

City of Portland Downtown Police Cadet Program

Program Evaluation, 2015-2016

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The City of Portland, Maine and Portland Downtown, the city's downtown business improvement district (BID), collaborate on the co-management of the Downtown Portland Police Cadet program. The cadet program exemplifies a community policing model that increases the community's perception of public safety while providing valuable training to the next generation of police officers. The popularity of the program within the community in previous years led the partners to increase cadet staff for the 2015 season. Maintaining the increase in staff for the 2016 season provided an opportunity to evaluate the program for continuous quality improvement, while less detailed data collection in 2015 and late season staffing changes in 2016 presented unique challenges to program evaluation.

Introduction

The community policing model operates on the assumption that police cannot solve public safety problems alone, and that the public plays a role in addressing public safety problems. (Community Oriented Policing Services , 2012) In response to negative attitudes around corrupt policing, the community policing model has evolved to become the norm for police departments nationwide, a model that puts law enforcement professionals in a position to work directly with the community as partners in problem solving to resolve crime and violence within communities. Positive public attitude and participation in community safety is critical to public health and safety because negative perceptions of public safety professionals can hinder police efforts. (Police Assessment Resources Center, 2008) Common partners in community policing models include governmental agencies, community-based organizations, social service providers, businesses and the media.

For many years, the City of Portland, Maine and the city's business improvement district (BID), Portland Downtown, have co-managed a Downtown Portland Police Cadet program in an effort to improve perceptions of safety in the city's downtown district. Cadets are training for careers in law enforcement or the military, and the program gives them valuable hands-on experience in the field of community policing to complement their career training. They are sworn in as constables with the City of Portland, and watch for and report on safety issues, educate the public on local ordinances, and have the authority to write citations for ordinance violations. Portland Downtown's mission is to maintain a clean and safe downtown while building and promoting a vibrant business, residential and tourism destination. Supplemental services provided by Portland Downtown include maintaining cleanliness and safety in the district, an area that is accessible by nearly 14 miles of sidewalk, and includes several public parks, City Hall, and two City-owned and -operated parking garages that house public restroom facilities. To provide safety services for its property and business owner constituents, Portland Downtown maintains the cadet program collaboration with the City of Portland's Police Department during the busy summer months.

Like most thriving major cities, Portland struggles with common urban issues, including panhandling, vagrancy, loitering and substance abuse, by-products of homelessness that have been identified as top concerns among downtown businesses, fearing these behaviors will negatively affect Portland's tourism industry. The cadet program is a partnership that provides for public safety in the district by adding security in public areas that see an influx of traffic in the summer months due to an increase in tourism and transient populations that come to Portland because of its pleasant summer climate and abundant amenities. The program epitomizes the community policing model, and is a long-standing program that has adapted with the changing face of law enforcement. In addition to patrolling the downtown area, cadets' duties include talking to business owners and connecting with local homeless outreach teams to resolve issues of loitering and panhandling. Their positions certainly focus on ordinance issues, but have risen to the challenge of addressing quality of life issues that a tourist or business owner sees, focusing as well on making perceptions of Portland a clean and safe destination in which to live, work and visit.

Program Implementation

Portland is generally a safe city and sees crime reductions annually, but Portland Downtown must remain vigilant as perception translates to reality for many. This requires continuous work to create a comfortable experience for visitors, business owners, employees and residents. Additionally, the influx

of tourist and transient populations downtown equates to many newcomers who do not necessarily understand the city's regulations, resulting in conflicts that are easily resolved through outreach and education in the community rather than police intervention. Portland Downtown manages safety concerns through a close working relationship with the police and fire departments, human service agencies, and city staff, and funds the staffing of four full-time cadets from May through September.

With perception being the key concern for business owners downtown, the cadet program bridges the gap between enforcing ordinances and providing public relations for both business owners and tourists. The city's police department collects and tracks daily stats from each cadet team by area of patrol, so that they may interpret the data for hotspots and apply its community policing and outreach efforts strategically, and the cadets share the stats with Portland Downtown's program manager to analyze and share with downtown constituents. Cadets meet with their police lieutenant supervisor at the start of each shift, are informed of assignments for the day, and check e-mail for communication from Portland Downtown and area businesses.

