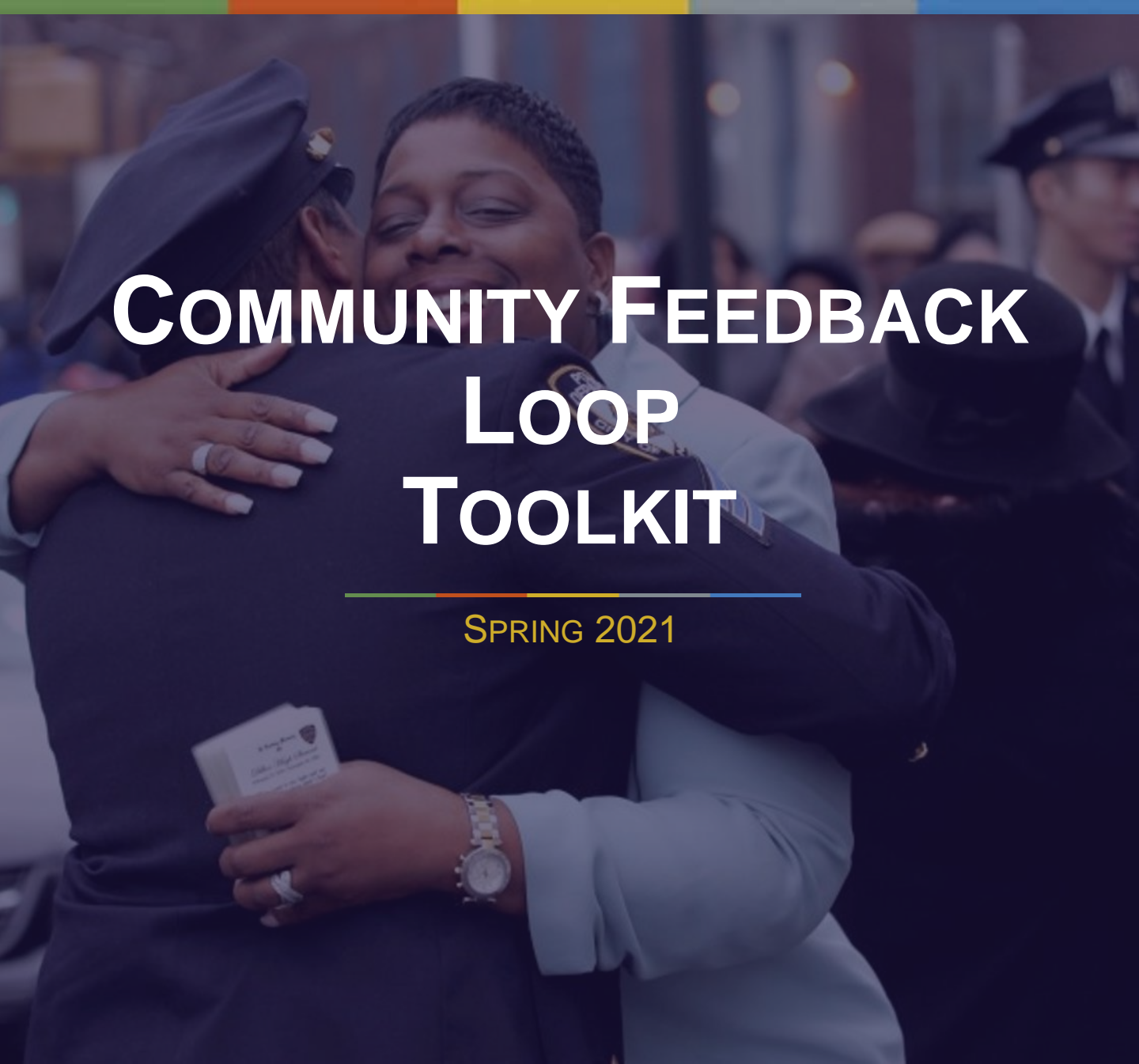# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK LOOP TOOLKIT

SPRING 2021

INTRODUCTION

The 'Community Feedback Loop Program' provided by Police2Peace enables police departments and communities to have open communications between one another using a unique, especially branded website.

There is a growing body of research on the public's perceptions of fairness in the criminal justice system and policing in particular.

This research also shows that people's perceptions of the quality of police-citizen encounters were less about the outcome and more about whether they felt treated in a fair way by the officer or the system. This suggests that feelings about fairness are vital for building trust and increasing community engagement.

This Community Feedback Loop Toolkit will help facilitate the following outcomes for police departments and communities:

- Giving citizens the opportunity to tell their side of a story directly to police leadership
- Conveying the message that the department is sincerely trying to consider the needs of the citizens whom they are communicating with
- Collects feedback from community members and delivers that feedback directly to the chief or department designate
- Allows the department to have an ongoing, bi-directional way to interact with their community which allows for continuous improvement of service on the part of the department

When you desire to set up a public feedback mechanism for your department and community, there are several questions to ask yourself beforehand which will shape the program and impact your ultimate results.

