



2023 Culturally Specific Engagement Session Analysis

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1. Introduction

In September and October 2023, the Minneapolis Police Department conducted a series of five culturally specific engagement sessions to receive feedback and guidance on policy changes. These sessions were aimed at fostering a productive dialogue between law enforcement and the diverse communities they serve. The Department utilized DeYoung Consulting as facilitators and notetakers for these sessions to encourage conversations and capture community thoughts and opinions.

The five sessions were broken apart covering multiple topics and focused on specific cultural groups. Sessions focused on Use of Force policies, Stops, Searches, Citations, and Arrests (SSCA), Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals and Non-Discriminatory/Impartial Policing. These sessions were hosted at several locations across the city to ensure community members from different walks of life could converge to share their stories, grievances, and visions for a safer and more inclusive Minneapolis.

This analysis delves into the wealth of information gathered during these sessions, offering an in-depth examination of the themes, concerns, and aspirations voiced by the community. As we navigate the findings, it becomes evident that these critical pieces of feedback not only unearth challenges for the Department and trials suffered by the Community, but also unveil opportunities and moments of greatness that will spur transformative change within law enforcement practices, ensuring a more responsive, and community-centric approach by the MPD.

2. Methodology

Utilizing five culturally specific engagement sessions across multiple Minneapolis neighborhoods, the Minneapolis Police Department worked to ensure a broad spectrum of individuals that live, work, or play in Minneapolis. The sessions, while conducted by the Department, were facilitated by DeYoung Consulting Services: a certified minority-owned business focused on providing training, organizational development, evaluation, and outreach and communication services working with various types of institutions.

Each two-hour session shared a common agenda format, where leadership from the MPD, such as Chief Brian O’Hara, Assistant Chief Christopher Gaiters, and Commander Yolanda Wilks, would introduce the session’s primary topic. The lead facilitator would then remind participants of the purpose and ground rules for these discussions before breaking them into smaller groups each led by a facilitator and accompanied by a notetaker, who would transcribe these notes. Both the facilitator and notetakers were provided by DeYoung, and not part of the MPD.

The MPD broke apart the five sessions covering: 1) Use of Force, 2) Stops, Searches, Citations, and Arrests, and 3) Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals and Non-Discriminatory/Impartial Policing. Each of these topic areas received one to two sessions each. The MPD steered these sessions toward the Native American, LGBTQIA, East African, African American, and Latinx communities. At the conclusion of these sessions, DeYoung Consulting provided the MPD with copies of all the notes transcribed during these sessions for analysis.

The MPD utilized its newly formed Implementation Unit, a primarily civilian team, to analyze these notes over the coming weeks. During this time, the Unit members worked tirelessly to catalogue and identify potential action items from nearly the three hundred pieces of feedback received. At no point was any portion of the feedback notes disregarded, and each piece of feedback was read and reviewed by multiple members of the Unit. The Unit operated on the following timeline to accomplish the large task of entering, cataloging, and analyzing the provided data:

Primary Step	Secondary	Assigned	Reviewed and Entered
Review and Enter Notes	All Sessions	Nov. 27 th	Dec. 15 th
Data Integrity/Analysis		Nov. 27 th	Jan. 3 rd
Session Analysis Findings White Paper			Jan. 5 th

The Unit utilized both qualitative and quantitative measures where possible to guide the findings and potential action items to consider. Regardless, if an action item could be prescribed to a piece of feedback, the Unit made sure all pieces of feedback were read, analyzed, and where possible, incorporated into future policy amendments, and will continue to do so.