The cadet program has evolved since inception, from a more crime-focused police department internship to a community policing model that encompasses ordinance enforcement, community education, and tourism. Cadets, under Portland Downtown's umbrella of service provision, help Portland Downtown achieve its mission of ensuring a safe downtown. In their preparation for careers in law enforcement or the military, they seek valuable hands-on experience in the community. As part of their duties, they make contact with business owners, identify persons in need of social service assistance, and can enforce local municipal ordinances. Due to the popularity of the program, Portland Downtown increased the cadet program to four cadets in 2015, up from two cadets in previous years. For safety reasons cadets, like foot beat officers, work in teams of at least two. With a staff of four, cadets are able to break up into groups of two and cover a larger area during their shifts.

The 2016 season was the second year employing four cadets. This was also the first season that Portland Downtown provided for full-time program management with the hiring of its Downtown Experience Liaison, which allowed for the collection of more detailed stats, as well as liaising on several community engagement opportunities.

Cadet Activity: 2015-2016

Four cadets worked during both the 2015 and 2016 seasons. They began the season on May 26th, Memorial Day weekend, and worked through September 9th in 2015, and they began work on May 31st, Memorial Day Weekend, and worked through October 8th in 2016. This span of time is the busiest tourism season for Portland's downtown and for Maine, coupled with higher than average transient populations living outside during the mild summer season. This combination of visitors to the city provides ample opportunity for the cadets to interact with a variety of people representing many socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

The cadets spent a significant amount time during the season making safety checks, known in law enforcement as special attention checks. Special attention checks are focused patrols in areas that are either very high in foot traffic or known to be concentrated with transients, crime or nuisances, such as graffiti. Many special attention checks include all of the parks downtown, certain alleyways and parking lots, public transportation hubs, and parking garages. In addition, the cadets spent time each day,

especially early in the season, introducing themselves and their role in the community to business owners.

While cadets have the ability to write summonses for ordinance violations, they are encouraged to gently warn violators as a mode of community education rather than create poor public relations for the city's tourist industry. They tend to focus on issues that a tourist or business owner sees that might create negative perceptions of business prosperity, such as loitering or blocking a public way, drinking in public, and smoking in public parks.

Community Involvement

In addition to special attention checks, business contacts, and ordinance violation warnings, the cadets had many opportunities to get involved in a variety of activities in the community, which they reported on during the 2016 season. There were several occasions when the cadets assisted the foot beat officers with arrests. They met with refugee and immigrant populations at a social service provider's office to answer questions about laws in the US and what a job with the police department is like. There were many events during the season that required additional crowd control, including a street fair, a political rally, several community events, and freedom of speech protests. A suspicious package was dropped off at the site of regular freedom of speech protests, and the cadets assisted with traffic control while the situation was investigated. There was also a terrorism threat to police head-quarters, and cadets assisted with traffic control while the situation was investigated. The cadets also assisted with a back to school *Fill A Backpack* event with other law enforcement officers, and participated in *Cop Camp*, a week-long summer camp that introduces young children to law enforcement as a career.

Quantitative Outcomes

During the 2015 season, the cadets:

- Made nearly 4,000 safety checks;
- Gave over 1,000 warnings pertaining to violations of local municipal ordinances;
- Assisted law enforcement with issuing 11 summonses; and
- Made contact with over 1,000 local businesses.

The cadets reported their activity during the 2015 season to their supervisor at the police department, but Portland Downtown did not have active management of the program on staff. Therefore, data collection and reporting detail was somewhat limited in 2015 without a designated Portland Downtown program manager. For the 2016 program year, the program manager obtained some data from the police department from the previous season, but reporting was limited and did not align with all reporting points for the 2016 season as data reporting to Portland Downtown became routine. With an end of season evaluation in mind, the program manager requested clarification on the data on several occasions, and met with the cadets to obtain feedback, including performing an end of year focus group.

