

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Committee on  
the Budget, and the Chairman,  
Subcommittee on Crime, Committee on  
the Judiciary, House of Representatives

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September 1997

# COMMUNITY POLICING

## Issues Related to the Design, Operation, and Management of the Grant Program



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**General Government Division**

B-272329

September 3, 1997

The Honorable John R. Kasich  
Chairman, Committee on the Budget  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Bill McCollum  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Crime  
Committee on the Judiciary  
House of Representatives

The enactment of the Public Safety Partnership and Community Policing Act of 1994,<sup>1</sup> Title I of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, established what officials described as the largest grant program ever administered by the Department of Justice (Justice). The Community Policing Act authorizes \$8.8 billion to be used from fiscal years 1995 to 2000 to enhance public safety. It has goals of adding 100,000 officer positions, funded by grants, to the streets of communities nationwide and of promoting community policing.

Under the Community Policing Act, the Attorney General had discretion to decide which Justice component would administer community policing grants. Justice officials believed that a new, efficient customer-oriented organization was needed to process the record number of grants. The result was the creation of the new Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). At the end of fiscal year 1997, the community policing grant program will be at the midpoint of its 6-year authorization period.

In view of the large size and scope of the COPS grant program, you asked us in a November 15, 1996, letter to review several issues related to the program's design, operation, and management. You asked us to review the implementation of the Community Policing Act with special attention to statutory requirements for implementing the COPS grants. You also asked us to (1) assess how the COPS Office monitored the use of grants it awarded; (2) describe the distribution of COPS grants nationwide by population size of jurisdiction served, by type of grant, and by state; (3) describe how law enforcement agencies used grants under the COPS Making Officer Redeployment Effective (MORE)<sup>2</sup> program; (4) describe the

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<sup>1</sup>Public Law 103-322.

<sup>2</sup>The COPS MORE grant program is one of the specific grants authorized by the Community Policing Act. It is designed to expand the time available for community policing by current law enforcement officers, rather than fund the hiring of additional officers. Grantees can use the funds to purchase equipment and technology, hire civilian personnel as support staff, and pay law enforcement officers overtime.

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process the COPS Office used to calculate the number of officers on the street; and (5) describe funding distributions and uses of COPS hiring grants by special law enforcement agencies.<sup>3</sup>

You also requested that we describe how community policing was implemented in several communities that received COPS grants. The results of this work are described in appendix II.

We did our review at the COPS Office in Washington, D.C., and we visited six law enforcement jurisdictions that received grants—Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, and Oxnard, CA; Prince George’s County, MD; St. Petersburg, FL; and Window Rock, AZ (Navajo Nation). We interviewed COPS officials, local law enforcement agency officials, and representatives of local government and community groups. We also reviewed documentation and analyzed data files on grants awarded in fiscal years 1995 and 1996, and we surveyed a nationally representative sample of agencies that had been awarded MORE grants as of September 30, 1996. Our work was done between July 1996 and July 1997 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. A detailed description of our objectives, scope, and methodology is contained in appendix I.

We requested comments on a draft of this report from the Attorney General or her designee on July 24, 1997. Justice provided both written and oral comments that are incorporated where appropriate. The written comments are reproduced in appendix III.

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## Results in Brief

Under the Community Policing Act, grants are generally available to any law enforcement agency that can demonstrate a public safety need; demonstrate an inability to address the need without a grant; and, in most instances, contribute a 25-percent match of the federal share of the grant. The act requires that 50 percent of the grant funds allocated go to law enforcement agencies serving populations of 150,000 or less, and that 50 percent of the grant funds go to law enforcement agencies serving populations exceeding 150,000. The act does not require the COPS Office to target grants to those law enforcement agencies that need the most assistance. In previous reports on grant design,<sup>4</sup> we have suggested that

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<sup>3</sup>These law enforcement agencies serve specialized populations, such as Native Americans, college students, and mass transit passengers. The COPS Office also considered new police departments to be special agencies.

<sup>4</sup>Federal Grants: Design Improvements Could Help Federal Resources Go Further (GAO/AIMD-97-7, Dec. 18, 1996) and Deficit Reduction: Better Targeting Can Reduce Spending and Improve Programs and Services (GAO/AIMD 96-14, Jan. 16, 1996).

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targeting federal aid on the basis of measurable need and the ability to pay could help scarce federal resources go further.

To achieve the goal of increasing the number of community policing officers, the law required that grants be used to supplement, not supplant, state and local funds. Grantees are also required to have plans for the assumption of a progressively larger share of the cost, looking toward the continuation of the increased hiring levels using state or local funds at the conclusion of the period of federal support.

