatisfied" to 5 "Very satisfied.")

18. How would you rate the department at addressing concerns within the city? (Provide respondents with a scale such as from 1 "Very dissatisfied" to 5 "Very satisfied.")

19. How would you rate the department at increasing safety and your sense of security in the city? Your neighborhood? (Provide respondents with a scale such as from 1 "Very dissatisfied" to 5 "Very satisfied.")

20. When you interact with police, how do you expect to be treated?

21. When you interact with police, how are you actually treated?

In a comprehensive research project as part of her doctoral work, Sargeant (2012) surveyed more than 4,000 residents in and around Brisbane, Australia, to examine the relationship between police legitimacy, effectiveness, strategies, and collective efficacy. The comprehensive survey offers an example of an in-depth survey that could yield valuable insights into a department's brand. Among the questions included in that survey are the following:

Based on your experiences or perceptions, can you indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements:

1. Police try to be fair when making decisions.

2. Police treat people fairly.

3. Police treat people with dignity and respect.

4. Police are always polite when dealing with people.

5. Police listen to people before making decisions.

6. Police make decisions based upon facts, not their personal biases or opinions.

7. Police respect people's rights when decisions are made.

8. I obey the police with good will.

9. Obeying the police is the right thing to do.

10. I feel a strong commitment to help police.

11. Police are more interested in catching you doing the wrong thing than helping you to do the right thing.

12. If you don't cooperate with police, they will get tough with you.

13. Once police think you are a troublemaker, they will never change their mind.

14. You should always obey the law even if it goes against what you think is right.

15. I feel a moral obligation to obey the law.

16. People should do what our laws tell them to do even if they disagree with them.

17. Disobeying the law is sometimes justified.

18. Respect for police is an important value for people to have.

19. I feel a moral obligation to obey the police.

20. Overall, I think that police are doing a good job in my community.

21. I trust the police in my community.

22. I have confidence in the police in my community.

23. Police are accessible to the people in this community.

24. Police make an effort to get to know people in this community.

Can you indicate whether the police in your community are doing a very good, good, average, poor, or very poor job at doing the following:

a. Dealing with problems that concern you

b. Preventing crime

c. Keeping order

d. Solving crime

If the situation arose, can you indicate whether you would be very likely, likely, neither likely nor unlikely, unlikely, or very unlikely to do the following:

a. Call police to report a crime?

b. Help police find someone suspected of committing a crime by providing them with information?

c. Report dangerous or suspicious activities to police?

d. Willingly assist police if asked?

2. Interviews

Interviews are time-consuming yet useful tools for gathering in-depth information from key stakeholders. They are particularly valuable because they allow follow-up questions and the ability to clarify certain responses.

Interviews can be used at the beginning of a process to help home in on issues and questions to include in a survey or after surveying to help interpret results, or both. Either way, consider the following criteria when selecting individuals to interview:

- Because interviews are rather labor-intensive and time-consuming, think about quality of input more than quantity of interviewees.

- Seek broad community representation and invite a cross-section of residents—including supporters and detractors, critics and champions—from different neighborhoods, age groups, ethnicities, religions, and occupations.

Interviewers should ask value-neutral questions to avoid leading questions that tend to prompt desired answers rather than allow the respondent to answer unaided. For example, "Do you believe our officers discriminate against people of color?" is a leading question that reveals a bias toward a certain response. "How do you perceive our officers treat members of our community?" is more neutral.

Development of a brand concept, creative elements, messaging, positioning, and the overall brand initiative requires an appropriate level of external research. Conducting interviews with key stakeholders will provide great insights about the culture and perceptions of the agency that will inform the branding or rebranding process.

In addition to surveying residents in and around Brisbane as part of the research for her thesis, Sargeant (2012) used in-depth interviews to gather information about how people perceived their community and their involvement in it as well as perceptions about police and problems or threats that face the community.

3. Focus groups

Focus groups can be great time savers as they enable you to gather a lot of information from many stakeholders in a short amount of time. A typical focus group has eight to 15 people and lasts up to two hours. The participants usually have some critical factors in common, e.g., they are all sworn officers or victims of crime, or they all own businesses or lead civic organizations. Focus groups are often conducted by a third party to create a greater sense of autonomy and encourage respondents to be more open with their responses. Engage a facilitator with experience in conducting focus groups, both in-person and virtual.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a variety of online meeting tools into the mainstream that can be used for focus groups if gathering in person is too challenging. Zoom, WebEx, GoToMeeting, Skype, Microsoft Teams, and ClickMeeting are just a few of the more popular such apps. Several have free versions available.

You can schedule one or dozens of focus groups. You can invite people directly, or you can issue an open invitation for people to self-select to participate. The goal of these information-gathering sessions is to probe issues, personal experiences, and individual perspectives to gain insights into the department's brand. Many of the questions used in interviews are suitable for focus groups.

4. SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis (see figure 7) is used to identify the agency's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It is a common tool used in a variety of problem-solving situations and could be one of the elements completed by focus groups.

The power in this exercise lies in the ability to dig below the surface and seek brutally honest input. While it can be difficult to admit weaknesses or

Figure 7. SWOT analysis chart

identify threats, there is little point in pursuing this project if the starting point is less than sincere. The more specific the entries, the better. If something does not neatly fit into any particular category, capture it in a "parking lot" area to consider it in another aspect of the research.

Examples of questions to ask:

- What do we do well?

- What do we do poorly?

- What equipment do we have that other departments do not?

- How well funded is the department?

- What expertise do we have? What do we lack?

- What social and political issues or trends are impacting the profession or our department?

- To what extent does our department have supporters? Who are they? How diverse?

- Are there community members who will advocate on behalf of our agency?

- What sets us apart from other agencies?

- How does our agency improve lives?

- How do we demonstrate our commitment to our department's mission and core values?

- How is our department's relationship with media? Online influencers?

- What complaints do we hear? (from community members, employees, businesses, media, elected officials, other departments in the city or county)

- Where are our gaps in policies, training, staffing?

- How are our relationships with other departments in the jurisdiction? State? Federal?

- How is the local economy?

- What are the predominant crimes and crime trends?

- How are our relationships with minority groups?

- Where are our department's best opportunities to make immediate improvements?

- What is the status and nature of our department's recruiting efforts?

- How is our department viewed by others?

- What is morale within our department like?

- What services could we stop providing?

- What needs could we meet that we are not?

- Is our department CALEA or state accredited?

- Is there local or state legislation contemplated or pending that could impact our department?

- Is there legislation needed to improve the operating environment for law enforcement?

- What technological solutions could benefit our department?

- Is grant money available to help offset our costs?

Tip

You do not have to complete one quadrant before moving on to the next. In fact, jumping around and writing down whatever comes to mind in whatever category it fits in can help generate more ideas because it represents how the human brain works.

Figure 8. Materials review worksheet – words and phrases

Category	Most prevalent topics, words, phrases, themes	Most prevalent imagery	Main colors	Positive, negative, neutral	What is missing?
Recruiting	• Challenge • Reward • Community • Standards • Test(s)	• Officers • Squad cars • Officers wearing sunglasses • SWAT	• Black • Blue	• Mostly positive	• What sets this department and city apart? • Community members
Social posts	• Hero • Sacrifice • Community • Crime • Law • Solutions • Bad (guy)	• Officers	• Blue	• Mostly positive or neutral	• Kids, variety, stories, people, recognition

5. Materials review

While gathering input from stakeholders, collect various internal and external tangible expressions of your brand. Cast a wide net. Review the website, brochures, stickers, trading cards, officer and civilian uniforms, markings on the department's fleet of vehicles, forms, email signatures, business cards, posters, notecards, bumper stickers, letterhead, brochures, social media, PowerPoint templates—grab everything you can get your hands on that includes some representation of the department's brand. Take photos of the larger items, like the vehicles and each of the uniforms to incorporate them into this exercise.

Spread it all out on a table and pin it up around the room. Make sure you can see every piece. Now, stand back. What do you see? Forget for the moment what the words depict; that comes next. For this first part, just consider the aesthetics, designs, and imagery contained in the material. Is it all consistent or does it reflect more of an "anything goes" mentality in terms of brand cohesiveness? Does the material tell a story and reinforce certain themes? What images are used? Are there lots of photographs of special weapons and tactics (SWAT) officers, specialty vehicles, and officers interacting with one another? What about images of officers engaging with community members and doing things like coaching kids or working a community event?

Catalog what you see in terms of themes and issues by sorting it into categories and providing descriptive words. Depending on how much material you have to work with, it may be appropriate to draw samples to use for the analysis rather than attempt to analyze every item. This is not intended to be a scientific review. All you really want is an overall sense of how the brand

is currently depicted on a range of different media. The categories and related descriptions provide a way to describe the characteristics and implicit as well as explicit messaging the various items project. Unless you gather all this together and look at it collectively, it is nearly impossible to get your arms around what is really happening with the department's brand. Consider separating items into internal and external "buckets" to make it easier to categorize and describe. It may take shape as something like figure 8 on page 36:

1. **Uniformity.** Does the agency convey a common message and image to audiences both within and outside the municipality?

2. **Community identity/pride.** Can you identify and do you promote what makes the agency distinct and appealing to residents? To potential recruits?

3. **Community and economic development promotion.** Does the agency convey that it is part of the bigger picture of the community in a way that helps to promote a healthy economy; attract private investment, new residents, and young professionals; and retain key businesses and creative talent?

4. **Consistency.** The brand must be consistent over time. Does everyone in the agency convey its core values through interactions they have?