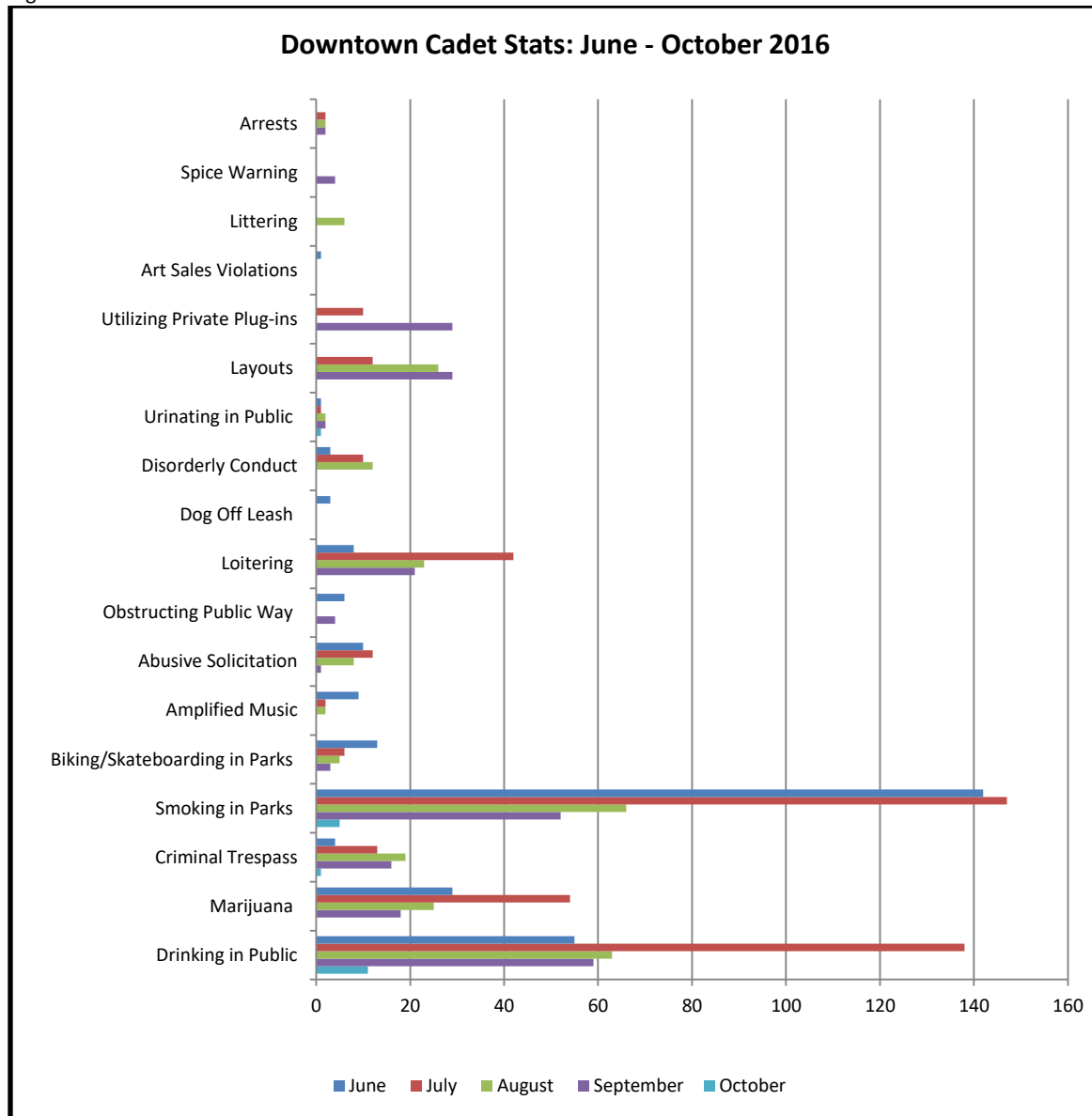
During the 2016 season, the cadets:

- Made over 2,000 safety checks;
- Gave nearly 700 warnings pertaining to violations of local municipal ordinances;
- Assisted law enforcement with issuing nine summonses; and
- Made contact with 400 businesses.

Smoking in public parks and drinking in public were the two most common ordinance violation warnings the cadets gave (412 and 326 respectively), with the month of July showing the highest numbers for

both offenses (147 and 138 respectively). Marijuana use and loitering warnings were higher than usual in July as well, nearly double the number of warnings for each offence than in any other single month. A new data category, spice warning, was introduced later in the season as the drug became more prevalent in Portland. Figure 1 details the type of warning by month for the 2016 season. Note: June's numbers include May 31st, and October's numbers include only the first eight days of this month.

Figure 1



In addition to public smoking, drug and alcohol use, there were signs of transiency and homelessness that the cadets addressed through ordinance violation citations, including layouts, urinating in public, disorderly conduct, loitering, obstructing public way, abusive solicitation (aggressive panhandling), and criminal trespassing. This mode of addressing social service need fell short of having an impact as the cadets found they were warning the same individuals repeatedly. As well, the neighborhood prosecutor at the police department reported no-shows at court for most criminal citations when the cadets issued them.

