Five Recommendations for Evaluating Seattle's New Police Oversight System

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Seattle Office of City Auditor

Five Recommendations for Evaluating Seattle's New Police Oversight System

Report Highlights

Background

Ordinance 125315, adopted on June 1, 2017, established a new police oversight structure for the City of Seattle. Seattle City Councilmember Tim Burgess asked our office to provide information to the City Council about the issues involved in evaluating the new police oversight system over time.

Recommendations

Our research brief offers five recommendations for evaluating the functioning of Seattle's new police oversight system:

1. It is important to evaluate how the police oversight system functions to ensure that it is effective.
2. The evaluation must be an appropriate fit for the Seattle context and community.
3. Shared goals among the police oversight entities as well as protocols, expectations, and metrics should be developed in advance of a system evaluation.
4. To the extent possible, the system evaluation should use tools and frameworks for assessing system functioning that are grounded in research.
5. The timing of a periodic system evaluation should balance the need to ensure that the system is off to a good start without overly burdening the police oversight entities.

INTRODUCTION

The Office of City Auditor prepared this Research Brief at the request of Seattle City Councilmember Tim Burgess in April 2017. The Research Brief was prepared before Seattle's adoption of police accountability system legislation and was intended to inform the City Council about the issues involved in evaluating the police accountability system over time. To avoid confusion, Figure 1 has been updated to reflect certain provisions contained in the final ordinance signed by the Mayor on June 1, 2017.[1]

Seattle's new police accountability system is complex, and no comparable model exists

The City of Seattle (City) is establishing a new system for civilian oversight of the Seattle Police Department (SPD) comprised of three entities that have interconnected duties and reporting structures:

- **Office of Police Accountability** (OPA), which will continue to handle complaints of misconduct;

- **Office of the Inspector General for Public Safety** (OIG), which will provide systemic oversight of the management, practices, and policies of SPD and OPA; and

- **Community Police Commission** (CPC), which will provide community input to ensure that police services are delivered in a lawful and nondiscriminatory manner and that those services and the accountability system are aligned with community values and expectations.

Seattle's proposed new police oversight system is complex, in that it has these three distinct entities, and no comparable model exists. While this innovative new model has many strengths, it will be a challenge to ensure that the interrelated entities function efficiently and effectively and can be sustained over time, while also ensuring that each oversight entity maintains its independence. Additional challenges to effective system functioning will likely occur and when there are changes in political leadership, staffing in the entities, in collective bargaining agreements, and in SPD management.

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[1] See Ordinance 125315 https://seattle.legistar.com/ViewReport.ashx?M=R&N=Master&GID=393&ID=3041612&GUID=189886AB-6C46-438A-AB56-DA45AE4FCD7B&Extra=WithText&Title=Legislation+Details+(With+Text)

Periodic evaluation of the police oversight system can foster continuous improvement

A periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of the overall system would be helpful for ensuring that the three entities are working well together and are coordinating and communicating effectively with each other and with City and community leaders, SPD, and the public. It would also help determine whether elected officials are providing the appropriate oversight to ensure follow through on implementation of system recommendations. However, care will need to be taken to ensure that the evaluation does not become a means to hinder the work of the oversight entities or assign blame. Our recommendations encourage the City to approach this system evaluation in a manner that fosters continuous improvement and promotes empowerment among the entities and the community they serve. Further, in accordance with principles of effective evaluation, any evaluation of Seattle's new police oversight system should be rigorous, reflective of the community, and adequately resourced. Finally, we caution that the question of who should perform an evaluation of Seattle's new police oversight system will require very careful consideration by the City.

Five recommendations for an evaluation of the police oversight system

This Research Brief offers five recommendations for evaluating the functioning of Seattle's new police oversight system:

1. It is important to evaluate the <u>overall system functioning</u> to ensure that the new police oversight system is effective.

2. The evaluation must be an appropriate fit for the Seattle context and community.

3. Shared goals among the entities as well as protocols, expectations, and metrics should be developed in advance of a system evaluation.

4. To the extent possible, the system evaluation should use tools and frameworks for assessing system functioning that are grounded in research.

5. The timing of a periodic system evaluation should balance the need to ensure that the system is off to a good start without overly burdening the entities.

RATIONALE FOR EVALUATION

Civilian oversight of policing in Seattle can help the City ensure that it has a high-functioning police department that practices constitutional, respectful and effective policing conducive to the public good. However, to achieve these ends, the civilian oversight system itself must be high-functioning. The entities that comprise the police oversight system must have sufficient authority, resources, and independence; and the system itself must operate in a way that is transparent, coordinated, and engendering of public trust.

