

The LEADS Academics Program

Building sustainable police–research partnerships in pursuit of evidence-based policing

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Abstract

The National Institute of Justice’s (NIJ) Law Enforcement Advancing Data and Science (LEADS) Program was developed in 2014 to facilitate and support the use of evidence-based practices in US policing by contributing to the professional development of mid-career officers. The program helps officers conduct their own original research projects, attend trainings and conferences, and develop a supportive network of peers who are similarly committed to improving policing. In 2019, NIJ piloted a new program, selecting four early career policing scholars to serve as the first cohort of LEADS Academics. This program seeks to promote partnerships, communication, and collaboration between academics and practitioners, an ongoing challenge in the field of police practice and research, but fundamental to the facilitation of evidence-based policing. In this chapter, we discuss the history of LEADS and the purpose of the pilot Academics program, highlight research and progress born during its first year, and chart a map for maximizing its contribution to evidence-based policing moving forward.

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Introduction

Calls for the integration of research into policing are the hallmark of the evidence-based policing movement (Lum & Koper, 2017; Sherman, 1998). In theory, the integration of science and data into policing should lead to better social interactions between the police and the public. In other words, there should be more positive outcomes from professional police as the profession grows into a well-respected institution, similar to the field of medicine. In practice, the attempt to use scientific data to improve the police has a long but unproven history. Too often scholars forget that research has played a role in policing since the early 1900s. For example, Berkeley (CA) Police Chief August Vollmer was such a strong proponent of research in policing that he helped establish the country's first criminology program at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1916 (Oliver, 2017). Vollmer's push also contributed to the diffusion of the forensic science field and, along with his protégé O.W. Wilson, he established the American Society of Criminology in 1941. Likewise, in the foreword to the groundbreaking Kansas City Preventive Patrol Study, former police commissioner in New York and president of the Police Foundation Patrick V. Murphy describes how the experiment was spurred by the intellectual curiosity of a long-tenured Kansas City Police Chief—future FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley (Kelling et al., 1974). These influential leaders undoubtedly paved the way for

subsequent police executives to apply the scientific method to identify good practices and assess the effectiveness of strategies and policies in their own agencies.

Even considering these forward-thinking and progressive police leaders, however, it would be inappropriate to describe policing as receptive to research and science. A more accurate assessment would describe the culture of policing as resistant to research with notable exceptions. For instance, Vollmer was successful at infusing science into operations in his agency in Berkeley, but faced incredible resistance when he moved to the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), ultimately leading to his resignation after just two years (Oliver, 2017). Murphy's recollection of the Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment emphasized the exceptional support garnered by Chief Kelley and his successor, Chief Joseph D. McNamara, which was critical to conducting such an innovative experiment (Kelling et al., 1974). Indeed, despite the fact that many departments have increased their capability for research through the hiring of crime analysts, in-house criminologists, and officers' own initiatives (McGough, 2019; Mitchell & Naoroz, 2021), these capacities may be more appropriately described as exceptions to a culture intrinsically resistant to research and science (Rojek et al., 2015; Telep & Lum, 2014). Moving into the twenty-first century, these notable exceptions will need to become the norm if policing's culture is to become accepting of evidence and research.

The history of LEADS

In 2012, NIJ Policy Advisor Maureen McGough sat at the Annual International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Awards Ceremony and watched as awards were distributed for excellence in law enforcement research. All but one of the winning teams featured a collaboration between a police agency and academic partners. Incredibly, however, second place was given to a lone officer, Sergeant Renée Mitchell of the Sacramento Police Department, who had developed and carried out an original study of hot spots policing in her own jurisdiction (later published as Telep et al., 2014). As Maureen described it to us via email (August 10, 2020): “It was an impressive sight to say the least – all of these world class teams of a half dozen people, and then Renée up there on her own, generating research that could compete with some of the nation’s best criminologists.” Later, Maureen shared her thoughts with criminologist Geoff Alpert, who suggested there were probably ‘lots of Renées out there’ but, due to the resistance to research in policing described above, were probably not recognized for their ideas within their departments. Deeply inspired by Renée, Maureen set out to find them.