6. Analysis of written and spoken material

Next is a content analysis of written and spoken material produced by the department and, in a separate category, produced by others about the department. This process will help identify the ways in which people describe the department, its people, their work, and how the incidents that arise from that work align and diverge. This analysis may be among the most powerful tools you can use to get a clear sense of the department's current brand because it uses existing material rather than relying on an individual's recollection of certain events or the retelling of perceptions.

To start, collect and review samples of any department-generated material that includes words—news releases, speeches, fact sheets, recruiting materials, community notices, website copy, and social media posts are examples. Then, do the same thing for stakeholder-generated material, like news articles and stories, editorials, interviews, social media posts, comments on online message boards, and user-generated videos. Give an internet search engine a workout. Enter variations of the department's name to locate examples of written or spoken material that offer descriptions of and commentary about the department.

With both the internal and external content, the analysis will be both quantitative and qualitative. For the quantitative aspect, the focus will be on the occurrence of certain words, concepts, or phrases used in reference to the department. For the qualitative, you are looking for themes that reflect how the department and its employees are viewed. The work is generally the same in both areas, but the result will show the extent to which there is alignment or divergence of opinions between how the department and its members portray themselves and how outsiders describe them. The analysis will focus on identifying words and phrases that are used most often, whether they are repeated across different contexts, and what themes emerge. It might even highlight things you expected to see but did not.

Reviewing external material and community-generated content

News media coverage, editorials, public posts on blogs and videos, social media posts, and verbal commentary accompanying user-generated videos of police activities are examples of the type of content to review in this analysis. The amount of material can be overwhelming, so take random samples in each area. Select enough in terms of numbers and types over a period of time to provide a reasonable snapshot of how the department is described in a variety of contexts. Sample coverage

of high-profile incidents and more routine events and examine how human interest stories are treated and what types of reactions they evoke.

Once the body of material is collected, review each for similarities and differences. Consider the following:

- Which words or terms are used most frequently?

- Are officers described with terms associated with warriors, guardians, heroes, villains, or some combination of these? How about trusted or not trusted, honest or dishonest, compassionate or cold, friendly or unfriendly, effective or ineffective? What about racist, sexist, insensitive, fair, or unfair?

- Is there a distinction made between policing in general and the specific department?

- When onlookers are recording videos of police interactions, what verbal commentary accompanies the recording?

- What about the tone and the overall sentiment? In general, is it mostly positive, negative, or neutral?

Reviewing internal material and member-generated content

How a department represents itself in material it and its members publish can also tell a lot about the department's brand and the extent to which it aligns with or diverges from external stakeholders' perceptions. This assessment will foreshadow the amount of work that needs to be done in subsequent steps: the more alignment, the less work; the greater the misalignment, the more work to do. The amount of material to review in this stage will probably be less than in the external review, but if it is still overwhelming, randomly select samples from the department's website, social media sites, brochures, flyers, and news releases.

Brace yourself. This step, combined with the previous review of the design, imagery, and color of departmental artifacts, will likely cement the reality that the

department's brand is—literally—spread out all over the place. The good news: You can change this for the better.

Performing the content analysis of the department's written material involves cataloging the following observations:

- Which words or terms are used most frequently?

- What is the content focus of the department's social media posts?

- If there are multiple official accounts, take screenshots of randomly selected dates of posts. Put them side by side. Do they seem like they come from the same organization? Do they reflect similar ideas, themes, messages, and tone? You don't expect uniformity but similarity.

- Scroll the department's primary Twitter feed. Does it read like a police blotter, or is there a mix of tweets that highlight more than breaking news about crime and traffic accidents?

- What sorts of stories does the department publish? Is there balance of human interest and ones about crime? Is there a mix of methods so it is neither all written nor all video? How are stories illustrated?

Based on this review of the written content, how would you characterize the department's self-talk—that is, how would you say the department reflects its work and its people? What themes does it emphasize, and are they appropriate? Do they support the agency's goals and mission and help residents understand what is going on in their community? Are there gaps or holes in the department's content focus? For example, is there a major focus on crime occurring but little on what the department is doing to address it, or making sure people know when an arrest is made or how a situation was resolved? Answers to all of these questions will provide the necessary foundation for the next step in the brand or rebrand development: identifying the brand core and pillars.
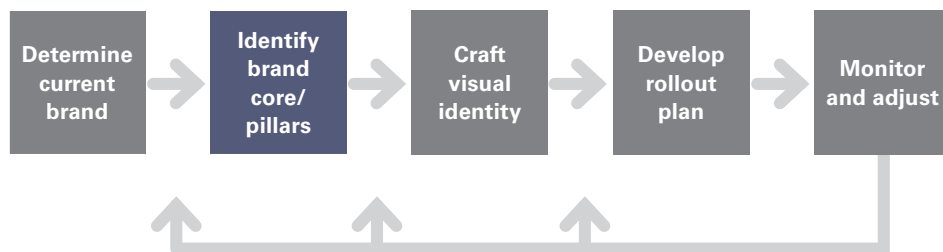
About All Those Social Media Accounts . . .

Before social media began to dominate both personal and organizational communication efforts, police agencies had fewer—and, for that reason, more controlled and centralized—communication functions. While desktop publishing software led many people both in law enforcement and elsewhere to fashion themselves into amateur graphic designers, writers, and marketers and inadvertently contributed to the muddling of agencies' images, most agency communication was formally disseminated through official outlets like meetings, news releases, interviews, brochures, ads, and websites. Social media upended that model. The result has been a mixed bag.

On one hand, social media has enabled more connections and encouraged interactions in ways that were not possible with older methods. On another, it has contributed to the splintering of a department's brand. When a few people have a megaphone, coordinating those voices is relatively easy. When everyone has a megaphone, not only is it difficult to coordinate but it also creates a cacophony of sound that may not allow certain voices and specific messages to be heard.

Many departments encourage or even direct employees to maintain social media sites tied to their jobs that are designed to share information with the public. Some of the accounts are associated with certain individuals—Chief Davis, Captain Jones, Sergeant Evans, or Officer Sloane—while others are more generic microsites—the Traffic Safety Unit, the Public Information Office, the Community Affairs Bureau, or the First Precinct/Division. In theory, this makes good sense. Different accounts target different audiences and can tailor their content to potentially reach more people. The downsides, however, are not insignificant:

■ How many and which sites will the department maintain? Twitter, Facebook, NextDoor, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Snapchat—each has its purpose, and while some people participate on all sites, some may just focus on one or a few.

■ The more sites there are, the more staff time and resources are required and the greater chance there will be inconsistencies and challenges with managing them in a decentralized way.

■ Policies must be developed that govern how, what, when, and under what circumstances information will be posted and not posted—and by whom. For example, how often should a site be updated? If there is an officer-involved shooting or some other major incident, does the department expect all but the centralized accounts to cease posting, or does it only share posts from the main departmental sites, or are employees afforded latitude in sharing unofficial reports?

■ Posting is only one part of the social media site responsibility. Responding to questions and comments posted to the site by followers is another. Not everyone is well suited to the responsibility.

■ Training is essential for anyone who maintains official departmental sites. How to write effective copy, what types of images work, what can and cannot be shared—these are not innate skills, and some situations require especially thoughtful judgments. At least some of this can be taught.

Determine current brand	→	Identify brand core/ pillars	→	Craft visual identity	→	Develop rollout plan	→	Monitor and adjust

Branding journey step two.
Identify brand core values and pillars

In people and animals, the core supports the body, allows freedom of movement, and ensures proper balance and stability. In building construction, pillars form the base and hold up the structure. Brand core values and pillars work in much the same ways.

An organization's brand core values support it and ensure all parts are aligned. The core values represent the organization and what it stands for. They reveal its personality and how the department is different from other law enforcement agencies. The brand core values provide guidance and direction for everything from how the department makes decisions about uniforms to how it communicates with and engages residents. They are the standard for guiding daily actions and evaluating options. They keep the brand accountable and keep everyone on the same page (Ritchie 2018). Just as you can strengthen your body's core, you can strengthen the core values of the organization to improve overall function.

Brand core values and vision:

- Personality
- Pillars
- Promise
- Positioning
- Purpose

The pillars define how values are operationalized throughout the department. They support the organization's mission, vision, and core values by focusing on how the elements come together to shape and define the overall brand, from the look or design of materials to the promise—what people can expect in terms of service. These pillars are the basic set of beliefs that influence everything the agency does. "They are the mission, values, purpose, positioning, voice, tone, look and feel" people experience when thinking of your agency (MacLeod 2015).

For example: The Brash Agency worked with the Dubai Police in 2017 and established a brand strategy that "focused around three pillars: innovation, connection and security" (Brash Agency 2022). FBI Director Christopher Wray focused on process, partnership, brand, and innovation as the four pillars of law enforcement during his October 26, 2019, address at the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) annual conference. Suppose your department has "protect and serve" as its mission and has determined its values to be respect, integrity, responsibility, and humanity. The pillars would support these values and the overall mission. You get to the pillars by asking questions that begin with "how" and "what."

- How will we demonstrate our commitment to these values? What actions reflect these values?

- How will officers and other staff show respect for each other and the residents they serve? In other words, what will I see or experience that tells me they respect others?

- What are the principles that guide the decisions people will make every day to live up to the values?

- What behavior will be encouraged or rewarded and what will not be tolerated?

Similarly, what does it look like if someone demonstrates the value of humanity, or responsibility, or integrity, or any of the many different values departments may be considering?