To catalogue the pieces of feedback garnered, the Implementation Unit sorted pieces of feedback into the following primary topic areas, allowing each piece of feedback to be tagged into multiple areas:

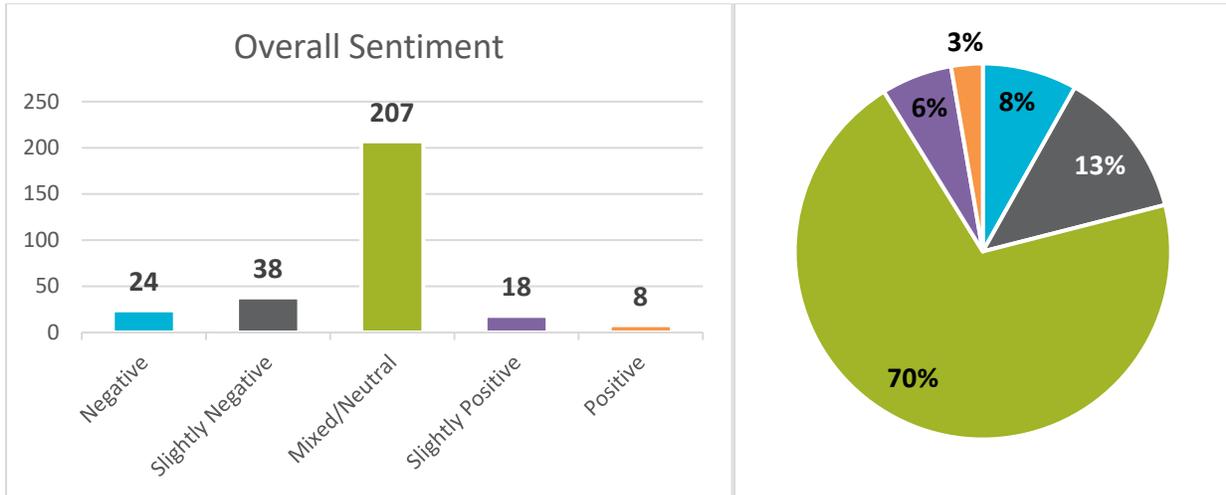
- **Accountability:** ways to improve officer oversight or holding individuals responsible
- **Collaboration:** focused on ways to solve these problems together through partnerships
- **Community Education:** improving community knowledge around policing, MPD resources, and MPD practices
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** comments focused on improving cultural sensitivity and empathy or general DEI efforts
- **Engagement:** ways MPD can or should engage with the community
- **Facilitator:** comments from the facilitator that were reiterating or asking a clarifying question
- **Mental Health:** feedback around the mental wellbeing of both community members and officers
- **Miscellaneous:** comments that were off topic or unrelated, such as a participant saying “Sorry” to another participant
- **Narrative:** a story or personal experience from a community member
- **Policy:** feedback that contained a policy recommendation or sentiment about an existing policy
- **Recruitment:** ways the Department should consider its recruitment efforts and the types of officers the MPD should be recruiting
- **Technology:** feedback around the use of technology in providing policing services
- **Training:** suggestions or comments about the type and quality of training for officers
- **Union:** commentary about the Police Federation and the impact the Union has on Minneapolis policing
- **Wellness:** feedback focused on improving the officer safety net to ensure they are cared for

3. Key Findings

Utilizing these definitions, in the below table, “Feedback Category”, the Unit found the sessions were well focused on the policy discussion overall with training, accountability, and engagement following. We notice that the use of stories to communicate the community members’ sentiment about policing was also used to a great extent.

During these sessions, the community provided just under two hundred pieces of feedback that could lead to an action item for the Department to consider out of slightly under three hundred received.

These sessions had a negative to positive ratio of approximately 3 to 1 highlighting the negative perception of the MPD by the community members that attended these sessions. This highlights the long path the Department has in rebuilding community trust and perception of their services, but it is also notable that a significant portion of feedback had a more neutral tone.



These sessions had a resounding focus on improving policy, providing credible training, sharing their personal stories, and additional routes for engagement.

One community member stated, “It makes me mad. They use excessive force with colored people if we get an attitude, they’re so quick to put their hands on us. If you’re walking you fit the description of... Yesterday there was a young girl ... police asked, “can I ask you a few more questions?” I said, “excuse me we are on the way to bury my brother.” She said because you fit a description. I just found out my nephew is homeless. Cop: “Why was he leaving your building at 4 in the morning?” “To get fresh air.” They said the dude was 6’4 and my nephew’s only 5’9. I told him no. “We’re going to call more squad cars.” I’m like no. They’re not taking you, you did nothing wrong. And they were like, “where were you from 2-4 am?” You guys aren’t taking my nephew from me. They kept saying needed to go downtown. Just because he’s black you assume he’s a suspect.” ~10/10 Session. This community member shared their story of how a MPD officer impacted their life in a hurtful way during a very traumatic moment of their life.