Here are questions to ask yourself as you begin this stage of the process:

1. **What are the existing channels of communication you have with your community?**
   a. What are they?
   b. What do you like about them?
   c. What would you change or improve about them?

2. **What are your program objectives?**
   a. Greater community engagement
   b. Creating new channels of communication
   c. Demonstrating an effort to work toward hearing the community's side of their stories
   d. Enhancing community connections in advance of future problems

3. **What success metrics are essential to you?**
   a. Number of citizens participating
   b. Instances where use of the feedback loop avoided problems
   c. Positive feedback received from citizens about officers

4. **What stakeholders will your program be important to?**
   a. Activist community
   b. Faith community
   c. Civic groups
   d. Business community
   e. BIPOP Community
   f. Police department
   g. Sheriff's department
   h. Other_____

5. **How long will your program run for?**
   a. 3 month
   b. 6 months
   c. 12 months
   d. Other_____

6. **What initiatives would you like to include in your program?**
   Later on, you will have the opportunity to complete a worksheet where you list them

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Improving the state of police-citizen encounters is a complex problem for any community. Satisfaction with the police, which in some communities may generally be high, is uneven at best. Satisfaction with the police varies by demographics, amount of neighborhood crime, and prior experiences. Understanding why some citizens hold negative views is an important step in building positive community engagement for any department.

How important is fair treatment?

Although community members' views can seem unable to be changed, departments should appreciate that treating citizens with respect and fairness during each and every encounter can help establish, build and foster community support for police.

What are the key drivers of successful encounters?

When citizens form opinions of the police based on interactions, they tend to remember the process of the encounter more than the outcome. Impressions of these encounters are influenced by the demeanor as well as the actions of the officers. Citizens generally pay close attention to the neutrality of the decision making that occurred, the respectful and polite interpersonal interaction and when opportunity for feedback or explanation are given to them. Although policing is local, citizens increasingly form their opinions of the police based on secondhand reports from encounters that may be hundreds or even thousands of miles away. For these reasons, a community based feedback loop is essential for maintaining good relations between a department and citizens.

How will citizens be better served by a feedback loop?

Not only are citizen impressions of the police uneven, the mechanisms for feedback with and from the community are highly uneven. Social media may cause a routine incident to become incendiary because of posts and reposts before any police response has been given. This results in the inability for a department to address an issue before it spirals in the spirals media and public consciousness. In these cases, this may have been avoided if a department is able to respond to an incident, hear the community member's side of the story and take actions to address the grievance or situation one-on-one with the citizen.

What does the Community Feedback Loop program offer?

Because the first step in building good relations with the community is understanding and responding to the needs and expectations of people across a broad range of encounters, what is needed is an instantaneous way for citizens to communicate directly with police leadership, and which gives the police the opportunity to respond.

PRE-CHECK LIST

Planning Phase

Week 1- 2

- ❑ Police2Peace aids in scheduling introductory calls with department and community leaders
- ❑ Introductory calls occur with police command staff and law enforcement
- ❑ Introductory calls occur with elected officials

Week 3

- ❑ Stakeholder support is assessed
- ❑ Decision is made for go-ahead based on level of stakeholder support
- ❑ Final date and time for the program commencement are determined
- ❑ Final objectives are set, including other things to be included, such as a live announcement events, media coverage, etc.

Week 4

- ❑ Police2Peace develops materials to describe the program in a one page proposal
- ❑ Program proposal is circulated among stakeholder groups, police, etc.
- ❑ Police2Peace and community leaders agree on method of promotion–online, printed flyers, social media
- ❑ Police2Peace prints flyers and develops social media posts
- ❑ Start date for program promotion is determined by community leaders
- ❑ Police2Peace delivers flyers and/or and begins social media posts on agreed date

PROGRAM PLANNING MATERIALS

Program Setup: **2-4 weeks before the program begins:**

- ❑ Meet with key stakeholders to discuss the program
- ❑ Finalize program objectives
- ❑ Identify operations points of contact
- ❑ Determine the timeline for the program
- ❑ Consider the geographical footprint desired for the program, such as only city-wide, or city and county
- ❑ Consider the types of feedback categories the community and department may wish to focus on
- ❑ Consider anyone else/any other groups who you have not thought of who need to be made aware of your plans, who need to support it, and who need to participate

Notes:

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PROGRAM ROLL OUT

Once the program planning is underway and key dates and geographical footprints are determined, it is time for the development of the actual program. Here are examples of program particulars for a 3-month Community Feedback Loop Program:

Month 2

- Provide department or city logos or artwork to be used with the app to Police2Peace

- Determine who and how many department designates will be in the feedback loop chain

- Schedule an introductory call with invited stakeholders to preview the app together

- Agree with stakeholders on the look and feel of the app and that its ready to be deployed

- Draft announcements of the Community Feedback Loop program in the form of press releases, social media posts and website articles