Fortunately, like the previous step, most departments already have material to inform this part of the process. Look no further than the poster hanging on the wall or the page on the department's website that captures vision and mission statements, core values, guiding principles, performance standards, and stated expectations. However, resist the inclination to shorten the rebranding process and summarily dismiss this step as "mission accomplished." Examine the material in light of what the research revealed about the existing brand. Be willing to make the changes necessary to ensure they reflect the organization today and what it wants for its future.

Sift through the research. What emerged as the top consensus words, phrases, and themes? Were there distinct differences among stakeholders, both internal and external, in how the department is perceived? Compare those findings to the department's existing core values. Is there agreement and consistency, or are there omissions and gaps?

Ask questions like the following:

- Are these core values still valid?

- Are these core values evident in what we say and do?

- How do we demonstrate (to one another and the community we serve) that these are our core values?

- Does the language we use to talk about the department, the work, the people, and the community reflect the core values?

- What do we value that is not reflected in the vision, mission, and core values?

The core values guide decision-making on everything from performance expectations and community interactions to commendations and discipline. While it may

be tempting to latch onto lofty words and phrases like pride, reverence for life, honesty, and fairness, the descriptions behind these values—the pillars—will have significant implications for the organization and therefore should undergo serious examination. Take, for example, that "loyalty" is a brand core value identified as central for your agency. On its face, loyalty is a prized quality, and most would agree it is a desirable attribute. Yet, it is easy to see how the term can connote a "band of brothers" mentality and an "us-versus-them" environment for members of the community, especially marginalized individuals. As Kleinig (2015) wrote, "police loyalty is an impressive but sometimes troubling phenomenon. An officer who will lay his (or her) life on the line to protect a buddy will often also lie through his (or her) teeth to cover up for a buddy's indiscretions." If that's not the brand core value your organization intends to espouse, rethink the words you choose and the way they are defined.

From this work of identifying the brand core values and pillars, the positioning statement will begin to take shape. This is a compact, carefully worded expression of your agency's brand. Like vision statements, the best ones are at once honest—accurately describing who you are today—and aspirational, speaking to the agency you want to become. It is what you strive to accomplish every day.

A positioning statement is different than a mission statement or a vision statement. Mission statements clarify your agency's "what"—its purpose for being. Vision statements provide the "where"—the direction in which it is heading. Positioning statements are the "why." They reflect how you want the agency to be viewed by others. While mission and vision statements are often made available to the public, posted on websites, and printed on posters and business cards, a positioning statement is usually used only internally to help remind the rank and file of the expectations. The branding and marketing agency, MilesHerndon (2015), provides a tidy process for writing brand position statements that

starts with the following sentence: [Brand Name] provides ___(1)___ with ___(2)___ than any other [Your Industry]. We do this by ___(3a)___, ___(3b)___, and ___(3c)___.

While this feels like something more suitable to for-profit or sales-oriented organizations, it provides a good perspective that can be adapted for law enforcement agencies. Try it. In the first blank, add a definition of your stakeholders or target market. In the second, provide a description of what you do, with a focus on what you do better than any other law enforcement agency. In the final three blank spots, add your proof, the reasons people should believe you. There are positioning statement generators online that offer fillable forms to help create a positioning statement: https://positionize.me/ and https://www.almostanything.com.au/marketing-strategy-branding/positioning-statement-generator/ both offer step-by-step processes for collecting answers to questions and once done, generate the statement for you.

However you do the work, the first few drafts of your department's positioning statement might be clunky; you might have more than three proof points and long descriptions of the stakeholder groups and the services provided. That is perfectly fine; better to have more material and refine it down to its essence. Eventually, you will refine it and home in on the right mix. The result will be a paragraph, usually three to six sentences long, that lays the foundation for your agency's brand messaging and culture drivers.

Positioning is about intentionally building your reputation. It defines how you want your agency to be viewed. This means proactively determining the image you want to project to your employees and the general public, conveying the desired perceptions, image, and reputation of your agency.

Tag lines are short expressions of your brand incorporating key words or phrases that embody the department's "reason for being"—what you want your audience to know about the agency, its people, and their work. It usually incorporates words associated with the pillars and positioning. Here are some examples from departments around the country:
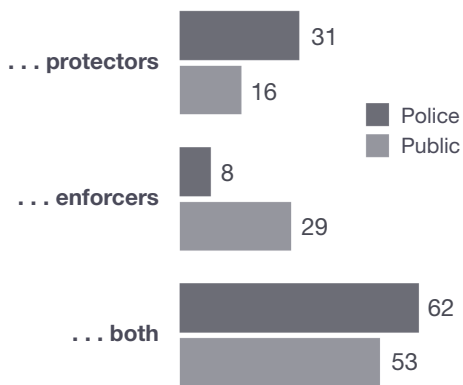
- Chicago Police Department: To serve and protect—with respect

- Los Angeles Police Department: To Protect and To Serve

- New York Police Department: Courtesy, Professionalism, Respect

- Minneapolis Police Department: To protect with courage, to serve with compassion

- Philadelphia Police Department: Honor, Integrity, Service

- Fort Worth Police Department: Service with Respect, Dedicated to Protect

- San Francisco Police Department: Safety With Respect

- Virginia Beach Police Department: Pride, Integrity, Commitment

How the Role of Police Informs the Brand

Figure A. Response to Pew Research Center survey question "Are police protectors or enforcers?"

Majority of officers, half of public say police are both

Percent of officers and the public say they see themselves/see their local police as . . .

. . . **protectors** — 31 (Police)
16 (Public)

Police
Public

. . . **enforcers** — 8 (Police)
29 (Public)

. . . **both** — 62 (Police)
53 (Public)

Note: "No answer" responses not shown.
Source: Morin et al. 2017

Warrior or guardian? Enforcer or protector? Each conveys a different image and carries different methods and expectations. A question that has long confronted police agencies is how they see their role and whether or to what degree it squares with the public's view. To the extent there is alignment, there is brand consistency. When there is a marked difference, we have divergence, confusion, and even a clash of expectations. The reality for most agencies is that the warrior/enforcer model fails to reflect what communities expect from their police. "The warrior concept is associated with the idea of militarizing policing and is consistent with the traditional view of police work—to search, chase, and capture. However, the newer concept of guardian policing emphasizes social service, valuing community partnerships and establishing positive contacts" (Florida State University 2019, 4).

In a 2017 study by the Pew Research Center that separately surveyed sworn police officers and adults around the country, differences emerged over views of police as protectors, enforcers, or both. "Overall, about six in ten officers (62 percent) say their primary role is to serve as both protectors and enforcers; among the public, about half (53 percent) view their local police this way. At the same time, three in ten officers (31 percent) say their primary role is to serve as protectors, about twice the share of the public (16 percent) who see their local police in that way" (Morin et al. 2017, 7–9); see figure A.

Rahr and Rice (2015) offer the following explanation about how the guardian versus warrior model plays out in communities and their impact on public confidence: "The guardian operates as part of the community, demonstrating empathy and employing procedural justice principles during interactions. The behavior of the warrior cop, on the other hand, leads to the perception of an occupying force, detached and separated from the community, missing opportunities to build trust and confidence based on positive interactions" (4–5).

Another recent study asserts that while officers are able to adopt both warrior and guardian mentalities as they approach various scenarios, officers who scored higher on the guardian measure were more likely to value communication while higher scores on the warrior measure revealed greater emphasis is placed on physical control and use of force (Florida State University 2019).

The job of police leaders is to ensure their organizational cultures and training support procedural justice practices and thereby align their agency's brand more with the guardian model.

Branding journey step three.
Assess and craft visual identity

When thinking about building a brand, visuals often come to mind first, but keep in mind that branding is more than a communication and design strategy; everything should align with and reinforce the brand so that no matter which channels your customers use when they interact with your brand—an officer, the website, blog, email, phone, Facebook, Twitter, or whatever tomorrow's technology may bring—they should all demonstrate the unique experience that your brand represents.

The visual identity completes the brand strategy by bringing together all the elements that make up the philosophical parts of the brand and creates something tangible, including the following:
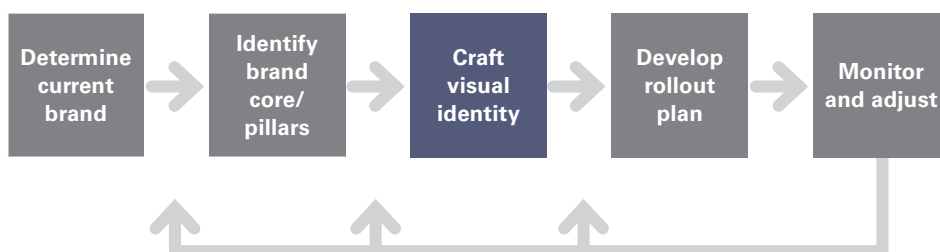
- Agency logo, patch, and badge

- Color scheme(s) that encompass everything from uniforms to logos to websites

- A tag line or phrase and key messaging

- Imagery that depicts and represents the agency

Your brand identity takes the spirit of your positioning, core values, and pillars and turns it into something people can see and experience—including a distinctive personality and voice. Fortunately for most departments, making major changes, as the Seattle Police Department did (see case study in appendix A), is not usually necessary; we recommend exhausting all other options first,

as it can be costly to replace logos, badges, and shields on everything from officers' uniforms to police vehicles. For starters, consider re-establishing core values and pillars, addressing necessary operational changes, implementing new communication tactics, telling better stories, engaging the community, and increasing information transparency. Fortunately for most agencies, these lesser but still impactful changes can often have the desired result.