The City of Seattle is establishing a new three-pronged system for civilian oversight of SPD. The City will soon be passing legislation to create a comprehensive, independent, and sustained approach to civilian oversight of SPD because "the police are granted extraordinary power to maintain the public peace…Public trust in the appropriate use of these powers is bolstered by having a police oversight system that reflects community input and values."[2]

Seattle's proposed new police oversight system is complex in ways that are different from other accountability systems. Seattle's model is "charting new territory" in police oversight, and no comparable model yet exists. (Walker, 2017) The proposed system will include three entities that have interconnected duties and reporting structures. There are interdependencies among each of the entities, yet each entity must retain its independence. Further, each entity and the overall system have connections and responsibilities associated with SPD as well as responsibilities for communicating with elected officials and the public, and SPD and elected officials have responsibilities they must fulfill in order for the intended reforms to be successfully implemented.

Figure 1 below provides a summary of each entity, and has been updated to reflect provisions in the adopted ordinance. Given the detail and complexity of the proposed oversight system, the items presented below as 'duties' and 'structure/relationships' are a subset, not a comprehensive list.

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[2]See Ordinance 125315 https://seattle.legistar.com/ViewReport.ashx?M=R&N=Master&GID=393&ID=3041612&GUID=189886AB-6C46-438A-AB56-DA45AE4FCD7B&Extra=WithText&Title=Legislation+Details+(With+Text)

Figure 1: Structure of Seattle's proposed new police accountability system

Seattle Police Oversight Entity	Duties include:	Structure/Relationships include:
Office of Police Accountability (OPA)	• Handle complaints of misconduct. • Provide oversight, official findings, and recommendations concerning police accountability at SPD. • Help ensure the actions of SPD employees are constitutional; improve SPD compliance with federal, state, local laws, and with City and SPD policies; and promote respectful and effective policing that is conducive to the public good.	• OPA Director is appointed by Mayor and confirmed by City Council; CPC will co-chair the search committee and also consult on reconfirmations. • OPA will provide input to the OIG regarding systemic problems in SPD policies, training, supervision, and management identified during OPA's investigations. • OPA is expected to routinely seek and share information with CPC and OIG that would improve SPD or the accountability system.
Office of the Inspector General (OIG)	• Provide systemic civilian oversight of the management, practices, and policies of SPD and OPA. • Provide an independent perspective on the efficacy of the policies, procedures, and practices of SPD, OPA, and related City departments and agencies. • Review of OPA investigations to ensure objective and thorough and can order additional investigation. • Audit all OPA operations, including complaint handling to ensure in compliance with OPA Manual. • Ensure ongoing fidelity to organizational reforms implemented pursuant to the Consent Decree to ensure constitutional, accountable, effective, and respectful policing. • Review evidence-based research and successful police practices in other jurisdictions and make recommendations based on such reviews.	• Inspector General is appointed by City Council committee and confirmed by City Council; CPC will co-chair the search committee and also consult on reconfirmations. • OIG will obtain information about community perspectives and concerns germane to OIG's oversight responsibilities (collaboration with CPC expected). • OIG is expected to routinely seek and share information with CPC and OPA that would improve SPD or the accountability system. • OIG will create its workplan independently, but will either include workplan recommendations from OPA and CPC or explain which such recommendations were not incorporated in the OIG workplan and the reasons.
Community Police Commission (CPC)	• Provide input to ensure that police services are delivered in a lawful and nondiscriminatory manner	• The Executive Director of the CPC is appointed by the CPC and the initial appointment is confirmed by the City Council.

and are aligned with community values and expectations. • Review and provide input to OPA, OIG, SPD, and other City departments and agencies, including the Mayor, City Council, and City Attorney on the police accountability system and SPD policies and practices of significance to the public. • Engage in community outreach to obtain the perspectives of community members and SPD employees on police-community relations, SPD policies and practices, the police accountability system, and other matters. • Identify and advocate for reforms to State laws that will enhance public trust and confidence in policing and the criminal justice system. • Convene an annual meeting to receive public comments and to formally report to the community on the overall performance of the police accountability system, including providing an update on the implementation status of any previously recommended improvements.	• CPC will consist of 21 Commissioners: 7 each selected by the Mayor, by the City Council, and by the CPC. CPC appointments include a public defense and civil liberties law representative, and two police labor union representatives. • The CPC is self-governing and functionally independent.