Another member exhibited a strong desire from both the youth of their community wanting to engage with the officers in meaningful ways. This member stated, “We had about close to a dozen kids that signed up(Community officer program) Having a conversation and seeing others were here and talking to the youth , including people in the East African community. Somali American Police Association. They need to advocate for their communities. Need to connect with those police officers. Need more community engagement with the officers. Neighborhood [sic] night out etc. They need to take the leap. There was an event at Little earth.” 10/19 Session.

Community members placed a strong emphasis on improving the policy that officers must follow, ensuring transparency in actions, and having appropriate oversight mechanisms that are communicated with the public.

Attendees also encouraged a focus on Mental Health and Wellness for both officers and the communities they serve. During Use of Force discussions, members desired a strong emphasis on using less force and more de-escalation coupled with alternative models. They found that there needs to be increased patrols in areas they do not feel safe such as train and bus areas.

The focus on new approaches revolves around involving communities more. People want the Department to focus on engaging with them to build trust. They appreciate being part of the feedback process but want more officers to join these sessions. There's a call for more diversity, inclusion, and cultural sensitivity, especially when it comes to use of force decisions in the MPD.

In the decision-making process, it's crucial to prioritize both officer safety and the well-being of the people they interact with. Attendees highlighted the need for alternative approaches to traditional policing, like community-based options and a stronger focus on de-escalation and non-lethal interventions. They also requested additional policing services in particular areas that they have had negative experience from criminal activity.

Another significant theme centered around handling incidents and their aftermath, acknowledging the trauma they cause in communities. Attendees stressed the importance of robust post-incident protocols, victim rights, support systems, and transparent review processes. Upholding ethical and procedural integrity in all interactions is essential, especially in these critical moments.

4. Learnings and Actions to Consider

In this learning endeavor, the Department has numerous potential actions it can consider helping it in its improvement process. The community is providing the Department clear direction that the way it is currently operating is not sufficiently meeting community expectations and should focus its efforts in five key improvement areas: Policy, Training, Engagement, Accountability, and Community Education. Note the percentage totals are the number of times that Feedback Area was identified as share of the total Feedbacks received, and since a piece of feedback can be catalogued into multiple areas, the total will sum to over 100%.

4.1. Policy (36%)

The attendees conveyed concerns that old policies and standards are still being used such as quotas. Additional members expressed a policy goal of reducing the number of stops and increasing feedback loops from the community about these changes in enforcement practices as it relates to policy. Additionally, community members recognized that our existing policy may be sufficient, but it is too complicated for both officers and members at large to understand. For example, individuals requested these potential considerations:

- Instead of creating multiple new policies, the MPD should focus on simplifying existing policy, especially as it relates to Use of Force
- Increase ability of officers to call out behavior of supervisors that they find questionable
- Start or continue working sessions where community members dive deep into actual policy language
- Incorporate kindness and compassion into the mission/vision statements
- Provide communication of accountability taken to the community and require it in policy to do so

However, policy is not the be all and end all in improving the Department, but rather the starting point.

4.2. Training (35%)

The community found that training officers with better tools would likely lead to improved outcomes for all parties involved in any incident. Training should allow officers to better relate to community members and empower officers to better communicate with individuals they stop. Also, this training needs to be frequent and ongoing to make sure that best practices are constantly incorporated in the Department. As examples, attendees found these potential actions to consider:

- Increase training around use of force, in particular de-escalation tactics
- Incorporate more real life examples, especially ones around Stops, Searches, Citations, and Arrests
- Incorporate more medical training to help officers respond to mental health crises
- Increase cultural training to help officers understand cultural sensitivities that may come into play during interactions
- Increased training on Mental Health and crisis intervention
- Training officers on LGBTQ issues

Training is just one component that helps build a resilient department of employees that are equipped to handle the highly demanding situations the city needs them to.