Take uniforms as an example. In some departments, the only ways to distinguish between an officer and a command staff member (specialized units excepted) is to count stripes or note the difference in the pins they each wear. In others, members of command staff wear different colored shirts than line officers—often white—as an additional indication of rank. Both decisions say something about the values of the organization. Both communicate what the organization has determined is important. The question is whether and to what extent the decisions reflect conscious and deliberate choices based on the department's core brand and brand alignment.

What is communicated visually and verbally contributes to an overall brand strategy: where the department posts, the types of public service announcements it promotes, what its recruiting material looks like, how officers are trained to interact with residents and how they treat the civilian members of the department, and how those civilians deliver service. Whether officers are smartly or sloppily dressed, patrol vehicles are clean or dirty, phone calls from victims or their families

| Determine current brand | Identify brand core/ pillars | Craft visual identity | Develop rollout plan | Monitor and adjust |

are returned, or officers attend community meetings, and how people feel they are treated when interacting with the police—all of this matters, and all of it can be improved without a major overhaul of the department's logos and designs. All of this says something about the kind of police department it is and what people should be able to expect from the people who work there and the systems set up to provide services.

That brand strategy is the blueprint for how you want the world to see your organization. It conveys the agency's purpose, promises, and how it solves problems for people. The goal is to align people to the brand in such a way that it is consistently portrayed and backed up through behavior and performance. Your logo appears on everything that relates to your agency. It is your calling card and the visual representation of your promise. The decision to retouch these elements and to what degree will be based on the previous research and the equity established in the existing brand's designs. Sometimes, though, even brand equity is upended when social forces apply pressure to compel change. Such was the case with the Washington Redskins of the National Football League, which had fought previous efforts to change the club's name. The owner finally acquiesced to mounting pressure in 2020, dropped "Redskins" from the team name, and went by "Washington Football Team" until February 2022 when the new name, Washington Commanders, was revealed (Selbe, 2022).

In 2020, the Quaker Oats Company announced its intention to rebrand the 130-year-old Aunt Jemima product line of pancake mixes and syrups because of what the company called origins "based on a racial stereotype" (Kubota 2021). While the product itself was well-liked, a spokesperson for Quaker Foods North America explained that, while it had updated the brand over the years "in a manner intended to be appropriate and respectful, we realize those changes are not enough." The brand had its origins in an old minstrel song and

featured a large Black woman wearing a kerchief—an image that had often been criticized for depicting a racist mammy stereotype dating back to slavery (Kubota 2021). The new brand was introduced in 2021 as the Pearl Milling Company, named after the small mill in St. Joseph, Missouri, where the pancake mix got its start. Not surprisingly, critics called out the rebrand for befitting a gravel mining company more than a beloved breakfast staple.

If your department's logo itself is fine, take a hard look at everything else. For example, color schemes and imagery used to represent the department can have major impacts on overall brand identity. Suppose a department has tended to use dark, foreboding colors in its printed and digital material along with images of officers in SWAT gear, with guns drawn and tank-like specialty equipment, or clearly staged photos that have officers all neatly lined up in a row. Those design choices may no longer accurately convey the department's values and key messages or resonate with community stakeholders. Updating color schemes and selecting photos and material that better reflect the department's brand image may be all that is necessary. Using photos that depict less militaristic, more community service–oriented imagery, eliminating black or dark backgrounds, and showing officers engaged with community members in non–law enforcement situations are examples of updates that don't take a lot of money but can fundamentally change the messages conveyed.

Updating graphics can make all the difference to the look, feel, and professionalism of a department's material. When the Fairfax County (Virginia) Police Department took stock of some of its social media posts, the staff saw opportunities to refresh the designs to provide a more consistent and polished look while also conveying clearer and more distinct categories, as shown in figure 9 on page 46.

Figure 9. Fairfax County (Virginia) Police Department website redesigns

Designs - before

Designs - after

Examples of Strong Branding Documentation

The following are some examples of cities with strong branding guidelines that include clear usage standards and well-defined parameters for everything from color, positioning, and size to variations in designs, hierarchies in organizational logos, and what is not permitted. All of this helps establish enforceable standards, which is helpful in protecting the integrity of the brand because it emphasizes consistency.

■ **City of Boston**

https://www.boston.gov/departments/innovation-and-technology/brand-guidelines

■ **City of Columbus**

https://www.columbus.gov/uploadedFiles/Columbus/Departments/Public_Health/New_Administrators/Media_Room/Brand_Guidelines_FINv1-1.pdf

■ **City and County of Denver**

https://www.denvergov.org/Government/Departments/Marketing-Media-Services/Brand-Guide/Logo-and-Seal

Change the Outside, Change the Inside?

In 1968, protests against the Vietnam War and for civil rights often led to clashes between police agencies and residents. In the San Francisco suburb of Menlo Park, California, a new chief hired to reform the police department decided that the public's low trust in the officers and the department's generally bad reputation were problems rebranding and an updated image could address.

Chief Victor Cizanckas set out to change everything from the uniform an officer wore to the labels used to refer to police employees. Ranks like captain, sergeant, and lieutenant were replaced with corporate titles like manager and director. Instead of traditional police uniforms, personnel wore more corporate attire—slacks, blazers, dress shirts, and ties. Service weapons were concealed, and metal badges were replaced with patches. "The new chief allowed officers to grow long hair and beards. It was hoped that with a change of appearance so would come a change in substance" (Simchayoff 2020). Initially, the changes appeared to have the desired effect.

"According to the podcast 99% Invisible, the community satisfaction with the department increased. However, inside the department, the new chief faced growing criticism and discontent. Some of the senior, veteran officers were unhappy with the changes. Some complained that civilians are confused about whether police officers were law enforcement. Officers left, decided to move to other agencies still offering the traditional police image for its officers" (Simchayoff 2020).

Shortly after the chief left about 10 years later, the Menlo Park Police Department ditched the new uniforms and standards. Chief Cizanckas took visible representations of the department and changed them in hopes that more substantive change would follow; it turned out that brand consistency needs both an internal and an external efficacy.

Keeping a brand identity intact and consistent over time requires clear guidelines so that no matter who is using it, even after the original staff is gone, there are instructions for what to do, what not to do, and what everything means. A standards document, also called a style guide or manual, serves as quality control to help protect the brand. It serves as a playbook for use of the brand and establishes rules for each of the visual and written elements included in a department's brand. This helps people know when something is consistent with your brand—whether it is "on brand"—which is important for maintaining the overall integrity of the brand.

Even if you do not already have such a document, you have some of the ingredients. Many of a department's general orders or administrative directives contribute to brand guidelines. Specifying uniforms and their components is an element of branding. Can you wear non-department pins on your uniform? Are officers allowed to wear any headgear they like, grow a beard, wear jewelry, have tattoos that show, or wear purple athletic shoes? These rules are all branding related. Specifications for how vehicles are marked, the colors used, and whether anything other than the name of the department, like a website or tag line, can be displayed are also included.

The following components should be included in a style guide:

1. **Logos.** Does the department have primary and secondary marks, like a badge, a patch, and a word mark? Secondary marks also could cover specialty units or divisions; are they allowed to have their own logos? What is the process for requesting one? Which one should be used in what circumstances?

2. **Size and dimensions.** Guides establish what dimensions should be maintained so the logo is always presented in the right ratio (height versus width). What is the smallest size in which the logo can be reproduced?

3. **Typography.** What fonts are used in what sizes and with what spacing?

4. **Colors.** What color(s) can be used? Is it okay to recolor the logo? Who approves any variations from the established color palette of primary and secondary colors?

5. **Positioning.** Usually there is an offset or clear space that exists around logos to avoid crowding and to make sure the logo has its own identity separate and apart from others. How close can other design elements be placed near your logo? How close can other logos or elements in a design be to the logo? Can the logo be used separate and apart from any wordmark? Can it be combined with other logos?

6. **Usage.** Organizations typically dictate where their logo can and cannot be used. For example, can someone make beer and put the department's logo on the

Figure 10. Brand summary worksheet

WHO are you? (summarize the research here – from interviews, surveys, materials review, etc., what words, phrases and imagery come up the most?)	
WHO do you want to be? **WHAT** are your core values/pillars? (Does the research match your desired brand? If so, you're set. If not, what do you want to be known for?)	
WHAT needs to change? (based on the research, what elements of the department need to change to reflect the brand you want to convey? Even if you have good alignment, there may be areas that could be strengthened.) **WHAT** is your agency's core promise/benefit? **WHAT** is the positioning statement? **WHAT** do you want people to believe/feel/experience when they think about or come into contact with your agency?	**BRAND POSITION STATEMENT STARTER** _____ Police Department provides residents with _____. We do this by _____, _____, and _____.
WHAT is the tag line?	
WHAT imagery will be used to reinforce the brand?	

label? What about on personal belongings, like a tie-dyed t-shirt or across the behind on a pair of work-out pants?

7. **Permissions.** What permissions are needed, internally or externally, for someone to use the department's brand?

Graphic designers know how to put these guides together and what needs to be included. If you are not changing much but have no guidelines in place, the links provided in the sidebar on page 46 give good examples to follow. There also are free and low-cost templates available online to help you create your own guidance. A quick online search will give several options.

Use the form in figure 10 on page 48 to capture summary information. It will provide the content for your strategy.

Branding journey step four. Develop rollout plan

While the new brand will come as a surprise to many people who were not involved in any way in updating it, it's a good idea to make sure those who did participate are aware of the rollout. Doing so acknowledges their help and may give you some allies, especially if the new brand is a major change from what people (employees, other departments, the community, the media, elected officials) have known. If there are only small adjustments, it may be sufficient to introduce it just to your internal audiences.