Maureen was eventually led to create the Law Enforcement Advancing Data and Science (LEADS) program in 2014. In partnership with John Firman of IACP, her program’s goals were to develop the research capacity of mid-career police officers who were passionate about improving the profession, and to ultimately nurture the next generation of law enforcement leadership to employ evidence-based policing in their communities. Mid-level officers were selected into the LEADS

program through a competitive application process. Those who were selected were granted the title of “LEADS Scholar” to signify that these sworn law enforcement officers were also engaged in rigorous, methodologically sound, academic research. The initial response was very positive, with the Scholars reporting greater confidence in integrating research into their police department’s operations as a result of their participation in the program. For example,

Through the LEADS program not only have I been exposed to opportunities to develop and flesh out some research project ideas, but access to tremendous resources and collaborate with smart people from police departments all over the country, and just to dig deeper, to have difficult conversations, and to work towards finding meaningful solutions to problems that are persistent throughout all of our agencies.

Wendy Stiver, Former Major, Dayton Police Department, Current Director of
Research and Procedural Justice, Charleston Police Department
(National Institute of Justice, 2018)

The LEADS program also garnered interest from international police officers who were similarly interested in developing skills and applying research to improve policing in their hometowns. When Rich Johnston from the Barrie Police Service in Canada inquired about applying to LEADS, he was initially denied as funding had only been approved for US applicants. Undeterred, Maureen worked with Laura Huey, a professor of sociology at the University of Western Ontario, to create LEADS

Scholars Canada and Inspector Johnston was accepted into its very first cohort. A similar program is in the works in Australia, led by Detective Inspector Mike Newman of the Queensland Police Service. While funding for the program has been approved, efforts to build LEADS Australia have been temporarily stifled by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Given that policing has historically been resistant to outside scrutiny and cultural change, it is unsurprising that the LEADS programs in the US and Canada evolved into safe spaces for the Scholars. The tight-knit culture of LEADS became so pervasive that Scholars began calling themselves the “Nerd Herd.” They printed matching t-shirts, with one specially made to appoint Maureen as “Head Nerd.” By bringing them together through the LEADS program, NIJ and IACP created a place for these exceptional officers to meet, interact, and bond with supportive peers, many after years of rejection and disapproval in their agencies. Consider the following letter, written by Sergeant Jeremiah Johnson of the Darien (CT) Police Department to Maureen McGough upon graduating from the LEADS program in June 2019:

I had very few friends left in my own agency. Three years in a row, LEADS has introduced me to a stellar cohort of likeminded practitioners ... I lost what little voice I had in my organization. LEADS gave me a national platform to share my work ... Supporting a large family on a single income greatly restricts my ability to attend academic and practitioner conferences. LEADS has emptied the federal coffers to send me across the country multiple times. Not only have I developed my CV and

grown my professional network, but these conferences and symposia have made me a better researcher and criminal justice scholar. I am insufferably stifled at work. Every LEADS trip, project, or paper that I have worked on has filled my sails enough to maintain headway. In sum, LEADS is not just the best thing to happen in my career, it saved my career.

Indeed, we have heard many Scholars say the LEADS program has made them feel included in a group and empowered to push forward for the first time in their law enforcement careers. This momentum inspired NIJ and IACP to expand, and in 2017, the LEADS Agencies program was born. LEADS Agencies was intended to assist departments in becoming evidence-based organizations and foster a culture encouraging the type of “research in the ranks” being conducted by Scholars (Cordner et al., 2017). In this way, Scholars would no longer have the “scars” and “war stories” of doing research in resistant organizations, as described by Former Newark (NJ) Captain and LEADS Alumnus, Ivonne Roman in a past tweet (@PD_PhD; June 23, 2018). Instead, they would be embraced and encouraged for their efforts to investigate and improve the agency. The program initially selected nine pilot sites, which had proposed projects designed to increase their in-house research capabilities and shift the culture of their agency to embrace more research. Ultimately, however, the program was phased out as it became clear that the shifting of an organizational culture required greater resources than LEADS had available (see, e.g., the following discussions on changing police organizational culture; Chan, 1996; Guyot, 1979).

Undeterred, NIJ and IACP expanded the program again in 2019 to include LEADS Civilians – a group of non-sworn police department employees such as crime analysts, and LEADS Academics – early career academic researchers with experience in conducting real-world research with police departments. The goal of the LEADS Civilians program is consistent with that of the LEADS Agencies program – to create an environment more conducive to the implementation of data and science in policing by acknowledging the important role of crime analysts and civilian planners in police departments and encouraging collaboration between the sworn Scholars and non-sworn Civilians.