The COPS Office provided limited monitoring of the grants during the period we reviewed; however, the office was taking steps to increase its level of monitoring. Justice also had some efforts under way to review compliance with the requirement of the Community Policing Act that grantees not supplant local funding, but rather use the federal funds for additional law enforcement beyond what would have been available without a grant. However, as our prior work on grant design has shown, it is difficult to establish with certainty that supplanting has not occurred because of the lack of evidence to determine what would have occurred in the absence of a grant. In April 1997, COPS Office officials said that they were also discussing ways to encourage grantees to sustain hiring levels achieved by COPS grants after the grant program expires.

The majority of the 13,396 COPS grants awarded<sup>5</sup> in fiscal years 1995 and 1996 for about \$2.6 billion went to law enforcement agencies serving small populations.<sup>6</sup> Almost 50 percent of the grants were awarded to agencies serving populations of fewer than 10,000, and 83 percent of the grants were awarded to agencies serving populations of fewer than 50,000. Communities with populations of over 1 million were awarded less than 1 percent of the grants, although they were awarded over 23 percent of the total grant dollars. About 50 percent of the grant funds were awarded to law enforcement agencies serving populations of 150,000 or less, and about 50 percent of the grant funds were awarded to law enforcement agencies serving populations exceeding 150,000, as the Community Policing Act required.

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<sup>5</sup>COPS Office officials define this point in the award process as grant "acceptance." The data reflect numbers of grants for which applicants had been advised they would receive funding and for which they had received estimated award amounts. Grantees are then to submit completed budget worksheets in order to receive notification of actual award amounts.

<sup>6</sup>We considered communities with populations of fewer than 50,000 to be small.

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About \$286 million, or 11 percent of the total grant dollars awarded in fiscal years 1995 and 1996, were awarded under the MORE grant program. According to the results of a survey we did of a representative national sample of those receiving grants under the COPS MORE grant program in fiscal years 1995 and 1996, grantees had spent an estimated \$90.1 million, or a little less than one-third of the funds they were awarded. They spent about 61 percent of these funds to hire civilian personnel, about 31 percent to purchase technology or equipment, and about 8 percent on overtime payments for law enforcement officers.

The distributions of MORE program grant expenditures were heavily influenced by the expenditures of the New York City Police Department, which spent about one-half of all of the MORE program grant funds expended nationwide. Excluding a heavy New York City Police Department expenditure for the hiring of civilian personnel, the highest expenditures were for purchases of technology and/or equipment, which represented about 48 percent of the MORE program grant spending by all other grantees.

To calculate its progress toward achieving the goal of 100,000 new community policing officers on the street as a result of its grants, the COPS Office did telephone surveys of grantees. As of June 1997, the COPS Office estimated that a total of 30,155 law enforcement officer positions funded by COPS grants were on the street. The COPS Office counted in this estimate new officers on the street as a result of hiring grants, as well as existing officers who were redeployed to community policing as a result of time savings achieved by MORE program grants, and 2,000 positions funded by another Justice component before the COPS grant program was established.<sup>7</sup>

According to the results of our review of COPS Office files, special law enforcement agencies were awarded 329 community policing hiring grants in fiscal years 1995 and 1996—less than 3 percent of the total hiring grants awarded. We reviewed 293 of the 329 special agency grant application files<sup>8</sup> and found that almost 80 percent of these files were from Native American and college or university law enforcement agencies. Special agency grantees applied most frequently to use officers hired with the COPS

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<sup>7</sup>These officer hiring grants were administered by the Bureau of Justice Assistance under the Police Hiring Supplement Program. According to a COPS Office official, the program was implemented in 1994 as a precursor to the COPS grant program.

<sup>8</sup>The 36 files that we did not review were in use by COPS Office staff at the time we did our work.

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funds to write strategic plans, work with community groups, and provide community policing training to officers and citizens.

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## Background

Community policing is a philosophy under which local police departments develop strategies to address the causes of and reduce the fear of crime through problemsolving tactics and community-police partnerships. According to the COPS Office program regulations, there is no one approach to community policing implementation. However, community policing programs do stress three principles that make them different from traditional law enforcement programs: (1) prevention, (2) problemsolving, and (3) partnerships (see app. II). Community policing emphasizes the importance of police-citizen cooperation to control crime, maintain order, and improve the quality of life in communities. The police and community members are active partners in defining the problems that need to be addressed, the tactics to be used in addressing them, and the measurement of the success of the efforts.

