



Seattle Office of
Inspector General

Force Review Board Feedback Memo

June 25, 2025

Introduction

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) completed a Use of Force Assessment in February 2024, which included a review of various components of the Seattle Police Department's (SPD) force review and investigation processes.¹ In that assessment, OIG set out a plan for continued evaluation of force review by attending Force Review Board (FRB) meetings, holding regular meetings to share feedback with Force Review Unit (FRU) leadership, and summarizing findings in periodic formal feedback memorandums. These memoranda are intended to be summarize information shared in meetings with FRB, as well as identify trends and observations that OIG has made since the last publication. The first FRB feedback memorandum was published in September 2024.²

Ongoing OIG collaboration with FRB during this review period has included continued attendance at all FRB meetings and monthly meetings with FRU leadership, as well as participation in FRB training. The FRB leadership meetings are an opportunity for timely collaboration and discussion to reinforce positive trends and identify areas for opportunities to improve. FRB held annual board training in October and November 2024. OIG attended the training sessions and participated with a presentation and discussion of our role at FRB and the various evaluation methods used by OIG for force review.

Facilitation by the Chair

FRB meetings require a Board Chair (Chair) to facilitate thorough and robust conversation about significant force cases. OIG has observed consistently effective board facilitation by several Chairs and thoroughness of Board reviews during this period. The Chairs have adopted a discussion framework and utilize specific skills to encourage robust conversations grounded in relevant case evidence. They balance the need to cover all issues under review by shepherding the discussion through necessary topics without leading Board members to specific conclusions. They regularly take steps to ensure Board members maintain the standards and mission of FRB by insisting discussions are grounded in officer statements or actions and redirecting any discussions that rely on speculation. The Chairs continue to be thorough, thoughtful, and responsive to feedback, whether self-identified or identified by OIG or Board members.

The Chairs continue to appropriately and effectively utilize subject matter experts at meetings. In the current review period, OIG has observed Chairs share training and policy documents with Board members and invite training instructors to answer Board questions. These continued references to policy and training have supported reviews grounded in SPD standards and expertise.

OIG has observed multiple meetings where the Chairs have encouraged Board members to avoid outcome-based assessments in determining whether tactics have planning were appropriate. Chairs instead ask Board members to discuss whether, regardless of the outcome, the tactics and decision-making were aligned with policy and training.

One Type III Officer Involved Shooting (OIS) FRB meeting occurred during this review period. The meeting was co-chaired by the FRU Lieutenant and the Professional Standards Bureau Assistant Chief. OIG found the co-chair approach to be effective for an in-depth review. The Chairs' ability to engage Board members differently and to share the responsibilities of facilitation encouraged a thorough review and discussion.

1 [Seattle Police Department Use of Force Assessment, 2.29.2024.](#)

2 [Force Review Board Feedback Memo, 9.12.2024.](#)

Board Discussion

Critical Review

For FRB to maintain its role of providing robust and effective internal review for SPD use of force, Board members must be willing to engage in critical analysis of tactics and decision-making and to provide necessary feedback to officers. OIG has noted many cases where FRB has identified issues and concerns not previously identified by the chain of command (COC), highlighting the ongoing need for this additional level of internal review. The Board also assesses beyond whether something was within policy and training, and explores whether best practices were followed, or what could be improved. While this analysis does not result in individual feedback to officers, it can be used to revise SPD policy and training.

As shared in the last memorandum, there was a recent addition of new Board members. OIG has noted to FRU leadership that some members appear hesitant to second-guess and critique the tactics and decision-making of fellow officers. The Chairs are mindful of this phenomenon and have utilized various techniques to address the concern, including periodically shuffling the Board composition and incorporating past, more experienced, board members into Board panels with less experienced members. OIG observes that, with experience and direction, Board members find the balance necessary to engage in a critical review.

De-escalation Discussion

In previous reports, OIG has provided feedback regarding the Board's discussion of de-escalation efforts made by officers before using force on a subject. In this reporting period, OIG has regularly observed discussions to be robust and thorough. Chairs continue to use the Findings Document to structure conversations and to identify efforts to use time, distance, shielding, and verbal tactics. Board members consistently identify proper de-escalation tactics and note where improvements can be made, or deficiencies should be addressed.