- Schedule the virtual announcement or live event to occur about 2 to 3days prior to the rollout

- Hold the virtual announcement or live event to announce the Community Feedback Loop event

- Confirm key community group participation in promoting the program

- Confirm police department and/or sheriff's department participation in the program

Month 3

- Confirm stakeholders are promoting the use of the program to their communities

- Designate community members to post stories about the use of the program and how it impacted them

- Organize community groups to speak about the value of using the app for better police community relations

- Distribute printed flyers about the program and the app to stakeholder groups

- Begin the use of the Community Feedback Loop

Program Completion

- Post videos, photos and stories on city, department and other community group websites and social media about the program and its effect on the community

- Consider performing a survey of the community, police department and other stakeholder groups to gauge their feelings about the program and one another

Engaging Stakeholders

The following steps will help build engagement for your program:

- Inform community stakeholders and key influencers in your city. Invite them to review the program proposal with their supporters prior to rolling out.

- Identify community influencers with the help of key stakeholders and personally invite them to review the program proposal.

- Generate excitement with a broad announcement about the program.

- Circulate an official invitation to the program with a link to a dedicated website or Facebook page.

- Hold informational sessions to discuss benefits of the program and the basics of greater community engagement within the community.

- Invite key stakeholders to the program and prepare for their participation.

THE COMMUNITY FEEDBACK LOOP PROGRAM

Creating Buy-in

We crafted a set of emails and graphics you can use with your community in order to promote engagement for your Community Feedback Loop Program.

- **The Program Awareness Email:** Make your organization and community members aware of the upcoming program. It is just for awareness, and therefore, shouldn't contain a URL to your program's event website.

- **The Community Program Participation Email:** Entice and excite participation. This email should be sent to community leaders, stakeholders you identify as potential influencers

- **The Department Program Participation Email:** Create excitement among police department staff and entice them to support the program

- **The Program Participation Reminder Email 1 and Email 2:**
Urge last minute participation to use the app. When you are crafting your message, focus on what outcomes are most important each type of participant to experience.

How to inspire community members:

- **Inspire!** Explain benefits of Community Feedback Loop

- **Why?** Explain event and program objectives

- **Who?** Key stakeholders and community influencers

- **Goals?** Transparent & clear objectives

How to inspire police department staff:

- **Inspire!** Explain advantages of community engagement

- **Why?** Explain program objectives

- **How?** Confirm the program doesn't diminish any of the work already being done to engage the community

- **Goals?** Transparent & clear objectives

Additional benefits for both departments and communities

Interaction among many groups of people
Community Feedback Loop helps create better community engagement giving officers the opportunity to strike up conversations with community members during encounters. Officers are given ample opportunity to interact with a variety of different types of community members, civic leaders and stakeholders which encourages thinking in new ways and broadening horizons.

Learning for the future
The Community Feedback Loop Program reinforces community policing using a new framework of respect, neutrality, trustworthiness and transparency helping foster the ideal that police are part of the community and the community is part of the police.

Feedback
The Community Feedback Loop Program fosters a feedback culture, where community members and officers are asked for their views on a variety of issues. This helps stakeholders become more receptive and trusting of feedback, and better able to accept it and apply it.

CONCLUSION

The 'Community Feedback Loop Program' does not end at the close of the program. To maintain healthy community-policing engagement, community leaders need to continue to use tools at your disposal to stimulate engagement among stakeholder groups and continuing buy-in. In addition, think of ways you can stimulate department and community-wide excitement about the program and the benefits of direct feedback between community members and police leadership. Emails, newsletters, videos and testimonials are all good ways to maintain excitement.

You can even follow on the Community Feedback Loop Program with these programs to continually generate buy-in, such as:

- Peace Officer Program
- Police-Community/Youth Dialogues
- Walk With Us Community Unity
- 7 Simple Steps for Positive Policing

These programs may come in handy when creating a Community Feedback Loop Program for your community.

Begin developing yours today!

You now have the tools, tips and worksheets to consider developing your own Community Feedback Loop Program using Police2Peace.

If you have any questions about starting a Community Feedback Loop Program using Police2Peace, or enriching your existing program, feel free to visit police2peace.org or give us a call at 928.852.4240.

Engage your community today with Police2Peace.

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This toolkit was made possible by the generous support of Rotary Club of Portland.

POLICE 2 PEACE

Police2Peace is a national, nonpartisan nonprofit organization that is operationalizing a framework of community policing rooted in the idea of police officers becoming peace officers. Police2Peace's mission is to be a trusted source of ideas, strategies, programs and policies for positive change in policing for departments, municipalities, the federal government and civil society. As a solutions-driven organization, Police2Peace brings expertise to departments that are redefining, reimagining and advancing policing in America for the purposes of cultural, procedural and operational change and departmental alignment. Police2Peace is a U.S. domestic nonprofit corporation having a 501 (c)(3) status with the IRS.

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