Source: Office of City Auditor and Judge Anne Levinson (ret.) review of Ordinance 125315

It will be a challenge to ensure that a system that is this interrelated will function efficiently and effectively and can be sustained over time. Additional challenges to effective system functioning will likely occur when there are changes in political leadership, staffing in the entities, in collective bargaining agreements, and in SPD management. A periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of the overall system could be helpful for ensuring that the three entities are working well together and are coordinating and communicating effectively with each other and with City and community leaders, SPD, and the public and whether elected officials are providing appropriate oversight necessary to ensure follow through on implementation of system recommendations.

An innovative complicated system of checks and balances, such as the system that Seattle is now creating, will inherently have points of friction. For example, there could be differing perspectives on the

threshold at which issues might be considered "systemic" or various ideas about how best to incorporate community input. Moreover, with any new system, there will inevitably be some faltering. Therefore, care will need to be taken to ensure that the evaluation does not become a means to unfairly hinder the work of the oversight entities or assign blame. It will be important for the evaluators to have a comprehensive understanding of the vision, goals and expectations underlying the requirements of the authorizing ordinance so that the evaluation can assess whether elected officials have ensured promises made to the community in adoption of the authorizing ordinance have been fulfilled. Our recommendations encourage the City to approach this system evaluation in a manner that fosters continuous improvement and promotes empowerment among the entities and the community they serve. A periodic assessment will allow the City to catch issues and challenges that arise, gathering feedback from those implementing and managing the entities, so that the oversight system can leverage the strengths that each entity brings to improving public safety.

Further, it is important to note that, in accordance with principles of effective evaluation any evaluation of Seattle's new police oversight system should be rigorous, reflective of the community, and adequately resourced. The five recommendations presented in the next section will help ensure that the evaluation will follow these three principles.

Rigorous	• An effective evaluation is informed by research, and it follows scientific methods. Our recommendations below include the use of an established evaluation framework and scientifically validated tools.
Reflective of the community	• An effective evaluation reflects community context and incorporates community input. Our recommendations below include reliable tools for self-evaluation and practices for gathering and incorporating community input.
Adequately **R**esourced	• An effective evaluation is not cheap. Our recommendations below would require sufficient funding for planning and coordination, staff, consultants, data-gathering activities, and report-writing.

Source: Office of City Auditor literature review

Finally, the question of who should perform an evaluation of Seattle's new police oversight system will require very careful consideration by the City. Unfortunately, the police accountability professionals with whom we spoke offered no ready examples of analogous evaluations, nor any clear roadmaps for how to proceed with the undertaking. And the research on measures and outcomes for police oversight systems is nascent.

The lack of ready roadmaps for how to proceed with an evaluation of the police oversight system makes the decision about who should do the evaluation increasingly important and complicated. Who evaluates the police oversight system could greatly affect how the evaluation is received and acted upon. If an evaluator from outside the system performs the evaluation, would the entities and SPD be trusting enough to participate fully and meaningfully? Would an outside evaluator further complicate the already tangled set of interdependencies among the entities and SPD? If the evaluation is vested in one of the entities, might it disrupt the checks and balances of the system? Might it privilege that entity over the other two? Under either scenario (i.e., if the evaluation is performed by an outsider or by one of the entities), the legitimacy of the evaluation and its findings could be negatively impacted.

Some strategies that might help address issues of buy-in and legitimacy of the evaluation are included in our recommendations below. For example, an empowerment evaluation framework (see recommendation #2 below) would actively include representatives from each of the entities and SPD in the evaluation design and implementation. Such strategies all take time and cost money. Ultimately, whomever the City chooses to conduct the evaluation of the police oversight should be afforded the time and resources necessary to work through issues that might otherwise adversely affect the usefulness and legitimacy of the evaluation.

FIVE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

It is important to evaluate the <u>overall system functioning</u> to ensure that the new police oversight system is effective.

"The (police accountability) system that you are creating in Seattle is breaking important new ground. There isn't anything like it anywhere else."

- Sam Walker, Emeritus Professor, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Nebraska, Omaha [3]

Police accountability professionals concur that periodic evaluation of Seattle's police oversight structure is a good idea, however no ready roadmap exists

Office of City Auditor staff recently spoke with eight local and national police accountability professionals[4] about Seattle's proposed new oversight system, and they agreed Seattle's new oversight structure is more complex and unlike any other known model. These professionals were generally enthusiastic and hopeful about Seattle's new system. Moreover, all agreed that given the importance of its role and the complexity of its structure, it would be wise for the City to consider a periodic evaluation of the overall system functioning. However, since Seattle is charting new territory with its model, and citizen oversight of the police is an under-researched area, the professionals with whom we spoke could not offer a ready road-map for an evaluation of Seattle's proposed oversight system. Nor could they identify an agency or set of agencies who would be suitable peers for Seattle's structure, and several stressed the importance of including community perspective in the evaluation. All the professionals agreed that how the evaluation is structured and who is doing it are very important to its success and to ensuring that it is done in an objective, constructive manner.