Change in Activity: 2015 – 2016

Although comparing the 2015 season to the 2016 season was challenging because of the limited data collection and reporting during the 2015 season, overall numbers for each season were obtained for comparison.

Table 1 details cadet activity and the change in activity between 2015 and 2016.

Table 1

Activity	2015 Totals	2016 Totals	2015 -2016 Change
Special Attention Checks	3827	2154	44% Decrease
Business Contacts	1130	400	65% Decrease
Ordinance Violation Warnings	837	693	17% Decrease
Drinking in Public	525	318	39% Decrease
Marijuana	139	100	28% Decrease
Criminal Trespass	16	48	200% Increase
Summons	11	9	18% Decrease

Several factors contributed to the reduced numbers in almost all activity areas during the 2016 season:

- A reduction in staff midway through the season and subsequent reduction in patrol area;
- An encouraged focus on community policing and warnings versus ordinance violation citations; and
- A deliberate strategy to implement the most effective method of dealing with vagrancy and loitering, which contributed to the only increase in ordinance violation warnings (criminal trespassing).

While the 2016 season represented an extended season as compared to the previous year, by the second week of August the cadets worked as one team rather than two after one cadet was hired by the police department as a full-time officer, leaving his role as a cadet to begin training at the law enforcement academy in Vassalboro, Maine. In addition, a third cadet worked reduced hours beginning in late August while attending college locally. For safety reasons, the cadets are scheduled to work in groups of at least two, so these staffing changes limited their patrol to one group beginning early in August for the 2016 season.

In an effort to present a positive image of community policing to the public, the cadets' supervisor at the police department discourages aggressive ordinance violation citations, instead encouraging warnings as a mode of public education. As well, the cadets experienced some pushback around ordinance violation warnings and recognized that even a citation carries little legal ramifications for transient populations who tend to loiter, smoke and drink alcohol in the public parks, with little likelihood of appearing in court according to their summonses. In fact, most incidents of summonses for the summer resulted in no-shows at the courthouse. Consequently, the significant increase in criminal trespass violations (200%) highlights a focused effort on loitering and panhandling and the influx the city has seen after an anti-panhandling ordinance was overturned in court. Criminally trespassing someone is a bit more effective as compared to citing for an ordinance violation. The cadets were occasionally discouraged by the minimal effect an ordinance violation citation had, feeling the process didn't "hold a lot of weight" because there were no repercussions for not showing up in court. Criminally trespassing someone holds

more weight because the write up is on record and will result in the violator being arrested if found in the location again.

Qualitative Outcomes: 2016

At the end of the 2016 program season, Portland Downtown's program manager held a focus group with two of the cadets, their supervising sergeant, and two foot beat officers who patrolled the same area as the cadets. Cadets were asked about their training experience and their overall experience with the program, how the program affected their perceptions and attitudes about policing, and what they liked and disliked about the program. The open nature of the questions allowed for ample discussion. In addition to finding out more about the cadet's experiences, the sergeant talked about the hiring process and potential for program expansion.

In addition to managing the cadet program internally, early in the season the program manager at Portland Downtown applied for an award opportunity with the International Downtown Association (IDA). The IDA awarded the program its Award of Excellence within the 2016 Downtown Achievement Awards in the Leadership and Management category. Award results were shared widely within the community for press opportunities and the corresponding trophy remains on display at Portland Downtown's office. The program's description and supportive documents are available on the IDA's website as a replicable model for other BID's nationally and internationally.

Program Hiring Process

The City of Portland's Human Resources Department posted the cadet job description on the City's website with all city-wide job postings. Applicants needed to be at least 18 years old, and the job was described as a paid internship opportunity in partnership with a school's law enforcement program. The city received 30 applications for the five cadet positions; four downtown cadets and one Peaks Island cadet. Moving forward, the police department would like to actively seek qualified candidates from local colleges with students looking for law enforcement experience. This is because they find the best pool of applicants among students going to school locally so that they are available for the full season, which extends into October. The program is an opportunity for the cadets to tryout the community policing model and for the police department to groom future police officers.

Cadet Training and Management

One cadet who served during both the 2015 and 2016 program years felt that the training was more structured and organized in 2016, specifically that there was more briefing on what they might encounter in the field. The sergeant present indicated the police department would like to aim to rehire from previous years' cadets so they could begin with prior experience, which reduces the need for extensive training.