4.3. Engagement (28%)

In modern law enforcement, bolstering community engagement stands as a paramount strategy and must incorporate additional connections between officers and the communities they serve. These deliberate efforts can foster mutual empathy and understanding, ultimately building a stronger and more cohesive relationship. From the feedback notes, the MPD should consider the following actions:

- Find additional methods for officers to engage within the community such as:
 - Increasing “Beat Patrols”
 - More time out of the car
 - Regular interactions at community events
- Find alternative/non-traditional methods to allow community members and police to see the humanity in both parties
- Require officers to carry business cards to provide during stops – including a QR code for a survey
- Focus on recruitment efforts for future officers from members of the community they serve

By improving the engagement between officers and the communities they serve, the MPD can build the trust necessary to improve community safety by being able to forge new and cultivate existing partnerships with community-based organizations.

4.4. Accountability (28%)

Within the Accountability section, the Department should focus on changing and improving the culture of the organization. This requires the Department to make sure to hold officers accountable in a fair and transparent manner and ensure the MPD communicates these decisions and processes to the public. As examples, the Department could consider these potential actions:

- Create and present processes that confirm officer attendance at trainings

- Include a QR code for a survey of the community members experience after an interaction to encourage more feedback on officer performance
- Office of Police Conduct Review needs stronger teeth to be a meaningful oversight committee
- Ensure communication of accountability measures and discipline to the community

Proper accountability and oversight allows members of the public to know that the high standards expected of officers is lived up to, and helps enhance all other areas of improvement by making sure the feedback loops are reaching the appropriate decision makers.

4.5. Community Education (23%)

Community Education in policing is vital for fostering transparency and trust. The MPD has a number of resources that the feedback shows that not all members know about, and increasing community knowledge on policing practices helps all parties. It empowers members of the public to access resources they need in critical moments and ensures the public knows about the activities the MPD is undertaking. If the community doesn't know about them, they may as well not exist. To that end, the MPD should consider:

- Start or increase community education sessions covering policing practices
- Start or increase community seminars on existing police transparency practices
- Ensure timely updates to dashboards both for discipline and crime statistics
- Create a podcast with officers explaining why particular policies exist
- Increase the number of learning interactions between members and officers
- Find additional ways to have more positive police interactions (outside of law enforcement capacity)

The more the MPD knows of the communities they serve and the community of the MPD, the better each can respond to and guide improvements in public safety.

5. Conclusion

This comprehensive examination of the culturally specific feedback sessions underscores the critical need and resounding call from community members for improving law enforcement within Minneapolis. The profound messages and powerful stories from members paint a vivid picture of lived experiences of individuals' interactions with the Department, which can serve as a catalyst to improve. These pieces of feedback will allow the Department to craft policy that is both effective and responsive to the community needs.

However, it doesn't end there. The community is demanding heightened accountability of officers, which is a fundamental building block in earning the community's trust. The Department must provide multiple avenues for accountability and provide that information to community members in full transparency. Officer training will be a critical investment, not something that can be ignored, toward fostering a more empathetic and culturally sensitive approach within the Minneapolis Police Department.

Equally crucial is finding ways to bridge the divide between officers and the individuals they serve through increased engagement. Forging and constantly cultivating these relationships is a mandate from the community, and one that can provide an opportunity to not only enhance trust but improve community safety. Equally important is the communication of actions taken by the Department and the status of public safety in Minneapolis so the community can be educated on the resources available, and progress made during this process.

The insights gleaned from these sessions will not merely be catalogued and placed on the shelf but will be a compass guiding the Department toward a future where collaboration, understanding, and collective action will form a bedrock of a safer, more equitable Minneapolis. As the Department continues to improve, we continue to ask for your support, patience, and trust as we navigate this together.

6. Disclaimer

While transparency and access to data is important, we are limited in our ability to publish all the actual comments we received to preserve the privacy of those people who comment.