Whether the changes to your brand are large or small, having specific plans for the rollout can help avoid missteps. You don't want the department's social media accounts or website to sport the new look while department vehicles, uniforms, and signage still show the old one. You need a solid phase-in plan. Be sure to consider all the different applications that may need to be updated:

■ Social media accounts

■ Websites

■ Email signatures

■ Uniforms—for sworn, civilian, recruits, volunteers, and cadets

■ Vehicles

■ Signage

■ Brochures, newsletters, reports

■ PowerPoint templates

■ Stickers and other giveaways, everything from water bottles and pins to t-shirts and coloring books

■ Policies, directives, and general orders

Building the rollout strategy

Simplify the rollout strategy development by focusing on who, what, where, when, why, and how much. From those basics, prepare the announcement plans and materials. Figure 11 beginning on page 50 is a worksheet
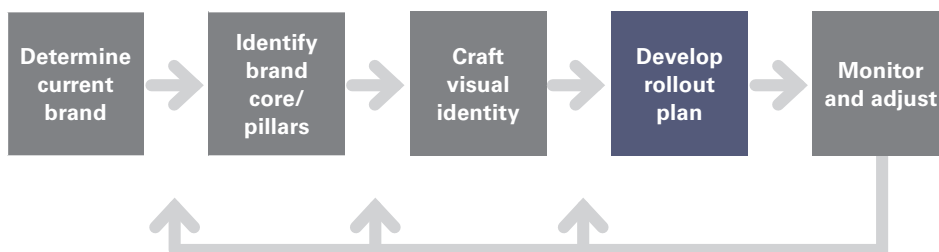
to help guide the plan development. This worksheet can be used for many different communication planning needs. For example, the Chicago Police Department used it to develop a plan to support branding and communication efforts involved in a 2016 gun violence reduction project (see case study in appendix A).

Figure 11. Rollout plan development worksheet

IDENTIFY THE GOAL OF THE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

How do you want the initiative to be perceived? Do you want to affect or change attitudes, behaviors, opinions?

IDENTIFY YOUR KEY AUDIENCES

Whom do you mainly want to influence?

☐ General public / community segments

☐ Elected officials

☐ Stakeholder groups

☐ Employees/internal

☐ Industry partners

DEVELOP YOUR KEY MESSAGES - NO MORE THAN 3 TO 5

What messages are going to resonate most strongly with your key audiences? Keep them short and focused.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

Figure 11. cont'd

IDENTIFY YOUR KEY MESSAGING VEHICLES

What are the best methods to reach your audience?

NEWS MEDIA	SOCIAL MEDIA	DIRECT/ ENGAGEMENT	INTERNAL/ INTRANET	INDUSTRY/ PUBLICATIONS
☐ Newspapers	☐ LinkedIn	☐ Town halls	☐ Intranet	☐ Thought leader-ship publications
☐ TV news stations	☐ Facebook	☐ Community events	☐ Meetings	☐ Civic clubs
☐ Blogs	☐ Twitter	☐ Meetings with civic, neighbor-hood, or religious organizations	☐ Email	☐ Conferences
☐ Radio news	☐ Instagram	☐ Podcasts		
☐ Opinion pieces	☐ YouTube	☐ Webcasts		
☐ Magazines	☐ TikTok	☐ Call center		
	☐ NextDoor	☐ Email		
		☐ Direct mail		
		☐ Reverse 911		
		☐ Text message		
		☐ Schools, colleges, and universities		
		☐ Job fairs		

DEVELOP MATERIALS

Fill in some descriptions of materials you may want to develop to convey your messages to your audiences.

- Thought leadership and community engagement
  - Civic associations, neighborhood groups, etc.

- Printed material
  - Posters, press kits, briefing sheets, postcards, direct mail

- Placed media stories
  - Broadcast, print

- Social media content
  - Blogs or web articles, produced videos, infographics

Figure 11. cont'd

**DEVELOP A MONTHLY SCHEDULE TO RELEASE YOUR MATERIALS
THAT BUILDS IN REPETITION EVERY WEEK**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY

MEASURE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR PLAN/CAMPAIGN

How will you know you are successful? Types of measures to evaluate the effectiveness of your efforts include surveys, interviews, and monitoring social and traditional media for mentions and sentiment.

Once you have the mechanics of your plan, decide who should see the material first, second, third, etc. Ideally, people throughout the agency participated at various stages in the process. We strongly recommend unveiling a new or updated logo internally before showing it externally. Their buy-in and ownership can help make the rollout smooth. Other audiences include city leadership and elected officials; media; community, civic, and business leaders; and then the general public. Focus on key highlights like the following:

- What is changing? Major changes require more explanation than minor changes. Prepare to show and tell.

- Where and when? Highlight where the changes will be seen and talk about the mechanics of the rollout, especially if it requires a phased approach because of costs and logistics.

- Explain why you are making the changes. Change is hard, even when it's needed. Acknowledging this in your messaging may be beneficial. Expect pushback initially and allow people time to get accustomed to the changes.

- How much will it all cost? Account for costs of development as well as implementation. Emphasize areas in which you saved money, like using grants or getting work done pro bono.

The big reveal

The tools you will use to share your new and improved branding are like those the department uses in its everyday communications. In preparation for the internal and external introduction of the rebrand, prepare the materials you will use to support it: news releases, social media posts, videos, remarks, presentations, and new website design. If the changes are significant, consider hosting an unveiling event or a series of smaller "first look" events. Include elected officials early and have plenty of examples of the new look on hand.

Then what?

Launching the rebrand is just the beginning of the brand's public journey. Making sure content aligns with the brand story and department employees reinforce the department's core values will be the ongoing challenge.

The key to reinforcing the department's brand rests with the stories you tell and the interactions people have with members of the agency. Storytelling is among the most powerful of all brand tools because stories spark emotion, provide ways to meaningfully connect, and engage people. And as research suggests, positive interactions with officers have long-lasting positive effects on people's perceptions of them (see, for example, Peyton et. al. 2019).

The work done in the previous steps has helped identify the storytelling touchpoints for the agency. Tell stories that align with and reinforce the organization's core values and pillars. Whatever platform you use to communicate with stakeholders (website, blog, social media, presentations), among the routine announcements about events, tell stories that provide value to the community, reveal the department's priorities, and ultimately help build trust in your brand (your agency).

## Branding journey step five.
Monitor and adjust

Monitoring is part of reputation management, a business process for tracking (and, as appropriate, responding to) what is said about the brand overall—about the department, its people, and its work. It helps provide an overall sense of how the public perceives the organization and the sentiment (positive, negative, or neutral) they express toward it. Monitoring how the public references and describes the department gives you actionable intelligence about what people think, what they want, what they believe, and how they view issues that directly and indirectly involve the department. With this information, you can then decide whether to respond, as well as how, when, and where to do so. Whether someone posted a video of a negative interaction with one of your officers during a traffic stop that has now been shared from their Twitter feed thousands of times or whether you simply want to know how a new program is being received, monitoring gives you necessary insights that inform subsequent decisions.

News outlets, blogs, online forums, and social media accounts will make up the majority of your monitoring. There are a variety of tools available, from paid services to free tools, such as

- **Google Alerts** (https://www.google.com/alerts);

- **Social Mention** (https://socialmention.com/);

- **TweetDeck** (https://tweetdeck.twitter.com/);

- **Boardreader** (https://boardreader.com/).

As well as native searches on individual platforms. Analytics tools offered for free on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram can provide valuable information about how your own posts and stories are performing as well as what reactions they receive.

Make no decisions based on immediate reactions to any modifications you might have made; change is often not well received even when it's warranted and wanted. Initially, monitor comments and pay attention to sentiments people express about the (re)brand itself.
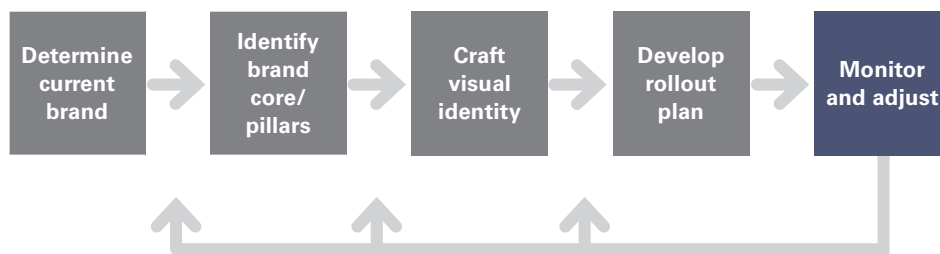
Conclusion

Author and marketing strategist Jay Baer is credited with saying, "Branding is the art of aligning what you want people to think about your company with what people actually do think about your company. And vice versa." (Beverland 2021). Few investments you will make in the development of your organization will pay more dividends than (re)establishing the department's brand strategy and related components. A department's brand is its calling card; it embodies who you are, what you do, and how you do it. Brand encompasses reputation, representation, performance, promise, and identity all rolled into one concept that underscores evaluations of trustworthiness and credibility. It reflects the promise and commitment a department makes to the communities it serves and how the people in those communities view it. Moreover, the brand provides a roadmap for the organization in terms of what is acceptable, what it strives to achieve, and what performance standards employees are expected to follow.

Core values

Professionalism

Pillars

Voice   Public perception

Positive interactions

Cohesiveness

Unique purpose

Appendix A. Case Studies

The following case studies offer examples of branding activities from the Chicago, Seattle, and Milwaukee police departments.