Further, the evaluation must consider the broader context, beginning with a thorough understanding of the intended goals of the terms of the authorizing ordinance, in order to assess whether the goals are being met. The evaluation must also assess whether the work of the three entities was fully enabled (or was hampered) by factors controlled by City elected officials, including: timely provision of contractual authority, financial capacity, buffering from interference, and implementation of recommended reforms.

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[3] Sam Walker, Emeritus Professor, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Nebraska, Omaha, Interview with Office of City Auditor staff, March 31, 2017 (Walker, 2017)

[4] Office of City Auditor interviews: Sam Walker, March 31, 2017; Judge Anne Levinson (ret.), April 5, 2017, Pierce Murphy, April 6, 2017, Richard Rosenthal April 10, 2017, Sam Pailca. April 11, 2017, Michael Gennaco, April 11, 2017, and Nicholas Mitchell, April 20, 2017, Phil Eure, April 25, 2017.

An evaluation of the overall police oversight system can promote improvement, coordination, accountability, celebration, and sustainability

Functions of a high-quality evaluation can include: improvement, coordination, accountability, celebration, and sustainability.[5] Given the complexity and innovation of Seattle's new police oversight system, it is easy to imagine how these functions of an evaluation might apply. A periodic evaluation of the overall system would provide an opportunity to identify under-resourced areas and threats to independence of the entities. The evaluation could promote and verify the extent of cooperation among the three entities involved in police accountability (OIG, OPA, CPC) and SPD. Further, the evaluation could be a vehicle for celebrating recommendations that have been implemented and significant outcomes achieved. Finally, in examining such issues as the effectiveness of the communications of the three police oversight entities about their work with the public, the Mayor, the City Council and the Police Monitor, an evaluation will help promote public trust, which is key to the long-term sustainability of the oversight system.

Local oversight of policing is particularly important now

In March, 2017 the U.S. Attorney General issued a memo[6] requiring the U.S. Department of Justice to re-examine all its activities including existing or planned consent decrees. The memo states that, "local control and local accountability are necessary for effective local policing. It is not the responsibility of the federal government to manage non-federal law enforcement agencies." The memo signals that Seattle (and all other local jurisdictions) might expect little help from the federal government for police oversight under the present administration. This current climate makes it perhaps increasingly important that Seattle's local system for police oversight is as effective as possible. A periodic evaluation of the overall functioning of the police oversight system is an important tool to ensure that our system is robust and effective.

Further, policing scholar Brenda Bond suggests, *"that by creating a culture of assessment and evaluation, Seattle is setting a standard for a high performing, adaptable and legitimate police organization that values learning and reflection as part of its core values. Similar ways of thinking have taken hold in the healthcare/medical industry where physicians and nurses talk about and learn from implementation for the purpose of improving their work and patient outcomes – rather than minimize or hide mistakes or failed attempts at new or innovative activities. A culture of learning will support and promote high performance in Seattle's police oversight system."* (Bond, 2017)

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[5] See the Evaluation Primer from Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America for examples of the five functions of evaluation :
http://www.cadca.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/evaluationprimer.pdf

[6] See March 31, 2017 memo from U.S. Attorney General https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/954916/download

Recommendation 2

The system evaluation must be an appropriate fit for the Seattle context and community.

"Every community should define the appropriate form and structure of civilian oversight to meet the needs of that community."

- Final report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, May, 2015[7]

Police oversight systems should reflect the "best fit" for the community

A recent report for the U.S. Office of Justice Programs and the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE) concluded that "no single model of oversight is going to work for all jurisdictions" and recommended that "jurisdictions should focus on "best-fit" rather than "best practices" when considering how to structure civilian oversight." (DeAngelis, Rosenthal, & Buchner, 2016) The authors reached this conclusion from data gathered from 97 police oversight entities in the U.S. They found that the structure and characteristics of the oversight systems varied considerably. Factors that influenced the structure of the police oversight systems included: the strengths and challenges of the police department, local crises or precipitating events (e.g., use of force), community history and unique characteristics, and availability of resources.

