



# The Law Enforcement **KNOWLEDGE LAB**

## FACT SHEET

# NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT KNOWLEDGE LAB

April 27, 2022

In 2022, the Department of Justice, (the Department) established the National Law Enforcement Knowledge Lab (Knowledge Lab) to identify and promote constitutional policing practices used by state, local, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies to reduce crime, protect communities, and build public trust.

The Department, in its mission to advance justice and ensure public safety, has a wide array of legal, enforcement, and programmatic resources through which Department components such as the Civil Rights Division, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office), and the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), independently engage with law enforcement. Through each one of these individual engagements with law enforcement, the Department makes recommendations and provides advice to law enforcement on resources and best practices. This structure ensures flexibility in the Department's approach because public safety needs vary across communities large and small; urban, rural, and suburban; homogenous and diverse. However, the principles of fairness, equity, procedural justice, legitimacy, transparency, and accountability are, and must always remain, universal.



**The Knowledge Lab holds the promise of providing no cost critical tools and voluntary technical assistance to help law enforcement and the communities they serve work within these core, universal American principles.**

Administered by the Office of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the Knowledge Lab will become a trusted resource for policy guidance, training, research, capacity assessments, and technical assistance for law enforcement and the communities they serve. The Knowledge Lab's vast network of subject matter experts will collaborate extensively with a broad cross-section of law enforcement practitioners, researchers, policy makers, and community stakeholders. It will deliver, at no cost, vital resources that support the voluntary development and implementation of crime reduction strategies that are constitutional, evidence-informed, and built upon a foundation of partnership with local communities.



## CREATING A NATIONAL RESOURCE HUB

Because American law enforcement is primarily the responsibility of local and state governments, it is highly decentralized. The United States has more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies – each of which establishes its own rules and procedures – and almost 700,000 law enforcement officers, each of whom translates these rules into practice every day. Most, if not all, of these organizations are being called on to address common operational issues that are complex and national in scope. No national law enforcement institution exists to set nationwide standards or core competencies for best practices in law enforcement operation, and many agencies are relatively small and have limited resources to develop and implement such programs on their own. Although many universities and professional associations have developed remarkable resources to try to fill this void, there remains no easily accessible national resource hub where a law enforcement leader can go to develop or learn about effective, fair, crime-reduction policy. Moreover, their command staff, officers, deputies, professional staff, municipal leaders, and the citizens they serve often have a more difficult time accessing reliable sources, knowledge, and best practices regarding constitutional policing. Recognizing this complex reality and the critical importance of promoting constitutional policing, the Department of Justice is improving its service to law enforcement and communities throughout the United States with the creation of the National Law Enforcement Knowledge Lab.



## WHAT WILL THE KNOWLEDGE LAB DO?

The Knowledge Lab will enhance law enforcement’s knowledge and use of constitutional and evidence-informed policing practices and strategies to reduce crime, protect communities, pursue justice, and address the concerns of local communities. It will serve as a highly visible and reliable national resource for law enforcement agencies, communities, and researchers to improve public safety through effective crime fighting strategies, robust constitutional policing, and stronger community relationships. The Knowledge Lab will collaborate with stakeholder organizations, researchers, and agencies to leverage and share resources and guidance already developed within these professional networks.

Through convenings of law enforcement, community, and other stakeholder and expert groups throughout 2022, the Knowledge Lab will identify the specific issues and resources needed to support the greater awareness and use of constitutional policing practices at the state, local, and tribal levels. It will seek to identify and define core competencies of constitutional policing, which will be based on evidence-based practices and research, and closely informed by the Department of Justice’s past enforcement and assistance efforts, as well as non-federal interventions.

Through this discovery process, the Department of Justice will come to better understand gaps in resources, training, and services that should be developed for law enforcement to ensure that resources

are laser-focused on supporting the needs of 21st century policing. Activities like the translation of peer reviewed research findings into practitioner and policymaker-oriented briefs will ensure that important research findings are more accessible and useful for practitioner decision-making.

In addition to reviewing the scientific literature, best practices, and local innovations, the Knowledge Lab will also identify contemporary resources, guidance, and lessons learned from across national and local initiatives to ensure the strategies and resources that have been developed through these efforts can inform other agencies as they seek to strengthen their policies and practices.

Concurrently, the Knowledge Lab will respond to calls from law enforcement stakeholder groups for information on best practices, and outcomes associated with the Department of Justice's engagements through their Civil Rights Division (CRT), as well as its other litigation and enforcement work. To that end, the Knowledge Lab will create a publicly accessible, online resource to share the reforms and outcomes (where available) of local agencies that have undergone significant structural changes under the supervision of federal or state consent decrees, settlement agreements, and other reform efforts. This analysis will include collecting information about the pattern or practice investigations conducted by CRT and state authorities, as well as Independent Monitor Reports, outside evaluations, data analysis, research, and reports published by the agencies themselves.

The Knowledge Lab will also build on multiple Justice Department initiatives designed to support best practices in policing in America, including the research on what works and the technical assistance provided OJP and the COPS Office. These and other existing resources from across the Department will feed into the Knowledge Lab, making it a one-stop-shop for the latest information, training, and guidance on strategies to protect the public and safeguard civil rights.