Training and management of the cadets is currently at capacity in the police department, therefore, expanding the program would add significant administrative cost. Summer cadet management alternates somewhat seamlessly with public school resource officer management, which contributes to keeping costs low, so expanding the program beyond the busy summer season into the holiday season during the school year would require additional administrative cost.

Daily Experience

The cadets expressed wanting to get into law enforcement initially so they could contribute to fighting crime. One cadet felt the job was an eye-opening experience, one that could not have been experienced in a classroom. Daily work for the cadets provided experience dealing with public drug use and mental illness, working with police officers in the field, finding popular hangouts for illegal activity, report writing, and generating paperwork, as well as participating in community education and events.

Local Community Policing

One cadet explained that he liked the local aspect of law enforcement in Portland, and that he liked getting to know local people. They felt there is a different dynamic in Portland from more rural communities, and that they were able to experience a broad spectrum of government departments working together, i.e., federal officers with the FBI, waterfront officials, Department of Homeland Security. They liked working with local law enforcement where they knew where they would be each day, versus working with federal law enforcement which could place them almost anywhere.

The Portland Police Department is relatively small, with only 163 police officers, and while Portland is the largest city in Maine, the downtown area is geographically small and easy to patrol on foot. The cadets found it easy to get to know the majority of the officers they worked with and build the relationships that are important in law enforcement.

The cadets described their positions as a way to show what law enforcement does in the community. They spent time in the community explaining their role to tourists, business owners and other officers, as well as answering questions. In this respect, they considered the position a community service role.

Positive Experiences

Overall, the cadets described the program experience as a positive one. Being able to talk and interact with people was described as a favorite part of the job, emphasizing learning to use words more effectively and to write well for all of their reports. In fact, using words was cited as being especially important in community policing because the cadets do not carry weapons, so they need to choose their words carefully when dealing with aggressive or criminal behavior. They typically dealt with a wide variety of people, from tourists to mentally ill individuals living on the streets. The cadet experience helped them learn how to talk with people, and to encourage them to look at their options to make better choices.

Though they were always supervised, the cadets enjoyed the respect they received from officers they had the opportunity to assist. They felt the officers trusted them and treated them as equals during these occasions. They also enjoyed getting to know “street people” and building relationships with particular individuals. One cadet shared the heart-warming experience of seeing a well-known individual that he remembered from the previous season who had completely turned his life around and appeared to be much healthier. This individual approached the cadet and personally thanked him for his leniency with his behavior in the past, crediting him, in part, to his ability to make changes in his life. From this experience, this cadet recognized that the job is not always about enforcement, and that they need to make judgement calls and show compassion for all members of the community.

One cadet currently had a father on the police force and he liked having the opportunity to work in the city with him. The cadets also enjoyed the mentoring they received from other officers and hearing comparisons of law enforcement from 20+ years ago.

There were several opportunities to get involved in community events during the season that were particularly rewarding for the cadets. They enjoyed assisting with the local *Fill A Backpack* program that helps send students in need to school with all the school supplies they need for a successful start. They also had the opportunity to participate as mentors in *Cop Camp*, a week long summer camp for youth in grades 4 – 6. These community and leadership programs allowed the cadets to see a different side of policing.

Negative Experiences

Other than rare inclement weather (the 2016 season was exceptionally dry), the only negative experience cited was encountering things that the cadets lacked the skills to deal with, behaviors that would be better served by public health or social service workers. The 2016 season included the police department being charged with displacing many homeless individuals and families that had created a campsite in a remote area of the city, and the cadets learned about how a situation such as this needed to be dealt with. Over the course of the season, however, the cadets felt they got to know local “street people” better and were able to build relationships, which they felt was helpful in dealing with unfamiliar behaviors related to mental illness and substance use. By developing their communication skills through many aspects of the job, the cadets learned how to talk to people about their choices and offer better options in the community than substance abuse or other criminal behavior.

Opportunities for Improvement

The cadets suggested that perhaps adding two or more days of walking with officers might make for a fuller training experience. Bike patrol was cited as a potential for improving the program because the cadets could cover more ground quickly, although their supervisor felt this was unlikely due to the scale of the program and location. The cadets recalled hearing from several businesses that expanding the program through the holiday season would be a welcomed improvement as well.