This "best fit" recommendation was also consistent with recommendation 2.8 of the 2015 Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing which called for each community to determine the oversight structure that meets the needs of that community. (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015) Since there is broad agreement that the police oversight structure itself should be specifically designed to meet the unique needs of the community, it follows that the <u>evaluation</u> of the police oversight system should also reflect the "best fit" for the community.

The Community Police Commission (CPC) can help ensure that an evaluation of the police oversight system is the "best fit" for Seattle

An important part of the police oversight context in Seattle is that considerable progress has been made in recent years, including the development of the CPC. In 2012, the City of Seattle signed a settlement agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice to initiate police reform. Subsequently, the City established the CPC[8], which became operational in 2013. "The CPC's charge is to represent a broad range of community perspectives, reach out and engage communities directly, get critical feedback, and then recommend changes to Seattle Police Department

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[7] See recommendation 2.8 of the Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, May, 2015 https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf

[8] See Ordinance 124021 http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~scripts/nph-brs.exe?d=CBOR&s1=124021.ordn.&Sect6=HITOFF&l=20&p=1&u=/~public/cbor1.htm&r=1&f=G

(SPD) and police accountability system policies and practices . . . All CPC recommendations are intended to: ensure police services comply with the constitution and the laws of the United States and Washington state; increase the effectiveness of the police accountability system; and promote public confidence in SPD"[9]

The legislation for Seattle's new police oversight system calls for the CPC to "review and provide input to OPA, OIG, SPD, and other City departments and offices, including the Mayor, Council, and City Attorney on the police accountability system, police services, and SPD policies and practices of significance to the public . . ." It also is responsible for an annual report that includes "an evaluation of the extent to which all the purposes, duties, and responsibilities detailed in [the ordinance] have been met.".[10] The CPC's charge under the new ordinance and its work in recent years position the CPC well to ensure that an evaluation of the police oversight system is appropriately reflective of the community, adequately responds to community concerns, and is effectively communicated to the community.

A recent report describing the CPC's first several years of operation highlight the CPC's appreciation of the complexity of the issues and its commitment to inclusivity. *"There is an understanding that the issues are complex, and multiple perspectives are valid. Many issues cannot be resolved easily, but there is increasingly a shared belief that 'we are all in this together,' and there is agreement that genuine collaboration is of value in surfacing important issues, identifying options for resolution, and ultimately putting into place better, more effective policies and practices. The CPC has gained credibility because it sought to build a bridge between the police and the community and has shared and honored the values and expectations of both."* (Graef, 2015)

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[9] See CPC's website at: http://www.seattle.gov/community-police-commission/about-us#mission

[10] See Ordinance 125315,

The City might consider using an "empowerment evaluation" framework to ensure that the evaluation of the police oversight system is an appropriate fit for the Seattle context and community

Empowerment evaluation is a professional and systematic approach to self-evaluation that has been used in over 16 countries and a diverse array of organizations including Hewlett-Packard, the Centers for Disease Control, the Arkansas Department of Education, and women-artisan's cooperatives in Peru. Empowerment evaluation is conducted by the organization itself, with coaching and technical assistance from an evaluator(s), who ensures the rigor of the evaluation but does not control the evaluation. Organization staff and stakeholders are provided with evaluation concepts, techniques, and tools that are used for self-evaluation of the organization. The focus of the evaluation is continuous improvement. The ten principles of empowerment evaluation include: improvement, community ownership, inclusion, democratic participation, social justice, community knowledge, evidence-based strategies, capacity building, organizational learning, and accountability. (Fetterman, Kafterian, & Wandersman, 2015)

WATCH: One of the developers of empowerment evaluation, Dr. David Fetterman, former director of the Division of Evaluation in the School of Medicine at Stanford University, offers a six-minute Ignite presentation describing the theory and practice of empowerment evaluation.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=fjUvV4HHH38

Empowerment evaluation has been used effectively in very complex systems that involve community-based intervention operating at multiple jurisdictional levels, for which there is the need to accommodate for the contexts of sites, organizations, or individuals, and the complex hierarchies that exist among these entities. (Wandersman, Alia, Cook, Hsu, & Ramaswamy, 2016) This makes empowerment evaluation an approach worth considering for Seattle new and complex police oversight system. There are books, guides and online resources that describe the practice of empowerment evaluation and offer case studies that can help the City determine whether the empowerment evaluation framework is well-suited for an evaluation of the police oversight system.

Recommendation 3

Shared goals among the entities as well as protocols, expectations, and metrics should be developed in advance of a system evaluation.