The LEADS Academics program expanded the LEADS mission in a manner that is consistent with the history of policing research. Individual officers and civilians have been instrumental in developing and evaluating policing programs. Their positions allow them to conduct rapid, flexible evaluations without enduring lengthy processes, such as peer review, to get answers on what practices work in their agency (Potts, 2019). Yet, many influential policing studies, such as the Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment (Kelling et al., 1974), the Newark Foot Patrol Experiment (Police Foundation, 1981), and the Minneapolis Hot Spots Experiment (Sherman & Weisburd, 1995), were all conducted with the help of universities or research institutes. Consistent with this tradition, the LEADS Academics program provides academic research support for Scholars' own or collaborative projects. Second, creating the LEADS Academics program helps to connect officers and

agencies with potential neutral outside evaluators, as needed, on projects.

Accordingly, NIJ selected the four of us to serve as LEADS Academics in a three-year pilot program to develop connections between and among LEADS Scholars and Civilians with the expressed goal to create research collaborations and, ultimately, an expansion of evidence-based policing.

The first year of the LEADS Academics program

As we write this chapter, we are concluding the first year of the three-year LEADS Academics pilot program and planning the next phase. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic causing activities to be either cancelled or transitioned online from Spring 2020 into the unknown future, the Academics program still made progress in the first year. To start, in November 2019 all active LEADS Scholars, Civilians, and Academics attended the IACP Conference in Chicago, Illinois. This four-day annual meeting offers workshops, panels, exhibits, and social events to nearly 20,000 law enforcement leaders from around the world. In addition to attending the regularly scheduled IACP events, LEADS members had six hours of LEADS-specific programming, during which new and past members became acquainted, heard program updates and happenings, and received training. Training featured a primer on evidence-based policing taught by criminologist and LEADS Chief Research Advisor Gary Cordner, covering his guidebook on evidence-based policing in 45 small “bytes” (Cordner, 2020). Scholars also received a workshop on research methods for police

officers delivered by the Academics. The methods workshop covered important first steps for law enforcement officers beginning their own research ideas and projects:

- How to evaluate the quality of published research
- How to locate empirical resources, particularly when blocked by paywalls
- What to look for in an academic partner

For us, a highlight of the 2019 IACP conference was the unique opportunity it offered to network, learn from, and identify mutual research interests with the LEADS Scholars and Civilians. Later in this chapter, we describe four collaborations that emerged or were strengthened during the first year of the Academics program, some during those four days in Chicago.

Also in 2019, LEADS organizers introduced a peer-reviewed journal, “Perspectives on Research and Evidence-Based Policing,” to feature original research and commentaries from LEADS members (National Institute of Justice, 2020). The goals of this journal are to (1) encourage scientific research and publication among LEADS Scholars, (2) demonstrate the impact of evidence-based policing across individual agencies, and (3) disseminate translatable research by cops to cops. As many officers and agencies face challenges gaining access to peer-reviewed research due to expensive paywalls, the journal will also provide free access to recent research evidence on relevant policing issues. As noted by Lum and Koper (2017).

Evidence-based policing doesn't just require the generation and use of research knowledge to guide decision making. It also includes the processes and efforts used to make that information digestible, to translate it into usable forms, and to incorporate and institutionalize it into regular systems of policing.

Using Lum and Koper's recommendations as a springboard, the new LEADS journal facilitates the dissemination of evidence-based knowledge in translatable forms to police practitioners. As LEADS Academics, we are some of the journal's reviewers. The first papers were solicited in Fall 2019, and we reviewed seven submissions ranging from 1000 to 4500 words. In July 2020, NIJ published five articles, which covered topics like officer productivity, women in policing, and motor vehicle crashes (National Institute of Justice, 2020). In many cases, submitting a manuscript to this journal was the first experience the Scholars had with the peer-review process, so we took great care to provide detailed feedback on their writing, paper organization, and research methodologies.

Within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, planning for the second year of the Academics program is centered on activities that can be provided to the LEADS members over virtual platforms. In July 2020, LEADS held a virtual orientation meeting to welcome the new Scholars by overviewing the program and introducing current members. A subsequent virtual event was held in August 2020 to honor the 2017 class of LEADS Scholars with a formal graduation, including a

message from NIJ Director David Muhlhausen, presentations from a few graduates, and a discussion on policing during the pandemic.

