BE A FORCE

Milwaukee Police Department
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http://www.milwaukee.gov/police

Edward A. Flynn
Chief of Police

(414) 935-7200

November 10, 2015

Ronald L. Davis, Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice
145 N Street NE
Washington, DC 20530

Gregory J. Haanstad, Acting United States Attorney
United States Department of Justice
517 E Wisconsin Ave # 530
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Director Davis and Acting U.S. Attorney Haanstad,

As the Milwaukee Police Department continues the evolution of reform necessary to achieve our vision and mission, I write to request participation in the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) Collaborative Reform Initiative for Technical Assistance (CRT-TA) process. It is my expectation that entering into this voluntary process with the COPS Office will provide an avenue to strengthen and build the mutual trust between the Milwaukee Police Department and the communities we serve.

My decision to pursue collaborative reform comes amid our demonstrable progress and growing reputation as a forward-acting and progressive police agency. When I first became chief in 2008, we committed to becoming a top-tier professional agency engaged in community-based, problem-oriented and data-driven strategies. We quickly transitioned to a values-based organization, which included the publishing of a Code of Conduct founded in our six core values of competence, courage, integrity, leadership, respect and restraint, and serves as the foundation for our accountability and discipline.

During the past eight years, both our partnerships with public and private entities and our proactive activity aimed at improving public safety in our neighborhoods has dramatically increased while reported crime, uses of force, and citizen complaints trended downward. We critically evaluated our policies and made improvements, including a reexamination of our use of force policy that expanded the definition of reportable force and a reexamination of our pursuit policy which resulted in a constriction of the circumstances in which pursuits are permitted, resulting in fewer pursuit-related crashes and significant reductions in injuries to suspects, officers and uninvolved citizens alike.

We have implemented a battery of leadership and operational training curricula, including Leadership in Police Organizations (LPO), a robust and modeled Fair and Impartial Policing program, and an aggressive and comprehensive implementation of Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) for all members of the agency, which we have dubbed the "Milwaukee Model" for CIT. In addition to our internal training advancements, we have developed novel, effective, and award-winning community-based training like our Students Talking it Over with Police (STOP) program aimed at improving relationships between Milwaukee officers and the youth they serve by reducing perceptions of conflict and animosity.

In 2014, our authorizing body, the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners, sanctioned a citizen survey for the first time in anyone's recollection. The results showed 74% of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the services of the Milwaukee Police Department. Just yesterday, the Milwaukee Police Department was accredited by the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Accreditation Group (WILEAG), indicating our successful compliance with 226 separate standards associated with our policies, procedures, operations and support services.

Despite the facts I have detailed here, and the scores of other points of progress this agency has achieved, I realize that there is – and will always be – room for improvement. I also realize that requesting and completing the collaborative reform process administered by the COPS Office will not appease all those who have complaints and criticisms about the Milwaukee Police Department.

I commit to you both – and recommit to the Milwaukee communities we serve – the full transparency, openness, engagement and effort of the entire Milwaukee Police Department. I look forward to working with you and your offices to establish mutual goals for this initiative, including comprehensive assessments of key areas like use of force, training, discipline and accountability, community perspectives, recruitment and hiring, and the handling of mass demonstrations and protests, among others. More importantly, I look forward to the results of this collaboration between the COPS Office, the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Police Department, and members of our communities: objective, sustainable, strategies that affect positive changes in the promotion of public safety, the growth of community-police relations, and the next steps toward the achievement of our vision of a Milwaukee where all can live safely and without fear, protected by a police department with the highest ethical and professional standards.

Thank you for your consideration of my request for Collaborative Reform. I anticipate a rigorous and productive initiative.

Sincerely,

EDWARD A. FLYNN
CHIEF OF POLICE