Findings

Program Development

This first year of evaluating the cadet program helped administration to look at the program a bit more objectively and to consider the role from the cadets’ perspectives. The foot patrol aspect and scope of the program will likely remain the same in the immediate years ahead due to program cost, but evaluation findings suggest room for improvement within the program’s scope. The police department indicated it would like to be more strategic about its outreach for program staffing, posting the position with local colleges and universities specifically to recruit from law enforcement programming for an optimal pool of applicants.

Business Contacts

The cadets spent a significant amount of time involved in community events and reaching out to members of the community to educate and respond to safety concerns during the 2016 program year. However, personal business contacts decreased by 65% in 2016 from the previous season, indicating the cadets were either more heavily focused on community involvement, there was less demand within the business community to meet with the cadets, or perhaps there were other variables.

Smoking Violations

Smoking in public places where the activity is prohibited was consistently the highest ordinance violation warning by incident throughout the 2016 season. As compared to drinking in public offenses, the second highest warning by incident, one of the cadets reported that smoking ordinance violators were typically unique offenders as opposed to the repeat offenders they encountered with drinking in public ordinance violations. This observation suggests that smoking in parks is perhaps more prevalent among the general population than it appears to be as compared with other violations.

Social Service Need

A large majority of encounters the cadets deal with daily are indicative of social service need more so than law enforcement need. While the program introduces the cadets to a wide variety of situations that they might encounter in community policing, they do not have training in social work or community health, and often lack the skills they need to address the challenges faced by transient, mentally ill and substance abuse disordered populations.

Recommendations

With safety as one of Portland Downtown's responsibilities to its downtown property and business owner constituents, it sees its relationship with the police department as imperative to maintaining a safe downtown. As Portland Downtown's key program to increase perceptions of safety downtown, the cadet program should include making personal business contacts a priority according to demand, further improving attitudes and perceptions of a safe and economically prosperous downtown. To assure property owners' and businesses' interests in talking with the cadets are met, Portland Downtown's program manager could provide cadets with points of contact by business location for cadets to strategically check in with early in the season to make their role in the community known. As well, Portland Downtown could make use of its constituent contact list to solicit interest in meeting the cadets, continue to provide liaison for community interest and requests, and maintain routine contact with the cadets for data collection and other communication.

The large amount of smoking violations by typically unique violators indicates the current messaging around smoking in public spaces may be confusing, smokers lack places to smoke downtown legally, consequences for smoking in public are minimal, or there are other barriers to obeying smoking restrictions in the city. Exploring public smoking attitudes with public health officials for solutions could be a key partnership in slowing these violations.

The cadets and law enforcement in general are traditional first response professionals when someone in the community is in need of assistance. Findings from cadet activity stats, the focus group discussion, and feedback throughout the season, indicate there is a social service demand from transient, mentally ill, and substance abuse disordered individuals that would be better served by social service organizations than through criminalizing by-products of homelessness and mental health behaviors, which has been found to be costly and ineffective (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2014). Outreach downtown is typically shared with social service providers city-wide, while services and tourism activity are concentrated nearby or within the downtown district. Downtown community health outreach programming in conjunction with the cadet program could better serve the nature of issues the cadets report encountering.

Conclusion

The City of Portland Downtown Police Cadet Program has served an important role in the community. It is well received by local property and business owners as having a positive impact on perceptions of safety downtown, and the cadets develop important interpersonal skills they would not learn in the classroom. In fact, the police department has hired several employees who have previously served with the cadet program. While Portland is an exemplary safe city, typical perceptions of unsafe situations downtown often include public transiency and loitering, and reports of aggressive solicitations from business owners, employees, residents and tourists, by-products of homelessness that require skilled social service response from trained professionals, typically with personal histories comparable to the populations they serve. The successful co-management of the award-winning cadet program represents a leading model of program service for downtown safety, and supports the managing organizations' abilities to develop additional programming according to service demand.

Limitations

The lack of internal program management during the 2015 season created a challenge for aligning data points between years and left some gaps in reporting where greater detail was achieved with data collection during the 2016 season. As well, staffing limitations towards the end of the 2016 season resulted in a reduction in the cadets' ability to patrol two separate areas, which likely contributed to reduced activity for the season total.

With the 2016 season being the first year of internal program management at Portland Downtown, the season was a learning one to develop optimal data collection processes. Therefore, data reporting lacked violation summonses detail until late in the season and was time consuming to align with violation outcomes within the criminal justice system.

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