A. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES: A COMPACT REFERENCE FOR POLICE–COMMUNITY ICT PROJECTS

The following guiding principles and best practices, discussed in greater detail in *Beyond the Beat: Ethical Considerations for Community Policing in the Digital Age*, can serve as a convenient reference tool to help guide the decision-making process of police–community information and communications technology projects.

1 Guiding Principle: Police and Communities Working Together

Police–community information and communications technology (ICT) projects must be genuine partnerships that are based on mutual trust, respect, and accountability.

Best Practice in Brief

Information and communications technology (ICT) has revolutionized the way that Americans learn, socialize, do business, and interact with their government. ICT also has great potential for transforming how police and residents interact by increasing opportunities for communication and collaboration, as well as harnessing the power of computerized data collection and analysis to aid efforts to fight crime and make communities safer. ICT will not, however, replace the need for direct, one-on-one, interaction between police officers and the residents they serve. ICT planners must clearly assess the current relationship and identify ways to address deficiencies so that the foundations of a constructive working relationship and genuine partnership—mutual trust, respect, and accountability—are in place at the start of an ICT effort. Community policing offers a useful framework for improving relations by inviting residents and community organizations to partner with law enforcement in identifying, prioritizing, and solving problems. Technology can serve community policing goals by promoting better communications, providing greater access to information, fostering greater transparency, allowing for greater accountability, encouraging broader participation, and providing a vehicle for collaborative problem solving.

2 Guiding Principle: Access to Technology

Police–community ICT project planners should identify gaps in access to technology and develop tools collaboratively with potential users to promote widespread community access and use.

Best Practice in Brief

Fair and equal access to an ICT project will start with an assessment of technology usage by the different demographic groups in the community as well as a review of national trends. The findings will highlight any gaps in access that ICT projects must address and will help project planners choose ICT tools that are most likely to be used

locally. By choosing the most relevant technologies and working to increase access to them in the community, as well as by providing content and training programs that are targeted to the populations being served, ICT projects will have a better chance of effectively engaging traditionally underserved groups. Local resources, such as community technology centers and knowledgeable residents, can greatly aid the project design and education efforts.

3 Guiding Principle: Handling Personally Identifying Information

Police–community ICT projects should safeguard individuals and the community from any unintended consequences of collecting, storing, and disclosing personally identifying information or information about communities. Privacy considerations must inform every step of the process.

Best Practice in Brief

The privacy of community members is perhaps the central ethical concern for police–community information and communications technology projects. ICT project planners are advised to develop clear and easily understood policies and protocols for handling personal information and protecting the privacy of all parties whose information may be collected or shared in the course of the project. ICT projects should collect no more information than is necessary and should reveal personal information only when necessary to meet the project objectives.

When crafting privacy policies, ICT projects should carefully consider the safety implications of disclosing personally identifying information about crime victims, witnesses, police officers, suspects, or other members of the community. Policies should specify how criminal records will be handled, and should warn against posting information on individuals suspected or arrested but not convicted unless there is a compelling reason to do so. ICT projects may want to allow users to participate anonymously or pseudonymously and should consider establishing mechanisms for registering complaints against and commendations of police officers that respect both the privacy and safety concerns of those officers as well as the community's need to know that its input carries weight. ICT projects should make efforts to avoid harming a particular neighborhood's reputation through information posted online. ICT projects should establish comprehensive, transparent, and accessible privacy-compliance programs, including, where possible and appropriate, a full-time privacy officer to monitor the privacy impact of the project and enforce privacy policies.

4 Guiding Principle: Operational Requirements

Police–community ICT project partners must engage in an ongoing process of preparing their respective organizations for change, mobilizing to sustain the commitment, and learning from the experience.

Best Practice in Brief

Starting and maintaining an ICT project to fight crime and promote community safety requires a sustained commitment. The leadership of police departments and community partners must communicate their support and vision for the project, and actively encourage police officers, staff, and others to embrace the new technology in their community policing efforts. ICT project planners must assess what their organization needs to conduct an ICT project and should create an infrastructure to support it. An ICT project's success or failure will depend heavily on the organizational capacity to manage and respond to the information transmitted by the technology. The development, implementation, and communication of policies and procedures will help communities trust that information collected, stored, and disseminated through ICT tools will be handled thoughtfully, legally, and ethically. Finally, ICT project planners should integrate an ongoing evaluation system that monitors the effectiveness of daily operations and allows for the ICT project to respond to problems and make mid-course corrections in a timely fashion.