

Birmingham

2018 INTERIM STATUS REPORT



BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA IS ONE OF SIX PILOT SITES FOR THE NATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR BUILDING Community Trust and Justice (NI), a project designed to improve relationships and increase trust between communities and the criminal justice system, while also advancing public understanding of the issues contributing to those relationships. In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice, the National Initiative is coordinated by the **National Network for Safe Communities at John Jay College of Criminal Justice**, in partnership with the **Justice Collaboratory at Yale Law School**, the **Center for Policing Equity at John Jay College and UCLA**, and the **Urban Institute**.

The National Initiative's work involves trust-building interventions with police departments and communities based on three pillars:

- Enhancing **procedural justice**: the way police interact with the public, and how those interactions shape the public's views of the police, their willingness to obey the law, and their engagement in co-producing public safety in their neighborhoods.
- Reducing the impact of **implicit bias**: the automatic associations individuals make between groups of people and stereotypes about those groups, and the influence it has in policing.
- Fostering **reconciliation**: frank engagements between marginalized communities and law enforcement to address historical tensions, grievances, and misconceptions that contribute to mutual mistrust and misunderstanding and prevent police and communities from working together.

At a Glance: Key highlights for Birmingham, Alabama

Procedural Justice

- All 970 sworn officers who have been members of BPD over the span of the project have received procedural justice training ("PJ1" and "PJ2"). New recruits continue to receive the training.

Implicit Bias

- All 970 BPD officers have also received implicit bias training ("PJ3"). New recruits continue to receive the training.
- On September 9, 2017, BPD launched a community-facing implicit bias training, known as "PJ3—Community". In 2018, they rolled out a youth-facing version paired with youth listening sessions.

Reconciliation

- BPD has worked closely with a Community Reconciliation Liaison who has played an instrumental role in recent reconciliation activities brought together community members and advocacy groups together for listening sessions with BPD leadership.
- BPD has collaborated with the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and other partners to create a full-day, interactive training for recruits about Birmingham's civil rights history and BPD's role in it.

Birmingham was selected as a pilot site for its demonstrated willingness and capacity to engage in the National Initiative's research, intervention, and evaluation process, as well as its jurisdiction size and demographic composition. The National Initiative partners with public safety officials to develop, implement, and assess each intervention, which is tailored to the needs of the Birmingham community. The successes and lessons learned in Birmingham and each pilot site will set the city on a trajectory beyond the project's formal end date and help to build a base of knowledge, policy, and practice to transform communities everywhere.

This status report comes as Birmingham nears completion of the fourth and final year of work with the National Initiative. Moving forward, the Birmingham Police Department will take steps to institutionalize each component of the NI to ensure sustainability and longevity.

Enhancing Procedural Justice

The Justice Collaboratory at Yale Law School and the Chicago Police Department created a comprehensive curriculum on procedural justice (PJ) that was adapted by the National Initiative and the Birmingham Police Department (BPD) to address Birmingham's unique history and police practices. Research demonstrates that procedural justice can increase public willingness to obey and cooperate with the police ("police legitimacy") and ultimately lead to stronger police-community relationships, increased safety, and reduced crime.

The PJ curriculum includes several modules that do the following:

- Define the concept of legitimacy and highlight ways to increase police legitimacy;
- Explain procedural justice and how it is necessary for advancing public safety goals;
- Review the present-day relationship between the police and the community; and
- Help BPD officers understand the role that history has played—from the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 through the Civil Rights Movement—in hindering legitimacy in some communities.

It also features modules that thoroughly explore the real-life application of procedurally just policing principles, thus helping officers to recognize when, where, and how those principles should be applied.

All 970 sworn officers on the force over the life of the project have undergone both 8-hour trainings on the theory and framework of procedural justice ("PJ1") as well as operational techniques on how to apply this framework in practice ("PJ2").

When the City of Birmingham began the search for a new Chief of Police in 2018, criteria included orientation towards NI principles, and Chief Patrick D.

Smith was selected in part for his commitment to PJ and his training experience. The NI is working closely with Chief Smith and the City to continue integrating the PJ curriculum into the academy and throughout the department.

In February 2019, representatives from BPB will attend a Procedural Justice Train the Trainer in Stockton, CA as they plan to sustain these efforts beyond the formal conclusion of the project.

Reducing Implicit Bias

As part of the National Initiative's work to address and reduce implicit bias, Birmingham police trainers worked with NI staff to adapt the implicit bias training developed by the Center for Policing Equity. This training works to ensure that law enforcement is aware of implicit biases Americans hold and how they form, and the circumstances under which implicit biases are most likely to manifest in ways that jeopardize good judgment and safety. With this information in hand, officers and departments are far better equipped to work through police training, policy, and practice to identify and mitigate the scenarios in which implicit bias has significant negative impacts.

Birmingham was the third NI site to deliver implicit bias training ("PJ3") to its officers. All 970 of BPD's sworn officers have undergone the 8-hour training on implicit bias, and all new recruits continue to be cycled through.

In 2017, BPD launched a community-facing implicit bias training ("PJ3— Community") co-facilitated by police and members of the public; it provides a crucial forum for police and members of communities with low levels of confidence in the police to discuss issues of legitimacy, trust, bias, and history with greater nuance and common ground.

