Innovation Exchange

innovate (în'e-vat): v. To renew; to introduce something new; to be creative.

The need to achieve excellence through innovation to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in any industry is not new. And so too is it the case in policing. Many of us have brought back “new” ways of doing things as a result of our conversations and interactions with our colleagues at training sessions, incident scenes and social events. We have all faced problems that were as simple as equipment issuance to those as involved as internal communications, morale and department policy. Usually, we try and resolve them ourselves, frequently through trial and error, but periodically we stumble upon that wonderful pearl of wisdom, obtained from a colleague, that is just the right fix - and inevitably leaves us wondering "why didn't we think of that?"

The *Innovation Exchange* is a simple, yet effective “knowledge transfer” program whereby we send some of you to other cooperating agencies to “ride-along” with your counterparts for about half-a-day/shift to learn about those things they do better than us. You can then bring this new learning back to our agency to improve our operations. We will offer the same arrangement to those cooperating agencies.

Clearly, some might not consider the ideas you bring back as “innovations.” And they may not be innovations on the strict sense of the word. However, these ideas will become part of our on-going effort to incrementally improve our operations. Whether we call them best practices, innovations or just great ideas is not as important as their ability to help us improve our service to the community, increase various efficiencies or better support each other.

Re-inventing the wheel is not a cost- effective, nor efficient method of solving mutual problems or issues we face in our day-to-day work lives. If we can somehow access the experiences of our fellow policing professionals, learning about their successes and failures, we will leverage our available time and resources in an incredibly powerful manner. The on-going march toward excellence is incremental in nature. If we can improve our processes, policies and procedures a little at a time, before long we will achieve a marked increase in the overall quality of our organization.

We work in the most dynamic of environments - society. We are a people-intensive organization from both internal (our employees) and external (citizens) perspectives. And, as we can all attest, people are rarely static. Because our environment is so fluid and fraught with change, we must be constantly aware of the impact this has on our department and our ability to protect our community. In the private sector, a business' survival in today's highly competitive economy is contingent on its ability to maintain a healthy bottom line through constant innovation. Similarly, our organizational survival,

while not driven by a profit motive, is contingent on our ability to enhance the public's rust and confidence in us and to meet our customers' expectations (i.e. put criminal in jail, provide traffic safety, respond quickly, etc.) and increasingly, "do more with less."

This is what the *Innovation Exchange* is all about - maintaining our "competitive edge" through innovation by discovering how our colleagues in other departments are doing things better than we are. Both the big things (i.e. pursuit policy) and the seemingly inconsequential stuff, like how to get reports turned in and signed-oft in a timely manner, should be subject to examination and improvement.

This concept has many dimensions and applications, but the most powerful may be the interaction of supervisors from different agencies, in a work environment like their own, where they can see how alternative methods are implemented and have applicability to their own operations. For example, patrol sergeants, and records, dispatch and investigative supervisors, who, with this concept in mind, visit their counterparts in other agencies, are in the best position to note potential benefits to their own day-to-day operations. These people are the glue that holds our organization together. They lead from a position that sees daily the inner workings of our day-to-day operations. As such, they are in perfect positions to identify areas needing improvement.

The attached pages provide a partial list of topic areas to help participants focus on this process – a sort of road map to the discovery of innovation – and a brief form that documents the areas of potential improvement on which we can follow-up.

Our future organizational success depends on our ability to create "Raving Fans" of our customers - citizens, bosses and politicians. By sharing with our colleagues our ideas, victories and defeats, and then translating this information into positive changes within our organization, we can ensure we meet this goal.

Innovation Exchange
Pre-Visit Considerations

The purpose of this program is to observe how your colleagues in other departments are doing things in areas that may have proven problematic to our agency (to your subordinates, supervisors or to you personally). Therefore, it is non-productive for you to view the agency you are visiting with the mind-set of "We do this better than they do." Rather, you must focus on those areas where the other organization does things better than our own.

You may not know how this other agency does specific things unless you ask specific questions (i.e. “how do you select officers for special assignments?” or, “how do you ensure reports are done and turned -in and signed-off in a timely manner?”) The person you are working with probably doesn't know what things they do that have relevance to our work. So, ask lots of questions and keep your eyes (and mind) open!

It will be natural to spend time comparing pay and benefits, working conditions or leadership. However, getting stuck on these topics makes this natural curiosity problematic if you do not stay focused on the purpose of your visit. So, after some reasonable comparisons of pay, benefits and working conditions, please move onto other topics.

The following items are examples of the areas you should be looking at (in no particular order). Obviously, you cannot examine all of them in the short time you will be visiting the other agency, but this gives you a starting point.

Internal Communications (between
units, up/ down the chain of command)
External communication via social media
Career Development Quality Programs Hiring
Officer Safety and Wellness Programs or Strategies
Recruitment and Hiring
Promotional Processes
Disciplinary process
Employee Recognition
Department Mission, Vision and Values Training
Use of Force Investigations/policy
Pre-shift briefing procedures
Post incident de-briefing procedures
(i.e. after in-progress calls, major events, etc.).
Report taking (phone, forms, people)
Use of Civilian Investigators/Report Takers
Use of Volunteers

Crime Analysis
Community Policing Strategies
Specialty/Street Crime Units
Police/School Liaison groups
Personnel Evaluations
Response to Dept. Vehicle Accidents
Customer Service Programs
Interns
Firearms Qualifications
Uniform Standards
Patrol Activities (directed, re- active, pro-active)
Body worn cameras
Surveillance cameras,
ALPR cameras
General use of technology
Grant Acquisitions
Fund Raising
Deployment (schedules, concepts)
Non-sworn Employee involvement
Organizational Decision-making
Field training Programs
Field Officer's Resource Material
Handling Major Incidents
Report Sign-offs
Citizen Involvement (Citizen Academy, volunteers, etc.)
Leadership Training
Traffic Enforcement
Equipment issues
Cost recovery
POA/Administration Relationship Notifications
Dispatch functions Narcotics Enforcement Internal Affairs
Etc.

Innovation Exchange
Post-Visit Debriefing

This form is to be completed immediately upon finishing your *Innovation Exchange* visit.

Your name: _____

Date of Visit: _____

Duration of visit: _____

Name of person with whom you mostly interacted:

_____

Their assignment: _____

Areas you focused on

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please list at least three things the agency does better than we do:

1.
_____

2.
_____

3.
_____

4.
_____

5.