LEADS continued to offer virtual roundtable discussions and trainings in the second half of 2020 and into 2021. In the past, roundtables where members discuss broad issues in research and how it can be used to address specific policing problems have been well received. One example of a particularly successful roundtable, led by criminologist and LEADS Chief Research Advisor Geoff Alpert, was held at the November 2018 Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology in Atlanta, GA. Here, current and former LEADS Scholars met with police researchers (including the soon to be Academics) and discussed ways to improve relationships between police practitioners and researchers. With law enforcement facing numerous challenges, future roundtables will concentrate on emerging research, pressing social topics, and translating research into the practice.

Feedback from members after the ASC roundtable and the IACP training on research methods reflected a collective request for more in-depth and hands-on methods training from the Academics. Many LEADS Scholars have training in research methods and statistics generally but would benefit from training on specific topics. Topics being considered for virtual trainings over the next year include: (1) Hot spots policing, (2) Predictive policing, (3) Developing a better policing toolkit/effective strategies and implementation tips, (4) Evaluating police academy training, (5) Policy and program evaluation, (6) Officer surveys, (7) Community

surveys, (8) Experimental design, (9) Do's and don'ts of analyzing trends in police data, (10) Grant writing, (11) Communicating research findings to police executives, and (12) Tips for working effectively as a consultant for research projects.

Notable scholar–academic collaborations

Lum and Koper (2017) explain that “evidence-based policing necessitates strong partnerships and increased communication and collaboration among researchers, analysts, and law enforcement officers.” A notable problem impeding these relationships, however, is created through perceptual and philosophical differences between police practitioners and scholars. Commonly, police practitioners will focus on individual problems, their specific characteristics, and the benefits that professional experience can offer to solve them. Academic scholars, meanwhile, tend to value the ability to generalize information about samples to the larger population using the scientific method. As a result, scholars and practitioners often view many problems facing policing through different lenses and tend to support different solutions. Participation in the LEADS program has offered numerous opportunities for Academics, Scholars, and Civilians to discuss these differences in-depth, identify mutual interests, and explore the skills and tools each can offer. Accordingly, the Academics program has resulted in, or significantly contributed to, the development of many productive research collaborations between the practitioners and the Academics. We described four such collaborations below.

Cory and Wendy

Wendy Stiver, then a Lieutenant in the Dayton (OH) Police Department (DPD), and Cory Haberman, an academic researcher at the University of Cincinnati, formed a partnership in 2015 before either became affiliated with the LEADS program. Their partnership began with a simple “cold” email from Cory to DPD, which was forwarded to Wendy. They initially wrote a federal grant application that was unfunded but jumpstarted a collaborative relationship and fueled Wendy’s interest in evidence-based policing. In the meantime, Cory conducted some crime analysis using DPD data and offered potential strategies that could be used to address some of the agency’s crime problems.

Inspired by those projects, Wendy applied and was selected to become a LEADS Scholar in 2015. She was then promoted to Major and assigned to oversee Dayton’s Oregon District, a central business and nightlife division, where she was asked to increase police presence and address crime. Upon assuming this role, she sought Cory’s advice on how to build an evidence-based police presence program for downtown Dayton. Together, they discussed the emerging literature on the effectiveness of foot patrols in hot spots (Novak et al., 2016; Piza & O’Hara, 2014; Ratcliffe et al., 2011), partly based on Cory’s experience on foot patrol projects in Philadelphia, and decided a foot patrol program would work well in Dayton. Cory conducted a hot spot analysis that was presented to Wendy and the other supervisors

working in her division, and six hot spots (including the Oregon District) were selected for the program. Cory interviewed the 20 officers who would implement the foot patrols in the hot spots and Wendy used these data to finalize the protocol for what later came to be called the Dayton Foot Patrol Project (see Haberman & Stiver, online first). The program was implemented in April 2017 and linked to a roughly 20 percent decrease in crime (see Haberman & Stiver, 2019).

The Dayton Foot Patrol Program dictated that officers exit their cruisers and conduct foot patrols whenever they entered one of the six designated hot spots. On the night of August 4, 2019, six officers were doing just that when a mass shooter opened fire on hundreds of people who were waiting to enter Ned Peppers Bar and milling about the Oregon District. Due to their proximity to the shooter and position on foot, the officers assigned to the Dayton Foot Patrol Project were able to take down the shooter in just 32 seconds. Although the shooting took the lives of nine people, injured dozens, and traumatized thousands more, the presence of foot patrol officers doubtlessly saved the lives of many people that night. As of 2020, Cory and Wendy are continuing their collaborative relationship as Wendy assumes her new role as Director of Research and Procedural Justice for the Charleston (SC) Police Department.

