



<b>Creating and Maintaining Collaborative Partnerships</b>	<u>Related Policies:</u> Responding to Persons Experiencing a Mental Health Crisis, Domestic Violence Investigations, Traffic Enforcement, Investigation and Reporting of Hate Crimes
<i>This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee’s civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this agency for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.</i>	
Applicable State Statutes:	
Date Adopted: June 28, 2021	Date Reviewed:

**I. PURPOSE** The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on creating and maintaining collaborative partnerships between the Bennington Police Department (BPD) and community agencies, research institutions, and groups of citizens.

Collaborative partnerships within the community provide a foundation for community policing. Community policing responds to emerging issues and long-range goals that are a priority to the community. Collaborative partnerships are based on the following principles: strong leadership that supports collaboration, orientation towards service, transforming training, building community relationships, proactively engaging with diverse communities, improving communication with the community, understanding different community perspectives, and engaging the community as equal partners.<sup>1</sup>

**II. POLICY**

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<sup>1</sup> See: "Smart Policing Collaboration Principles", BJA published Report, January 2017, NCJ Number-250565, [SPICollaborationPrinciples.pdf \(henryleeinstitute.com\)](https://www.henryleeinstitute.com/SPICollaborationPrinciples.pdf)

- A. The Chief of Police and senior officers shall provide leadership and vision for the development of collaborative relationships and partnerships between the BPD and community agencies, research institutions, and groups of citizens, as well as within the BPD.
- B. The BPD shall collaborate closely and as equal partners with community agencies, groups and individuals to address complex problems and priorities in the community. When creating collaborative partnerships with community agencies or research institutions, the BPD, under the leadership of the Chief, or the Chief's designee, shall develop and implement a Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] with that agency or institution. The MOU shall thoroughly address and carefully describe the specific roles and responsibilities of the particular "partners."
- C. The BPD shall implement on-going training programs that support collaboration and the development of skills that include but are not limited to: social interactions, communication, and empathy. Training in the following areas shall also include, but not be limited to: de-escalation, trauma-informed procedural justice, implicit bias, cultural awareness, collaboration and problem solving, and evidence-based policing.
- D. The BPD shall encourage frequent interactions between Officers and members of the community in order to humanize the community to the Officers and the Officers to the community. Such interactions shall include community gatherings or other events for formal or informal conversations and problem solving; particularly with diverse and historically disadvantaged community members.
- E. The BPD shall promote positive community interaction through improved communications and outreach strategies and create an organizational culture reflecting the benefits of collaboration. Community outreach and communication efforts shall emphasize listening to the community in addition to the distribution of information. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Based on "Collaborative Principles for Police" Ibid.

### III. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Collaboration:** Police and community stakeholders working together to address issues and goals by sharing responsibilities, resources, and decision making.
- B. **Collaborative Partnership:** A long-term, durable, structured commitment to a range of common goals or multiple projects over time. The use of the terms “partnership” and “equal partners” is not intended to create expectations of a legal relationship that does not accurately reflect the statutory duties and powers of a police department and sworn officers.
- C. **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):** A document designed to clearly define and outline the goals, expectations, roles, responsibilities, duration, and accountability mechanisms of the partners within a collaborative partnership.
- D. **Research and Data Analysis:** The systematic investigation of law enforcement-related subjects by trained personnel aimed at answering questions or addressing concerns that arise within law enforcement organizations.

\* \* \* \* \*

This Policy is adopted by the Select Board of the Town of Bennington, Vermont, this 28<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2021 and is effective as of this date until amended or repealed.

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Jeannie Jenkins, Chairperson

### IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Establishing a Collaborative Partnership
  - 1. When establishing a collaborative partnership with a community partner, the BPD Chief of Police or their designee should actively participate in its development and implementation.
  - 2. The BPD Chief of Police or their designee should identify a program manager within the department to coordinate all aspects of work conducted with the community partner.
  - 3. Potential community partners shall be identified through prior established relationships or by:
    - a. reviewing social science research consortiums;
    - b. attendance at criminal justice-related conferences;
    - c. reviewing practitioner literature;

- d. obtaining a referral from colleagues, or
  - e. contacting state and local law enforcement associations.
4. Factors to consider when selecting a community partner include:
- a. subject matter expertise of the community partner;
  - b. prior experience with the community partner by this or any other law enforcement agency;
  - c. potential compatibility regarding values, staff, and goals of each partner;
  - d. proximity of the community partner to the agency; and
  - e. potential for staff turnover that may impact continuity of a project.
5. After identifying a community partner, the program manager should make initial contact. The initial contact should be used to discuss:
- a. the demographics of both organizations, to include staffing and available resources;
  - b. specific problem relevant to the BPD and/or community partner;
  - c. general topics or problem areas for further discussion, and;
  - d. funding concerns.

## B. Developing an MOU

1. Once mutual interest in collaboration has been discussed and the decision made to move forward, formal discussions should take place. These discussions should include the following:
- a. short- and long-term goals of the partnership;
  - b. specific questions to be addressed;
  - c. specific strategy, methodology, and analysis relevant to agency characteristics and community needs;
  - d. general timeline of specific projects(s);
  - e. roles and responsibilities of each partner;
  - f. relevant community members or stakeholders.

2. The Town of Bennington, through the Bennington Police Chief or the Chief's designee, shall offer to develop and implement Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) with key community agencies and institutions, such as UCS and SVMC, to address complex problems and priorities in the community and to formalize a long-term, durable, structured commitment to a range of common goals or multiple projects over time.

If the Town's offer to develop an MOU is accepted, the Town should identify a police officer or other Town employee (point person) to work with the agency or institution to build consensus around an MOU that clearly defines and outlines goals, expectations, role, responsibilities, duration, and accountability mechanisms of the parties. The point person should report regularly to the Police Chief on the effort to develop an MOU.

Town's attorney shall review and approve the MOU prior to execution.

### C. Goals

#### 1. Consultation

a. Participate in a process with community partner and discuss mutual community concerns as they relate to the BPD and partner.

b. Engage professionals in a specific subject matter as the matter relates to the BPD and partner.

#### 2. Coordination

a. Enable the BPD and community partner to work together organizing different activities or events allowing us to work together effectively and efficiently.

#### 3. Community Outreach

a. The BPD and community partner will actively work collaboratively to provide critical information and referrals to community members allowing them access to assistance and information related to resources for specific needs.

b. Support access to community services where care coordinating may be necessary.

#### D. Training

1. Training for the BPD membership team might include the following:
  - a. practical law enforcement methods;
  - b. agency-specific operations;
  - c. obligations of law enforcement personnel.
2. Review of MOU

#### E. Sustaining the Partnership

1. In order to sustain the partnership, the following should occur:
  - a. regular communication between partners;
  - b. fulfillment of roles as outlined by the MOU;
  - c. involvement of both partners in key aspects of the collaboration;
  - d. continued engagement of law enforcement personnel in research;
  - e. identification of future projects;
  - f. regular MOU reviews to ensure it meets the needs of the BPD and the community;
  - g. identification of areas that need improvement and development of a plan to address them.
2. The law enforcement project manager should evaluate the specific deliverables and overall experience with the partnership to determine what was or was not successful and prepare a document to that effect for review on an annual basis.
3. If the needs of one or both partners are not being met—and reasonable solutions cannot be found, the BPD shall consider dissolution of the partnership.

The policies and procedures outlined above are hereby adopted by the Chief of Police of the Town of Bennington, Vermont this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021 and is effective as of this date until amended or repealed.

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Paul J. Doucette, Chief of Police