Chicago Police Department

Following is a 2016 case study from the Chicago Police Department (CPD). Note how the CPD used its new data and technology-based crime-fighting strategy to rebrand itself to the community; "Chicago Strategic Decision Support Centers (SDSC)" became a jumping off point for its branding strategy.

In 2016, Chicago saw more than 770 murders after the CPD reduced its engagement in proactive policing (investigative street and traffic stops) amid falling officer morale with respect to anticipated reform efforts following the fatal 2014 police shooting of Laquan McDonald. (Konkol 2016). In 2018, the CPD began operating under a federal consent decree (City of Chicago 2022), and leadership thought the department needed to put together a branding campaign to get officers re-engaged and restore faith in the CPD—among officers and the public—to get crime down.

The department's rebrand included promoting a new crime-fighting strategy that changed the existing patrol model and leveraged data and technology to better respond to crime. Chicago SDSCs were built around predictive policing and gunshot detection technology and allowed police to respond to incidents of gun violence up to three minutes before the first calls to 911. The CPD summarized its crime fighting strategy as follows:

Strategic Decision Support Centers (SDSC) launched in 2017 as a pilot project in several highly volatile police districts. SDSCs combine data from several different sources and technologies, at the police district level, to identify priority crime problems as they are emerging,

develop "missions" for patrol officers, and evaluate missions daily. This provides officers with focused, daily priorities and allows the police district to keep on top of crime issues and modify mission strategies accordingly—and rapidly. CPD adopted and adapted the SDSC concept from the Los Angeles Police Department's LASER initiative, which also integrates technology and predictive analytics, problem-oriented policing, and a strategic focus on preventing community harms.

The policing strategy was a guide for the CPD communications team:

- The CPD developed marketing collateral and held a series of face-to-face public education community meetings around the city as well as backgrounders and press events with media on how the new model would work in an effort to inform and demonstrate the technology to residents, which provided the police department with an opportunity to partner with community validators who could also be used as future media surrogates.

- The CPD worked with the University of Chicago, which served as a technical partner and evaluator of the model. The university also helped with a fundraising campaign that ran parallel to CPD's public education efforts.

- The CPD's communications team put together a strategic plan and a rollout plan to emphasize social media. The plan centered around repetition and the "drip, drip, drip" approach, according to former CPD Chief Communications Officer Anthony Guglielmi. The CPD planned press and social announcements every week about some facet of the strategy's implementation (e.g., the CPD did announcements for

the buildout of the SDSC rooms, announcements for every installation of ShotSpotter sensors, and announcements for the expansion of closed-circuit crime cameras) to build public buy-in.

- Every month, the CPD put out infographics and a Monthly Crime Summary.

- The CPD communications team helped community leaders make connections to editorial writers at the Tribune and the SunTimes to place opinion pieces in the newspapers from the superintendent, mayor, and community leaders to build public support around the new crime strategy and confidence in the department.

- For every major weekend or holiday when the CPD expected high levels of violence, it put together custom tactical plans that reaffirmed the pillars of the strategy and the department's efforts to reduce violence.

- Lastly, a big part of the communications plan was a "pitch list" of top tier media targets: Associated Press, Police Chief magazine, academic journal articles for third-party validation, local and national stories every 90 days for trickle-down effect on the progress of the strategy and reinforcing the brand. Figure A1 is a template for how the communication teams built this multi-tiered communications campaign.

Figure A1. Sample worksheet for Chicago Police Department project on reducing gun violence—Strategic Decision Support Centers

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED GOAL OF THIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN?

What is your ultimate goal? How do you want the initiative to be perceived?

To regain public confidence in the Chicago Police Department's ability to create safer communities by reducing gun violence, the Department will implement a data- and technology-driven crime-fighting strategy that leverages gunshot detection systems that are integrated with crime cameras. About 200 square miles of the city will be covered by the technology and real-time data analytics will be provided by the University of Chicago Crime Lab for independent validation of the model. Twenty-two district-based situation rooms will triage and dispatch units to hot spots to increase response times to active incidents.

We will use a blended communications strategy that focuses on repetition of message and rapid reinforcement of messaging pillars.

- The communications plan will consist of top-of-the-funnel media engagement, social media amplification, and grassroots thought leadership development through civic association and community influencer meetings. We will also use a sentiment engagement tool that measures public confidence ratings to assess the success of our communications efforts and help inform areas where we need to focus community engagement.

- We will develop an internal education plan to position police officers and professional staff to become ambassadors of the new model and help amplify our messaging through face-to-face interactions.

- We will leverage industry and police leadership partnerships to evaluate and comment on the enhanced crime strategy.

Figure A1. cont'd

IDENTIFY PRIMARY AUDIENCES

Whom do you ultimately want to influence?

- ☑ General public / community segments
- ☑ Elected officials
- ☑ Stakeholder groups
- ☑ Employees/internal
- ☑ Industry partners

DEVELOP KEY MESSAGES - NO MORE THAN 3 TO 5

What messages are going to resonate most strongly with your key audiences?

a. MASTER THEME: OUR CITY OUR SAFETY

b. Violence reduction through targeted enforcement

c. Community trust and partnerships are central to the department's work

d. Police accountability and integrity

IDENTIFY PRIMARY MESSAGING VEHICLES

What are the best methods to reach your audience?

NEWS MEDIA	SOCIAL MEDIA	DIRECT/ ENGAGEMENT	INTERNAL/ INTRANET	INDUSTRY/ PUBLICATIONS
☑ Newspapers	☐ LinkedIn	☑ Town halls	☐ Intranet/ SharePoint	☑ Thought leader-ship publications
☑ TV news stations	☑ Facebook	☑ Community events	☑ All hands meetings	☑ Civic clubs
☐ Blogs	☑ Twitter	☐ Meetings with civic, neighbor-hood, or religious organizations	☐ Email	☐ Conferences
☑ Radio news	☐ Instagram	☐ Podcasts		
☑ Opinion pieces	☑ YouTube	☑ Webcasts		
☑ Magazines	☐ TikTok	☐ Call center		
	☐ NextDoor	☐ Email		
		☐ Direct mail		
		☐ Reverse 911		
		☐ Text message		
		☐ Schools, colleges, and universities		
		☐ Job fairs		

Figure A1. cont'd

DEVELOPING MATERIALS

Descriptions of materials you may want to develop to convey your messages to your audiences

- Printed materials
  – Posters, press kits, briefing sheets, postcards, direct mail

- Placed media stories
  – Broadcast, print

- Social media content
  – Blogs or web articles, produced videos, infographics

DEVELOP A MONTHLY SCHEDULE TO RELEASE YOUR MATERIALS THAT BUILDS IN REPETITION EVERY WEEK

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY/ SUNDAY
Week one	Violence reduction	Community trust event	*Integrity*	Violence reduction	*Planning*	Violence reduction
Week two	Community trust event	*Planning*	Violence reduction	*Planning*	Violence reduction	Violence reduction
Week three	Violence reduction	Community trust event	*Integrity*	Violence reduction	*Planning*	Violence reduction
Week four	*Planning*	Violence reduction	Community trust event	Violence reduction	*Planning*	Violence reduction

Figure A1. cont'd

DEVELOP A METHOD TO MEASURE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR PLAN/CAMPAIGN
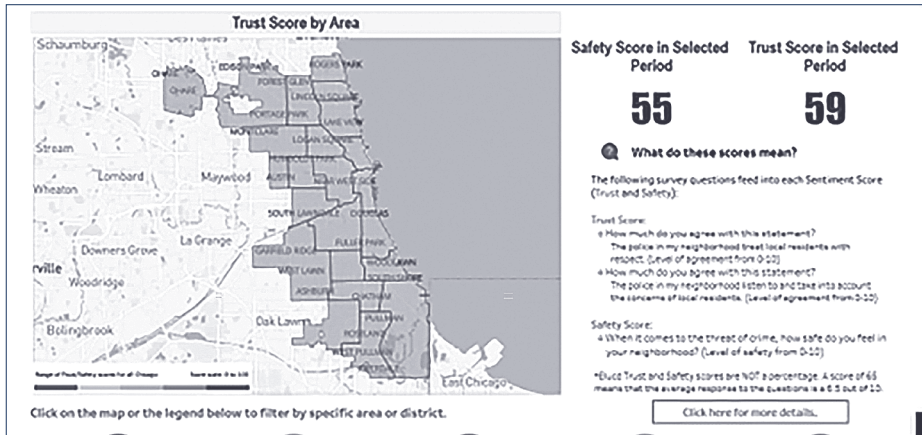
Seattle Police Department

The backstory

In 2012, the City of Seattle and Seattle Police Department (SPD) entered a consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice looking into a pattern and practice of biased policing and use of force. The intervening years brought a change in leadership to both the city and the department in the form of a new mayor and new police chief Kathleen O'Toole, signaling a new era of hope for improved police and community relations.

At the same time, Ford was discontinuing the Crown Victoria sedan, which meant the department needed to select a new vehicle for the SPD fleet. The French blue dry-clean only wool uniforms officers had used since the 1970s were also getting harder and harder for uniform suppliers to stock. The existing SPD logo had a crest that featured industries no longer as meaningful to contemporary Seattle as they had been in the past. All these factors pointed to the right time to overhaul the entire look of the department.

The design process

A committee comprising both civilian and sworn employees embarked on a project to redesign the department logo, patch, uniform, and vehicle paint color and decals.