Natalie and Rachel

Natalie Todak, a researcher at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), met LEADS Scholar Rachel Tolber (then a Lieutenant, now a Commander with the Redlands California Police Department) at the 2018 meeting of the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Rachel was interested in researching women's experiences in US policing, inspired by her 20-year career in law enforcement, combined with academic literature she had read documenting the challenges faced by women in their attempts to promote and thrive in the profession (e.g., Archbold & Schulz, 2008; Rabe-Hemp, 2018). Since Natalie was an academic researcher with experience in interviewing and conducting focus groups with women officers and recruits (see, e.g., Todak, 2012, 2017; Todak et al., 2018; Todak et al., online first), they determined a mutual research interest and forged a collaboration.

They teamed up with Renée Mitchell, a retired Sergeant with the Sacramento Police Department, current Senior Police Researcher at RTI International, and the inspirational muse for the LEADS program. Together they designed and implemented two national-level, mixed methods data collection efforts focused on understanding the experiences of women in nontraditional positions in law enforcement. They collected survey and phone interview data with women from around the country who had served as members of elite specialty units (i.e., Bomb, SWAT, K9, and Motors) and in leadership positions. They conducted nearly 100 interviews and 1,000 surveys with women officers from around the US. Their data speaks to the unique experiences

of women officers, many of whom were the first in the history of their departments to serve in their respective roles. Their data also explores how these women trained for and earned their coveted positions and the challenges they faced along the way. Ultimately, the goal of the research is to identify avenues for increasing women's representation throughout policing, particularly in positions of power, and maximizing their impact on the field.

Kyle, Jason, and Terry

During the IACP meetings in October 2019, LEADS Scholars highlighted recruiting as a pressing issue facing police agencies across the country. For years, policing has been facing a dual problem of increasing attrition and a shrinking number of qualified applications (Wilson et al., 2010). In larger agencies, salary or job opportunities alone may draw a large applicant pool, but recruiting a diverse, well-qualified pool is more challenging. As Officer Terry Cherry, lead recruiter for Charleston (SC) Police Department put it: "if you want a class full of warm bodies, that's no problem, but we want the right people in our recruiting classes, and that's more difficult."

Her agency had begun experimenting with different approaches to improve the quality of incoming recruits. In this context, Kyle McLean, a scholar at Clemson University, approached Lieutenant and LEADS Scholar Jason Bruder of the Charleston PD to test the agency's recruiting materials on college students' willingness to apply for a job with a police department. Jason put Kyle in touch with

Officer Terry Cherry, and Terry and Kyle began developing a study in Spring 2020.

In part due to the supportive research culture of Charleston PD (featuring two LEADS Scholars and as one of the nine pilot sites for the LEADS Agencies pilot program), as well as her involvement in the recruiting study, Terry was recently accepted into the LEADS Scholars Class of 2020.

Justin and John

In March 2020, as the nation began confronting the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, NYPD Captain and LEADS Scholar John Hall approached Justin Nix about studying the effects on crime of the city-wide stay-at-home order in New York City (NYC). As of June 2, NYC had experienced 341 shootings in 2020, with a daily total ranging from 0 to 9 (mean 2.2). Consistent with similar studies conducted in other US cities (Ashby, 2020; Campedelli et al., 2020; Mohler et al., 2020), Nix and Hall found shootings had *not* declined as might have been hypothesized due to fewer potential offenders and victims interacting in time and space (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Hindelang et al., 1978). In fact, in the weeks following public protests over the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, shootings had begun to increase rapidly (Moskos, 2020). Time will tell if the increase is the start of a troubling trend or a momentary blip followed by a return to “normal” levels. The work is ongoing at the time of this writing, but preliminary findings are posted on Justin’s research blog (Nix et al.,

2020). The authors plan to submit their research for consideration in one of several upcoming special issues on COVID-19.

The future of the LEADS Academics program

As mentioned, in the first year of the LEADS Academics Pilot Program, the program's leadership turned over, and the COVID-19 pandemic prevented, numerous planned activities from taking place. It seems likely that the virus will do its best to impede the program's growth and development in year two. Despite these obstacles, we are optimistic for the future of the Academics Program and its role in diffusing evidence-based policing throughout the field. Below we discuss how the program could be expanded and best utilized moving forward.