"When you are starting out, you need some very formal structural things in place that provide clarity around roles and responsibilities."

- Brenda J. Bond, Chair of the Institute for Public Service, Sawyer Business School, Suffolk University, Boston[11]

Clarify goals, roles, and responsibilities in advance of the initial evaluation of the police oversight system

An evaluation of Seattle's new police oversight system will require significant advance preparation. Several of the police oversight professionals with whom we spoke stressed the need for the three oversight entities, along with SPD, the Mayor's Office, City Council, and others to clarify their goals, roles, and responsibilities early on to lay the foundation for a future evaluation. Roles and responsibilities as described in the new police oversight legislation will require additional detail and clarifications before they can be effectively operationalized. In addition, it will be very important for the evaluation that the entities and other stakeholders establish clear goals for the police oversight system as a whole.

DeAngelis, Rosenthal, & Buchner (2016) identified eight goals for police oversight entities that were commonly cited in academic and policy reports on oversight. King County, WA has established seven goals for police oversight (Anderson, Brubaker, DeBlieck, Leary, & Dean, 2015)

Figure 2 below presents a comparison of the eight goals cited in the literature and the seven oversight goals for King County.

Figure 2: Comparison of goals for police oversight

Police Oversight Goals in Policy and Academic Literature	Police Oversight Goals, King County, WA
• Ensure that the police complaints process is accessible to all and to remove impediments to the filing of lawful complaints. • Ensure that internal investigations are fair and thorough, findings are reasonable and evidence-based and discipline is appropriate. • Improve public confidence in the police and local government by demonstrating that internal investigations are fair and thorough and findings and discipline are reasonable and appropriate. • Enhance the transparency of police organizations by publicly reporting on the department's efforts in holding its officers accountable. • Strengthen police organizations by analyzing patterns in complaints and other police-related data to improve policies, practices, training and management. • Deter officers from engaging in misconduct through the creation of more effective and consistent investigation and disciplinary processes. • Reduce legal liability from officer misconduct. • Improve the public's understanding of police policy, training and practices.	Civilian oversight in King County should: • Function independently; • Bolster public confidence and ensure proper oversight of the King County Sheriff's Office; • Increase understanding, confidence, and trust between the King County Sheriff's Office and the public; • Ensure integrity, transparency, and accountability in law enforcement; • Foster community trust in, and respect and support for the King County Sheriff's Office; • Ensure the thoroughness, objectivity, and adequacy of those investigations and any resultant discipline; and • Identify systemic problems and opportunities for improvement.

Sources: https://www.ojpdiagnosticcenter.org/sites/default/files/NACOLE_AccessingtheEvidence_Final.pdf and http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/auditor/auditor-reports/all-landing-pgs/2015/kcso-oleo-2015.aspx

Determine what baseline data should be collected in advance of the evaluation

To measure the progress of the police oversight system over time, the City will need to collect baseline data at a point in time in advance of the first evaluation. There are many measures that the City might include in its evaluation. Evaluation questions may potentially include: Are the goals and objectives of the ordinance being accomplished? Are there barriers to that occurring? Did the entities receive funding, capacity, authority and independence as committed to? Are the elected officials ensuring follow through on recommended reforms? Are accountability results measured by the City through SeaStat, quarterly Chief's reports, legislative agenda, etc.?

DeAngelis, Rosenthal, and Bucher (2016) identified 12 interrelated principles that may strengthen police oversight, and which might, for example, serve as a framework to help identify elements of the evaluation:

1. Independence;
2. Adequate jurisdictional authority;
3. Unfettered access to records;
4. Full cooperation;
5. Access to law enforcement executives and internal affairs staff;
6. Support of process stakeholders;
7. Adequate resources;
8. Public reporting/transparency;
9. Use of statistical pattern analysis;
10. Community outreach;
11. Community involvement; and
12. Respect for confidentiality.