The committee selected a local design company, with all funding paid for by the Seattle Police Foundation. The new logo and patch design went through many revisions, which were subjected to critical review by both Seattle Police union leaders and department management. The new SPD design featured the City of Seattle logo in the middle. The City logo happened to be in a design refresh process at the same time, which had to be factored into the SPD's design. The final patch also required a complex raised stitch pattern, so the committee reviewed many patch samples from different manufacturers before one passed quality standards.

The new design would be an updated and more professional look for the SPD, but the department knew that it needed much more than a fresh coat of paint to repair previously strained trust with the community, attract the best new recruits, and promote ongoing reform efforts, which included overhauled use of force policies and de-escalation training.

More than a new look

The country was still reeling from the fatal police shootings of Michael Brown in St. Louis, Missouri, and Laquan McDonald in Chicago; the in-custody death of Eric Garner in New York; and growing concerns about the militarization of law enforcement. The SPD needed a strategy to show the community why the new uniforms and cars mattered and that the rebrand was anything but superficial.

The SPD had for years employed dashboard camera technology. But in 2014, Chief O'Toole and Chief Operating Officer Mike Wagers began work to launch a body camera pilot program. The results of the Rialto Experiment, having just been published in November 2014, showed less use of force and fewer complaints against officers when body cameras were on.

Visible body cameras on Seattle Police uniforms were the jewel in the rebrand effort's crown. During a City Hall news conference to unveil the new look, it was renewed commitment to transparency and accountability in the form of body camera technology that stole the show.

"Body cameras will be a game changer, a progressive means to improve public safety, police accountability, transparency, and trust with the community," said Seattle Councilmember Bruce Harrell, chair of the Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Technology Committee.

"I hope what we're seeing is a new day for the Seattle Police Department and a new relationship between the community and the Seattle Police Department," said Mayor Ed Murray, noting the policy, leadership, and use

of force changes made in the past couple of years as part of a cultural shift in the agency. "There was a backlog of changes we need to make."

Transforming intent into action

In the following months, Seattle Police Public Affairs staff bulk redacted video from the body camera pilot and published every recorded encounter to YouTube. While the videos were blurry and lacked color and audio, the videos captured enough detail to show detentions and physical arrests. For the SPD, this was an unprecedented leap forward in police transparency, resulting in national media recognition and an award from the Washington State Coalition for Open Government, historically a critic of the department. A separate policy on rapid release of video in deadly force encounters codified existing practices and further cemented a brand identity built on transparency even in the most difficult of circumstances.

Milwaukee Police Department

The Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) went through two major rebranding cycles in the 2010s. The MPD began the redesign of its website in 2010 with the "Be A Force" campaign, meant as a call to action for people to join the police department as a force for change in the community. It was both a community engagement tool and a recruiting campaign. But with the release of the Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (President's Task Force 2015), it became clear that the warrior-like "Be A Force" images and tag line were no longer in line with the evolving "guardian" messaging law enforcement was encouraged to adopt.

In 2010, in a first for the city, the MPD launched an integrated campaign with the tag line "Be A Force." The pro bono campaign by Cramer-Krasselt/Milwaukee in partnership with MPD was, at the time, a rare example of public-private cooperation to create a branding effort for local law enforcement that invited community

members to get involved in helping make their city a safe place to live and do business. TV, print, out-of-home, radio, and online executions focused on reduced crime during the previous year thanks not only to the MPD but also to the community at large.

Milwaukee Police Department's redesigned website.
Source: Milwaukee Police Department.

The MPD knew sustainable neighborhoods require active involvement from residents in fighting crime. To that end, the MPD brand work in 2010 included a call to action to the community at large. "Be A Force" was an invitation to Milwaukee residents to join the police force in making Milwaukee a safer place to live, work, and play.

Concurrently, taking it one step further, the MPD launched MilwaukeePoliceNews.com. As shown in the illustration, the site allowed the MPD to publish crime news straight from the source. In addition, it gave the department a place to publish crime statistics and other positive stories of police work. Perhaps most important, it offered a far more intuitive user experience than traditional government websites—a key step in continuing to open lines of communication with the community.

By 2018, national coverage of police violence was fostering a growing mistrust of officers. As the years passed, it was clear that the "Be A Force" tag line and the militarized images of the MPD were no longer received as positive messaging. According to Mummolo (2018), "The increasingly visible presence of heavily armed

police units in American communities has stoked widespread concern over the militarization of local law enforcement. Advocates claim militarized policing protects officers and deters violent crime, while critics allege these tactics are targeted at racial minorities and erode trust in law enforcement. . . . [and] seeing militarized police in news reports may diminish police reputation in the mass public."

Key message the MPD adopted as part of its rebranding strategy to focus on its guardian role rather than the force

Source: Milwaukee Police Department

In addition, Mummolo's research found, "The normalization of militarized policing in the United States has raised concerns that a new, heavy-handed policing strategy is being used in similar ways and is eroding public opinion toward law enforcement . . . that citizens react negatively to the appearance of militarized police units in news reports and become less willing to fund police agencies and less supportive of having police patrols in their own neighborhoods. Given the concentration of deployments in communities of color, where trust in law enforcement and government at large is already depressed, the routine use of militarized police tactics by local agencies threatens to increase the historic tensions between marginalized groups."

The MPD's goal was to increase transparency and accessibility, but the visuals were not conducive to community engagement and positive interaction. The word "Force" was no longer a call to the community but had become pejorative. This change was greatly hampering the MPD's efforts to connect with residents in the communities they serve.

The MPD completely rethought and rebuilt the MPD website to showcase the idea that officers are guardians of good. As shown in the illustration, the department made the move from "Be A Force" to "We Are The Guardians."

District by district, residents can use the website to learn exactly how police officers serve their communities. The site tracks crime statistics in real time. It points those in need to valuable resources where they can receive support or guidance and instantly shares news regarding Milwaukee crimes, criminals, and police initiatives. Most important, it now allows residents to get to know the actual officers. Numerous documentary-style videos show how MPD officers go above and beyond the call of duty to serve their communities every day.

For example, with the new, reskinned website, residents can meet Officer Anna Ojdana and hear her story of responding to a dangerous domestic violence call that put both her and an abused spouse in grave danger; Officer Alberto Figueroa and his story of helping save a man threatening to jump off an overpass; Officer Minisha Howard, who took it upon herself to mentor a young girl who was regularly running into issues with the law; and Officer Thomas Kline, who ministers to the homeless through his involvement with the Homeless Outreach Team. Each video shows the kindness, caring, and empathy that officers have for the people and communities they serve.

Appendix B.
Major Cities Chiefs Association Survey

To enhance our understanding of what Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA) agencies are doing to connect, inform, and develop relationships with their communities, all of which is central to the branding discussion, we developed a survey to collect information from personnel in the public information and public affairs functions in departments.

The survey sought a wide range of information about websites, department social media presence, chief's or sheriff's presence on social media, community surveys, reports available to the community, community engagement programs, volunteers, communications plans and strategies, branding initiatives, and information on the public information or public affairs function.

We conducted the survey using Survey Monkey. We sent an email request to all 79 MCCA agencies on October 24, 2019, with a link to the electronic survey. The survey was closed on December 15, 2019. Forty-eight agencies (60 percent) responded to the survey. A summary of the survey results follows.

(Note: The survey results reflect the time period before the global COVID-19 pandemic; the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis during arrest; the officer-involved shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin; and other high-profile cases in which law enforcement faced significant public backlash and scrutiny, specifically surrounding how communities of color are treated by police.)

Agency websites

Websites play an important role as a source of information for the public. A website specifically for a law enforcement agency is a more direct way for the community to access the agency's services than navigating the local government's general site.

The survey found that MCCA agencies use their websites to provide information to the public on a wide range of topics. Table B1 shows the types of information most frequently found on MCCA agency websites. Twenty-five percent of the agencies reported providing on their websites an active list of calls for police service.

Table B1. Information available on law enforcement agency websites

INFORMATION TYPE	% OF AGENCIES
Division/Unit	97.9
Contact	97.9
City/County Crime Statistics	95.8
Employment Opportunities	91.7
Neighborhood Crime Statistics	85.4
Departmental Policies	79.2
Command Staff Biography	72.9
Current Agency News	72.9
Use of Force Statistics	56.3
Open Data Portal	54.1
Public Reports	54.1

Table B2 shows the type of customer services that are offered on the website. A large majority of agencies allow community members to file complaints, report crimes, and compliment employees.

Table B2. Services available on law enforcement agency websites

WEBSITE SERVICES	% OF AGENCIES
File a Complaint	89.6
Report a Crime	81.2
Compliment an Employee	79.2
Submit a Job Application	62.5

Social media

Since about 2010, social media has evolved as a key part of law enforcement efforts to provide information directly to the public about a wide range of issues. It is useful for making the public aware of events that might affect them, (e.g., street closures), providing more detail than might be included in a news report, sharing police/community event notifications, and helping inform the

Table B3. Social media platforms used by law enforcement agencies

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM	% OF AGENCIES
Facebook	100
Twitter	100
Instagram	91.7
YouTube	89.6
NextDoor	72.9
LinkedIn	20.8

community about the positive things the department is doing. Table B3 shows the primary social media platforms that departments use to inform and connect with the public.

Table B4. Social media follower or friend counts for law enforcement agencies

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM	AVERAGE FRIENDS/ FOLLOWERS
Twitter	118,134
Facebook	104,149
YouTube	81,128
Instagram	24,964
LinkedIn	2,468

Slightly more than 10 percent of the agencies report using Flickr, and 8 percent each use Snapchat and Pinterest. Table B4 shows the average numbers of friends and followers for the most commonly used social media platforms. Nine agencies said they had more than 200,000 Twitter followers, with one at 534,000. On Facebook, eight agencies reported having more than 200,000 followers or friends, with 287,000 being the highest number reported.