In 2018, BPD launched a youth-facing version of PJ3-Community, fusing implicit bias training with youth listening sessions during a four-week pilot program. Feedback from PJ3-Community trainers and other stakeholders helped the NI to identify the need for a community member to formally assist with the planning and facilitation of reconciliation activities, as described in the next section, “Fostering Reconciliation and Building Trust”.

Fostering Reconciliation and Building Trust

In an effort to encourage open communication between community members and the police, acknowledge historical harms, and build trust in neighborhoods where it has been sorely lacking for decades, the BPD has worked with the NI to design and begin implementing a robust reconciliation framework that prioritizes active listening and collaborative public safety.

Birmingham began its on-the-ground reconciliation work in August 2016 through facilitated meetings (“listening sessions”) between then-Chief A.C. Roper and influential leaders from a variety of communities with histories of tension with the police, including the African American, youth, and LGBTQIA communities.

These sessions began with BPD representatives acknowledging historical harm on behalf of the department—a legacy that is very rarely considered by police seeking to build trust. This acknowledgment and rejection of the police role in America’s legacy of government-sponsored racial oppression is a powerful statement intended to form common ground with community members who are asked to contribute their experiences, time, and effort to the process.

In an effort to explore a more intensive process of police-community listening, in 2016 the National Initiative partnered with [Sustainable Equity, LLC](#) to support the development of public safety circles premised on their “Welcome Table” model. The model, which provides a small group of community members and police officers with a safe space for honest, open, and compassionate narrative sharing, included 18 participants who either reside or police on Birmingham’s East and West sides. The resulting group, Birmingham Equally United, has met weekly for the last two years and has been an important model for sustained reconciliation between police

and communities. This group also played an instrumental role in coordinating and delivering the pilot training to new recruits at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (see below).

To further the reach and impact of its listening sessions, BPD and the NI team brought on a Community Reconciliation Liaison in 2018. The Community Liaison, T. Marie King, has organized and facilitated 8 different listening sessions with a number of key community stakeholders. In particular, the NI has supported the BPD meet with ‘Community Public Safety Stakeholder’ to foster more information sharing and collaboration between community agencies who address public safety and the police department. The NI also recognizes that members of the Hispanic community have unique public safety challenges and high levels of mistrust, so Ms. King has facilitated two listening sessions with the HICCA group. Lastly, Chief Smith has prioritized building relationships with local youth and recently participated in a youth listening session where young people were invited to share their hopes for the future of police-community relations in Birmingham.

As a result of their work on the National Initiative, the BPD strengthened its partnerships with the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI) and Sustainable Equity and collaborated with them on the development of a training for new recruits. The full-day training module launched on November 6th, 2018. Through a guided tour of the museum and facilitated conversations, it taught recruits about the department’s role in civil rights history and how that contributes to police-community relations in the present. The new recruits gave very positive feedback about the training, many of them indicating that it helped them better understand the present day tensions between police and communities.

To create more alignment between the department and the Mayor’s Office of Community Engagement, Chief Smith has appointed Captain Janice Blackwell to oversee all community engagement efforts in the department. The NI has been a part of a productive relationship between BPD and the Office of Community Engagement and continues to identify other opportunities where this partnership can be strengthened.

Reconciliation Guiding Policy Change

Over time, the lessons learned from community narratives shared throughout these sessions are being converted into changes in policy and practice that build community trust. As a result of the initial listening sessions, some policy changes are already underway— from departmental policy directing officers to use community members' preferred pronouns to changes designed to avoid triggering the trauma of domestic violence survivors during investigations.

These efforts also contribute to a larger process of collaborative police-community policy review. Using an analysis by the Center for Policing Equity and Yale Law School's "Model Policies for Procedurally Just Policing," BPD command staff have been carefully considering dozens of departmental policies for revision—some of which get to the very heart of the most pressing issues in policing, including a commitment to "de-prioritize the number of investigatory stops and low-level arrests made by officers and prioritize community policing by including

measures of community policing in performance in assessments."

Evaluating Progress

In order to assess whether the National Initiative is affecting community member perceptions of and attitudes towards crime and police, the Urban Institute has been surveying residents in Birmingham neighborhoods that have a high incidence of crime.

Their latest round of community surveys will be a follow-up from the baseline survey they conducted in Fall 2015, during which residents expressed support for obeying the law and willingness to partner with police to solve crime, but only 29% said that they trust the police.

The Urban Institute completed its second round of surveys in September 2017. Data from those surveys will feed into Urban's final report, which will be a comprehensive assessment of the implementation and impact of the NI and broader trust-building work.

Looking to the Future

The National Initiative commends the City of Birmingham and the Birmingham Police Department for their commitment to a new way of doing business. This commitment has been sustained through transitions in City and BPD leadership and essential to the significant progress detailed in this status report.

Over the remainder of the project, the National Initiative will continue the institutionalization of its curricula, facilitate trust-building efforts through listening sessions, document the benefits of and best practices for the Community Liaison model, measure the impact of its interventions, and continue to develop local partnerships to sustain and institutionalize this collaborative effort.