In addition, the City might want to measure over time the police oversight system's ability to effectively coordinate, communicate, and problem-solve among the entities and with SPD, elected officials, and the public. One approach that the City may want to consider using for evaluating these measures of system-functioning is relational coordination theory. Relational coordination theory promotes effective communication and high performance in complex organizations by applying three key concepts:

- "shared goals - that transcend participants' specific functional goals
- shared knowledge - that enables participants to see how their specific tasks interrelate with the whole process, and
- mutual respect - that enables participants to overcome the status barriers that might otherwise prevent them from seeing and taking account of the work of others." (Gittell J. , 2013)

Relational coordination theory also includes measures of communication including frequency, timeliness, accuracy, and problem-solving. The evidence on relational coordination shows that entities that apply relational coordination activities and processes are more effective at achieving their outcomes of interest. Relational coordination is particularly useful for systems in which the actions of each participant affect and are affected by the actions of others. "It takes a high degree of relational coordination for participants to be able to mutually adjust their actions in response to each other's actions and outcomes." (Gittell J. , 2013) The complex organizational structure of

the Seattle's new police accountability system with its interdependencies and checks and balances might benefit from an assessment of relational coordination. Researchers who have developed and support this framework have developed assessment tools and interventions that are discussed below in recommendation #4.

Establish evidence-based practices for effective communication and coordination in advance of the evaluation

Some of the police oversight experts with whom we spoke expressed hope that the, once legislation is passed, that the oversight entities would "have a sit-down to clarify their roles and responsibilities and develop a plan for a series of meetings." (Walker, 2017) We hope that the City will consider establishing evidence-based practices for effective communication and coordination prior to the evaluation of the oversight system.

There are some policing scholars currently using evidence-based communication practice in their work. For example, Dr. Brenda Bond from Suffolk University, is making use of relational coordination and the evidence on interagency coordination and policy change the field of organizational science in the implementation and evaluation of a statewide, interagency gang reduction effort in Massachusetts. Dr. Bond is applying the relational coordination concepts in this complex strategy and acknowledges that entities in a high-functioning system must have: shared goals, shared knowledge of each entity's role toward those goals, and mutual respect. "Deliberate specific practices and evidence-based tools are necessary" from the start. Initially, these tools may include: shared protocols (e.g., MOU's), regular consistent meetings, and joint trainings. In Bond's work in Massachusetts she has learned that, "the more formal and the more in agreement people are about the roles, the better things operate. You also have to be explicit about how the entities will be held accountable by each other and by the broader public." (Bond, 2017)

Recommendation 4

To the extent possible, the system evaluation should use tools and frameworks for assessing system functioning that are grounded in research.
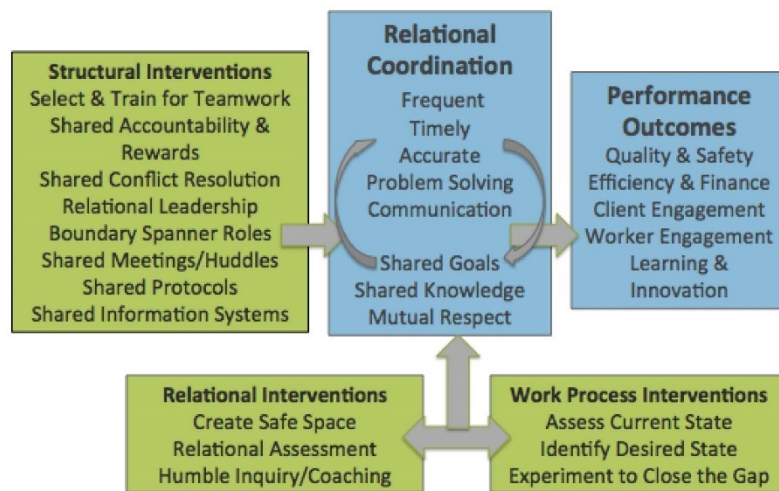
Seek research-based frameworks and tools from other fields that can be used for the evaluation of Seattle's police oversight system

It is widely acknowledged that there is little evidence on what works in police oversight. In fact, the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing urged "action on further research, based on the guiding principle of procedural justice, to find evidence-based practices to implement successful civilian oversight mechanisms." Many of the police oversight professionals with whom we spoke acknowledged the lack of research on what works in police oversight and the lack of established frameworks for evaluating oversight systems. They agreed that the City would be wise to look to other disciplines for evaluation tools that can be applied to police oversight.

The field of organizational science offers tools and frameworks for assessing communication and coordination that have been proven to improve outcomes in fields including healthcare, social services, airlines, and technology. The empowerment evaluation framework, described in recommendation #2 above, has been used in a wide variety of organizations, and has a growing research base.