Fifty-six percent of the agencies reported that their chief or sheriff had personal social media accounts, and 48 percent indicated they posted at least weekly. Almost all of the chiefs and sheriffs with their own social media presence are on Twitter; just five report using both Twitter and Facebook.

Community surveys

Surprisingly, the majority of MCCA agencies do not regularly conduct community surveys. Only 8 percent reported surveying the community on a citywide basis annually. Nineteen percent said they survey the community every two or three years, and 12.5 percent conduct neighborhood surveys. In some cases, the city government conducts satisfaction surveys and includes questions about police service.

Figure B1 shows the type of questions that agencies include in their community surveys. The most frequently asked question is about satisfaction with service, followed closely by satisfaction with officer interaction and concerns about crime. Only 24 percent of the agencies ask about call taker satisfaction, and slightly more than one-third inquire about neighborhood problems.

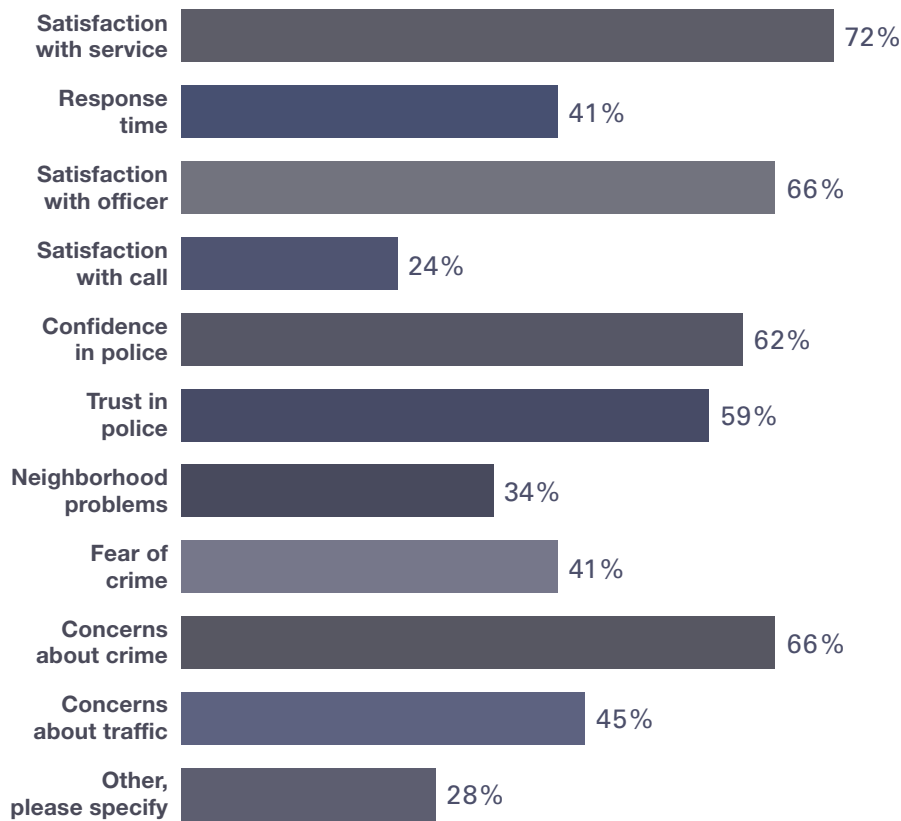**Figure B1.** Community survey questions

Satisfaction with service	72%
Response time	41%
Satisfaction with officer	66%
Satisfaction with call	24%
Confidence in police	62%
Trust in police	59%
Neighborhood problems	34%
Fear of crime	41%
Concerns about crime	66%
Concerns about traffic	45%
Other, please specify	28%

Figure B2. Existence of formal communications strategy or plan

Do you have a formal communication strategy/plan?

Yes	69%
No	29%

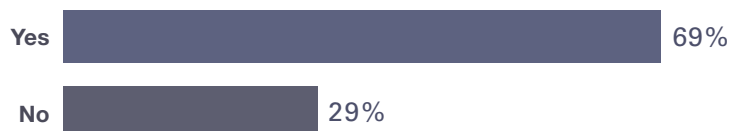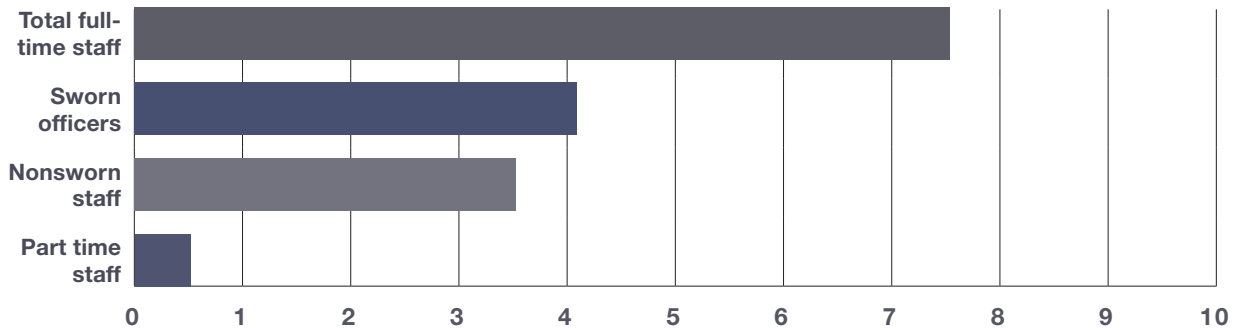**Figure B3.** Public information or public affairs staffing levels

Please indicate the staffing level of your public affairs / information function

Volunteer programs

One way to connect with the community is through volunteer programs. Fifty percent of the responding agencies indicate they sponsor a volunteer program. The number of volunteers ranged from 25 to 600. Volunteers also can serve as ambassadors for the department with their friends and family. They have a perspective of the department through working with officers and other employees that most community members do not have.

Communications strategies and plans

The majority of agencies (69 percent) responding to the survey report that they have a formal communications strategy or plan (see figure B2 on page 67). Several agencies said they were in the process of developing a plan.

Rebranding

MCCA agencies were asked about current (as of December 15, 2019) and recent branding initiatives. One-third of the agencies indicate they are currently involved in a rebranding initiative, and 42 percent have undertaken such an effort in the past five years. One-third of the departments that have been involved in a branding effort in the past five years focused on recruitment, which has been a challenge for many agencies. Recruiting has become more challenging since 2015 because of highly publicized events involving the police. Some departments updated their websites, logos, and apparel. Others focused on community engagement and improving trust and confidence.

Public information and public affairs

Figure B3 shows the average staffing level for the public information and public affairs function for the responding agencies. The average full-time staffing level for responding MCCA agencies is eight employees. Public information staff ranges from two to 30 people.

The public information and public affairs offices provide a variety of services to the department and the community. More than 90 percent of them advise the chief and command staff on critical incident and agency communications strategies, prepare press releases, brief the media, and handle social media posts. Most of the offices respond to all critical incidents, produce department videos, provide graphic design services, maintain website content, write speeches, and develop presentations for command staff with supporting material. Almost half of the public information offices prepare departmental newsletters, and one does an external newsletter as well. Some manage departmental events such as promotion ceremonies.

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Core values

Professionalism

Pillars

Voice   Public perception

Positive interactions

Cohesiveness

Unique purpose

About the Major Cities Chiefs Association

The **Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA)** is a professional association of chief police executives representing the largest cities in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. MCCA membership comprises chiefs and sheriffs of the 67 largest law enforcement agencies in the United States, the 10 largest in Canada, and two in the United Kingdom. They serve 91.4 million people (70 million in the United States, 11.5 million in Canada, and 9.9 million in the United Kingdom) with a sworn workforce of 241,257 (162,425 in the United States, 21,939 in Canada, and 56,893 in the United Kingdom) officers and nonsworn personnel. The MCCA's strategic goals are

- to guide national and international policy that affects public safety and major cities;

- to develop current and future police executive leaders;

- to promote innovation and evidenced-based practices in policing.

To learn more, visit the MCCA online at https://www.majorcitieschiefs.com.

About the COPS Office

The **Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

Rather than simply responding to crime, community policing focuses on preventing it through strategic problem-solving approaches based on collaboration. The COPS Office awards grants to hire community policing officers and support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders, as well as all levels of law enforcement.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has been appropriated more than $20 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing. Other achievements include the following:

- To date, the COPS Office has funded the hiring of approximately 136,000 additional officers by more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies in both small and large jurisdictions.

- More than 800,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office–funded training organizations and the COPS Training Portal.

- Almost 800 agencies have received customized advice and peer-led technical assistance through the COPS Office Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center.

- To date, the COPS Office has distributed more than eight million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs and flash drives.

The COPS Office also sponsors conferences, roundtables, and other forums focused on issues critical to law enforcement. COPS Office information resources, covering a wide range of community policing topics such as school and campus safety, violent crime, and officer safety and wellness, can be downloaded via the COPS Office's home page, https://cops.usdoj.gov.

This guide was prepared by the Major Cities Chiefs Association to help law enforcement agencies understand the relationship of organizational imagery to public perception and develop meaningful and consistent brand identities. It discusses the importance of public trust in the branding of law enforcement agencies in particular and provides step-by-step guidance to help agencies determine whether their existing brands need minor adjustment or major ground-up overhaul.