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SFPD Responds to Release of COPS Collaborative Reform Initiative Report

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In early 2016, the San Francisco Police Department approached the U.S. Department of Justice regarding an independent, top-to-bottom review of SFPD policies and practices in response to a series of racist text messages sent and shared by department members and community concern about officer-involved shootings. At the request of San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee, discussions with the DOJ began for a comprehensive assessment by the COPS Office Collaborative Reform Initiative for Technical Assistance (CRI-TA).

Throughout the review process, the SFPD has pledged to move swiftly to comply with preliminary and final findings of the CRI-TA assessment team. In addition, the Department has welcomed and forwarded the findings of the Civil Grand Jury Report on Officer-Involved Shootings, as well as the Blue Ribbon Panel Report on Transparency, Accountability, and Fairness in Law Enforcement for inclusion in the COPS report. With today's release of the complete COPS report, we remain firmly committed to implementing the recommendations of the DOJ to increase transparency and public trust and to meet national best practice standards for community policing.

SFPD's review is one of the largest undertaken by the COPS Office and is much more in-depth and detailed than that of any of its peer cities in the collaborative review process. SFPD has already implemented or will implement the recommendations detailed in the DOJ/COPS report. As the report states, SFPD is a department committed to change and working with the communities we proudly serve. However, it is clear that there are several areas where we are in need of improvement and continued analysis. While the COPS Office analysis found the Department's use of force is proportionate and "there were no racial or ethnic disparities in the severity of force," we agree that SFPD must do a better job regarding investigations of use of force, training and data capture.

SFPD agrees with several of the findings on bias by the COPS Office. We intend to look closely at data to determine the role of neighborhood "calls for service" and "on-view" detentions in traffic stops and other encounters. SFPD will continue to move rapidly to root out implicit and explicit bias. The COPS assessment team found "...there is no evidence that explicit bias is widespread. On the contrary, the team observed a law enforcement agency that for the most part showed genuine compassion, caring, and professionalism toward the people of San Francisco."

SFPD's Community Policing efforts are praised in the report, particularly on the district station level. The report found "SFPD engages in a range of successful activities, programs, and community partnerships that support community policing tenets." Per the recommendations of the COPS Office, SFPD intends to expand outreach efforts to community members to demonstrate our commitment to procedural justice.

The COPS Office report highlights the importance of accountability and transparency to build trust with the community. The report cites a lack of transparency around officer discipline practices by SFPD and calls for a marked improvement in the way SFPD collects, analyzes and shares data, policies and procedures with the public.

We agree that new technology and robust in-house systems can help make the data we gather and store more useful to Department members and to the public we serve. We are currently evaluating products and services with a focus on augmenting our data warehouse infrastructure to create a 21st century system capable of cross-platforming sharing and analysis of information. SFPD is also working to identify local academic institutions as potential partners to collaborate on our data collection and reporting practices. SFPD leadership has long stated that San Francisco's police force must closely mirror the City's diverse population in order to build trust. The Department's overall diversity is higher than the national average. The COPS assessment team encouraged SFPD to continue its support of diversity for all ranks and assignments, particularly those at the district level which are the "community face" of the Department. SFPD was also encouraged to develop a strategic plan to outline its diversity objectives in order to measure progress and accountability.

While the COPS assessment team found that the police academy curriculum conforms to POST standards, academy training is evolving to prepare all members to deal with emerging issues in today's law enforcement environment. The SFPD is re-engineering its academy curriculum to include de-escalation training, use of force training with a focus on sanctity of life, impartial policing and procedural justice. We welcome further monitoring by the assessment team to ensure the successful implementation of these programs.

"San Francisco has the second oldest police department in the nation and it shows," said SFPD Interim Chief Toney Chaplin. "We are committed to the work that needs to be done to bring our systems into the 21st century. The San Francisco Police Department wants to be a leader in creating best practices and policies for the nation. In the coming weeks, SFPD will prioritize and continue the implementation of the report's recommendations and assign ranking members to oversee the process. We look to the COPS report as a roadmap for 21st century policing and as a validation of the hard work we have committed to with our community partners."

The San Francisco Police Department thanks the COPS Office for their diligent efforts to complete this comprehensive assessment, which will be mandatory reading for every member of the department. Input from community stakeholders will be critical to implement the report's recommendations. SFPD has established the email address SFPD.dojcri@sfgov.org to receive feedback from the public regarding the COPS CRI findings.

We are grateful for the leadership demonstrated by Mayor Ed Lee during this process, and we remain committed to continue our work with the Department of Justice and the communities we serve to build stronger relationships, increase trust and create a better San Francisco Police Department.

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