Other examples of scientifically validated tools from organizational science that may be worth considering for the evaluation of Seattle's new police oversight system include:

Relational model of organizational change

Structural Interventions
Select & Train for Teamwork
Shared Accountability & Rewards
Shared Conflict Resolution
Relational Leadership
Boundary Spanner Roles
Shared Meetings/Huddles
Shared Protocols
Shared Information Systems

Relational Coordination
Frequent
Timely
Accurate
Problem Solving
Communication

Shared Goals
Shared Knowledge
Mutual Respect

Performance Outcomes
Quality & Safety
Efficiency & Finance
Client Engagement
Worker Engagement
Learning & Innovation

Relational Interventions
Create Safe Space
Relational Assessment
Humble Inquiry/Coaching

Work Process Interventions
Assess Current State
Identify Desired State
Experiment to Close the Gap

1   © 2014 Relational Coordination Research Collaborative

- the **Relational Coordination survey tool** which measures communication (frequency, timeliness, accuracy, problem-solving) and relationships (shared goals, shared knowledge, mutual respect).[12] This validated survey tool is used to gather a baseline assessment of these elements and to identify and apply interventions to improve relational coordination. These interventions may include: Structural Interventions (e.g., trainings, protocols, information systems), Relational Interventions (e.g., coaching, role-modeling), and Work Process Interventions (e.g., process mapping, structured problem-solving). (Gittell, Godfrey, & Thistlethwaite, 2013) While relational coordination tools are currently primarily used in the private sector and in health care, they appear to be flexible enough to be used for assessing the relational aspects of Seattle's new police oversight system. Dr. Bond is currently utilizing these ideas in several urban cities attempting to change policies and organizational practices.

- the **Program Sustainability Assessment Tool** which helps organizations identify sustainability strengths and challenges in eight domains (environmental support, funding stability, partnerships, organizational capacity, program evaluation, program adaptation, communications, and strategic planning).[13] This tool and framework is used primarily in the fields of public health, healthcare, and social services. However, again, the tool and framework appear to be flexible enough to be used for assessing the relational aspects of Seattle's new police oversight system.

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12 See description of the validation of the Relational Coordination survey tool from Brandeis University, Heller School for Social Policy and Management http://rcrc.brandeis.edu/survey/validation-and-survey-items.html .

13 See description of the scientifically validated Program Sustainability Assessment Tool and framework https://cphss.wustl.edu/Projects/Pages/Sustainability-Framework-and-Assessment-Tool.aspx

Recommendation 5   The timing of a periodic system evaluation should balance the need to ensure that the system is off to a good start without overly burdening the entities.

Finally, the City should carefully consider the timing of the evaluation of the police oversight system. Timing of the evaluation will have implications for resources, burden to the entities, and usefulness of the evaluation. One potential structure for the evaluation timing might include:

During first 18 months	• Establish and document plans for communicating and coordinating among entities (e.g., MOU's) • Identify any needed evaluation resources and technical assistance (e.g., empowerment evaluation coaching) • Develop/document policies and procedures for each entity • Identify baseline measures to collect regarding system operations (e.g., communicating and coordinating) • Identify evidence-based tools to collect system-operations measures (e.g., Relational Coordination survey, Program Sustainability Assessment Tool) • Collect baseline system-operations measures • Identify baseline measures to collect regarding outcome measures (e.g., status of recommendations, complaint handling) • Identify data-gathering strategy and evaluation plan for outcome measures
18-month checkpoint	• Report on planning efforts and process improvements, including any early challenges and opportunities • Report on baseline system-operations measures (relational coordination) • Describe evaluation plan including selected outcome measures, data-gathering strategies, and evaluation design
At two or three year intervals	• Report on planning efforts and process improvements • Report on ongoing system-operations measures (relational coordination) • Report on ongoing outcome measures • Report on opportunities for course-correction and celebration

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX A

Seattle Office of City Auditor Mission, Background, and Quality Assurance

Our Mission:

To help the City of Seattle achieve honest, efficient management and full accountability throughout City government. We serve the public interest by providing the City Council, Mayor and City department heads with accurate information, unbiased analysis, and objective recommendations on how best to use public resources in support of the well-being of Seattle residents.

Background:

Seattle voters established our office by a 1991 amendment to the City Charter. The office is an independent department within the legislative branch of City government. The City Auditor reports to the City Council, and has a four-year term to ensure her/his independence in deciding what work the office should perform and reporting the results of this work. The Office of City Auditor conducts performance audits and non-audit projects covering City of Seattle programs, departments, grantees, and contracts. The City Auditor's goal is to ensure that the City of Seattle is run as effectively, efficiently, and equitably as possible in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

How We Ensure Quality:

The office's work is performed in accordance with the Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. These standards provide guidelines for audit planning, fieldwork, quality control systems, staff training, and reporting of results. In addition, the standards require that external auditors periodically review our office's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that we adhere to these professional standards.

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