We encourage LEADS leadership to continue the Academics program beyond the pilot phase. The success of the program during the first year, particularly for bridging relationships between scholars and practitioners passionate about evidence-based policing, cannot be understated. Moving forward, we recommend the program strive to admit a diverse collection of Academics, especially in terms of personal backgrounds, academic training, skills, and methodological expertise. Diversifying the Academics admitted to the program will expose LEADS Scholars and Civilians to a wider range of research possibilities and enhance the potential impact of future collaborative projects. Perhaps a new cohort of three or four Academics could be admitted every other year, allowing for one year of overlap between a "graduating"

cohort (i.e., those in their third and final year) and a newly admitted cohort. The graduating Academics could mentor and help the new cohort get acclimated, ensuring a smoother transition.

We also encourage early career policing scholars to apply to become LEADS Academics. We recognize the evidence-based policing movement is facing resistance from some academics and interest groups who are calling for the abolition of all research conducted in partnership with police agencies (Hannem & Schneider, 2020) and boycotting research involving predictive policing and the use of algorithms (Linder, 2020; Reynolds, 2017). There is certainly merit in some of the criticisms of evidence-based policing, including the potential for police departments to encourage favorable results and the potential for algorithms to reinforce inequalities in policing and criminal justice outcomes. However, these criticisms should not derail police–researcher partnerships altogether but inform and improve them.

With that being said, perhaps the most important benefits of the LEADS program are the tremendous networking opportunities. As an early career policing researcher, it is often difficult to earn the trust of police department managers and leaders, which is necessary before they will agree to communicate with you, share data, or enter into partnerships. This program can open doors for you—doors that likely would not have been opened otherwise. For example, Justin lives and works in Omaha but is collaborating with an NYPD Captain. Natalie is in Alabama and is collaborating with officers in California. Both Cory and Kyle are now working in

Charleston. Each of these partnerships can be, at least partially if not wholly, attributed to these folks' participation in LEADS.

There could also be room to expand the program to include student research assistants, recruited from doctoral programs in criminology, criminal justice, and related studies. Such a program could lead to increased access for doctoral students to police departments to collect data for their dissertations and would advance students who are committed to original data collection and are eager to become responsible and effective research partners. It would also connect LEADS members with talented students seeking research experience and networking with the people they study. Today, many criminology students graduate with a Ph.D. without ever having opportunities to interact with and collect data from agencies. Inclusion in the program would benefit both the participating students as well as the LEADS Scholars and Academics they eventually connect with.

There are also endless opportunities for LEADS Academics to enhance the important work being done by the LEADS Scholars and Civilians. Their research is not only focused on reducing crime and improving officer welfare and well-being, but also on important social issues such as reducing racial disparities in police and other criminal justice practices and promoting gender equality up the ranks of law enforcement. These ideas may face resistance in the officers' own departments but are encouraged in the LEADS community. Officers working to advance these ideas in their own agencies will need support. One next step for LEADS may be to facilitate

on-site work between the Scholars and Academics, where Academics travel to the agencies and work directly with them to answer research questions of interest to them. Often times, having outside support can drive new projects and initiatives.

Another option is to use the LEADS program to generate research on important, yet under-researched areas. LEADS Scholars and Academics could work together to simultaneously replicate studies on particular topics across the country. For example, Scholars could help design studies and implement programs in their agencies with the Academics providing external evaluation of the work. In this way, NIJ could quickly generate a volume of research on ideas important to the field using a network of pre-established research partnerships. While this would certainly require funding support, it has the potential to quickly address important policing topics that lack rigorous research.

To some extent, the LEADS program will likely develop organically. Many good ideas will emerge from the interactions and academic discussions LEADS facilitates. Members of the group will continue to talk to each other and build rapport and trust over time. Areas for improvement will be identified and solutions will be proposed. Clearly, the LEADS program is well on its way towards fulfilling the goals Maureen McGough originally had in mind when she developed the program back in 2014—to nurture a large group of future police leaders who understand the value and implementation of research, and a series of researcher–practitioner partnerships that will ultimately generate a body of evidence that can be translated into policy and

procedure. The LEADS Academics program is an important new addition contributing to this progress.

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