Crisis Discussion

The discussion of crisis by the Board members has been the focus of many discussions between OIG and FRU leadership and was included in OIG's presentation during the FRB annual training. OIG noted some instances where Board discussions included a significant amount of information officers did not have at the time of interaction. For example, discussing a subject's medical diagnoses or prior contacts with law enforcement, despite the information being unknown to officers during the interaction. OIG provided feedback that any information not known by the responding officers should not be considered in the Board's review of tactics used and decision-making by the responding officers. Chairs were receptive to this feedback, and OIG has observed Chairs basing conversations in what officers knew and observed at the time of the crisis and redirecting Board members if necessary.

OIG noted in the previous memorandum that the Crisis Response Unit (CRU) representative was not consistently present to provide subject matter expertise at FRB meetings. This was identified as an issue resulting from position and staffing changes within the unit. Cases involving crisis are now reviewed first, allowing the CRU representative to address pertinent discussions and information, and then leave the meeting following the discussion. Alternatively, FRU has scheduled three cases with a crisis element on one day. This adjustment appears to be a good use of CRU resources and time.

Identification of Trends

The Board continues to properly identify trends arising in the cases reviewed. As discussed in the prior memo, the Board recognized a trend in officer tactics when encountering unresponsive drivers. As a result of the Board's identification of the potential danger to officers and the community with the tactics officers were using, SPD implemented a mandatory training on best practices for engaging with unresponsive drivers. After the training, the Board continued to recognize areas of improvement for vehicle tactics and engagement with subjects in vehicles. They observed officers using vehicle tactics incorrectly or tactics they were not trained on. The Board identified areas where the current tactics could be augmented. For example, they have noted that additional training would be useful on the use of terminator devices and OC spray deployment in a vehicle. The Board has provided this feedback to the training and policy units to be used in updates to training or policy.

As previously noted, training instructors have attended Board meetings to provide information about how officers are trained on a particular issue, and answer questions about application of the training to FRB cases. Their presence during discussions also provides the training unit with insight into issues identified by the FRB and gaps that may exist to inform future training.

FRB Outcomes

OIG continues to observe appropriate outcomes from FRB meetings, including Lessons Learned that are shared with the Department, FRB Actions, and OPA referrals.

At the FRB annual training, attendees suggested more visibility within SPD as to the outcomes of Board meetings. OIG made a similar suggestion in the 2024 Use of Force Assessment and the previous memorandum. Suggestions OIG heard from Board members during the FRB annual training included: highlighting experience of Board members; sharing the total number of cases where all issues were handled by the COC (i.e. no referrals or further action from FRB); and sharing the total number of cases where review resulted in internal referrals without an OPA referral (i.e. Lessons Learned or FRB Actions with no OPA referral).

FRU recently developed a dashboard on the SPD intranet that includes the suggestions noted above by OIG and Board members as well as additional insight including:

- A list of FRU leadership and the current Board members;
- Statistics on the cases reviewed by FRU and FRB including the type of force reviewed and referrals that resulted from the reviews; and
- A collection of all Lessons Learned, trends in Lessons Learned, and categorization based on area of concern.

This type of increased transparency can help to destigmatize FRB outcomes and critique, and help officers understand the purpose, impact, and tremendous value of FRB reviews.

Timeliness of Feedback

The feedback and referrals resulting from FRB review are crucial, but the impact is hindered when feedback is not timely. At the time of the last memorandum, FRU was holding two Board meetings per week to work through a backlog of cases. As of November 2024, the Board worked through the backlog and returned to meeting once a week. This effort has shortened the time between force incident and review, so feedback provided to officers and the COC is timelier and hopefully more relevant and impactful. When officers are given feedback sooner, they can make needed adjustments to their tactics and decision-making more quickly.

Next Steps

OIG will continue to attend all FRB meetings for ongoing assessment of SPD review of force and continue to meet regularly with FRU leadership to provide timely feedback.