The practice of community policing, which emerged in the 1970s, was developed at the street level by rank-and-file police officers. Justice supported community policing and predecessor programs for more than 15 years before the current COPS grant program was authorized. Previous projects noted by Justice officials as forerunners to the funding of community policing included Weed and Seed, which was a community-based strategy to “weed out” violent crime, gang activities, and drugs and to “seed in” neighborhood revitalization.

House and Senate conferees, in their joint statement explaining actions taken on the Community Policing Act, emphasized their support of grants for community policing.<sup>9</sup> The conferees noted that the involvement of community members in public safety projects significantly assisted in preventing and controlling crime and violence.

As shown in table 1, \$5.2 billion was authorized for the COPS grant program from its inception in fiscal year 1995 to the end of fiscal year 1997; \$4.1 billion of which was appropriated over this period.

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<sup>9</sup>H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 103-694, at 402.(1994).

**Table 1: Authorizations and Appropriations for COPS Grant Program, Fiscal Years 1995-97**

Fiscal year	COPS Grant Program	
	Amount authorized	Amount appropriated
1995	\$1.3	\$1.3
1996	1.9	1.4
1997	2.0	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5.2</b>	<b>\$4.1</b>

Source: Public Safety Partnership and Community Policing Act and COPS Office data.

## COPS Grants Not Targeted to Specific Law Enforcement Agencies and Supplanting Is Prohibited

The Community Policing Act does not target grants to law enforcement agencies on the basis of which agency has the greatest need for assistance. Rather, agencies are required to demonstrate a public safety need and an inability to address this need without a grant. Grantees are also required to contribute 25 percent of the costs of the program, project, or activity funded by the grant, unless the Attorney General waives the matching requirement. According to Justice officials, the basis for waiver of the matching requirements is extraordinary local fiscal hardship.

In one of our previous reports,<sup>10</sup> we reviewed alternative strategies, including targeting, for increasing the fiscal impact of federal grants. We noted that federal grants have been established to achieve a variety of goals. If the desired goal is to target fiscal relief to areas experiencing greater fiscal stress, grant allocation formulas could be changed to include a combination of factors that allocate a larger share of federal aid to those states with relatively greater program needs and fewer resources.

The Community Policing Act also requires that grants be used to supplement, not supplant, state and local funds. To prevent supplanting, grantees must devote resources to law enforcement beyond those resources that would have been available without a COPS grant. In general, grantees are expected to use the hiring grants to increase the number of funded sworn officers above the number on board in October 1994, when the program began. Grantees are required to have plans to assume a progressively larger share of the cost over time, looking toward keeping the increased hiring levels by using state and local funds after the expiration of the federal grant program at the end of fiscal year 2000.

<sup>10</sup>GAO/AIMD-97-7.



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Assessing whether supplanting has taken place in the community policing grant program was outside the scope of our review. However, in our previously mentioned report on grant design, our synthesis of literature on the fiscal impact of grants suggested that each additional federal grant dollar results in about 40 cents of added spending on the aided activity. This means that the fiscal impact of the remaining 60 cents is to free up state or local funds that otherwise would have been spent on that activity for other programs or tax relief.<sup>11</sup>

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## COPS Office Grant Monitoring Was Limited

Monitoring is an important tool for Justice to use in ensuring that law enforcement jurisdictions funded by COPS grants comply with federal program requirements. The Community Policing Act requires that each COPS Office program, project, or activity contain a monitoring component developed pursuant to guidelines established by the Attorney General. In addition, the COPS program regulations specify that each grant is to contain a monitoring component, including periodic financial and programmatic reporting and, in appropriate circumstances, on-site reviews. The regulations state that the guidelines for monitoring are to be issued by the COPS Office.

COPS Office grant-monitoring activities during the first 2-1/2 years of the program were limited. Final COPS Office monitoring guidance had not been issued as of June 1997. Information on activities and accomplishments for COPS-funded programs was not consistently collected or reviewed. Site visits and telephone monitoring by grant advisers did not systematically take place.

COPS Office officials said that monitoring efforts were limited due to a lack of grant adviser staff and an early program focus on processing applications to get officers on the street. According to a COPS Office official, as of July 1997, the COPS Office had about 155 total staff positions, up from about 130 positions that it had when the office was established. Seventy of these positions were for grant administration, including processing grant applications, responding to questions from grantees, and monitoring grantee performance. The remaining positions were for staff who worked in various other areas, including training; technical assistance; administration; and public, intergovernmental, and congressional liaison.

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<sup>11</sup>The studies we reviewed generally looked at the fiscal impact of grants in the aggregate or for broad categories of grants. Like the COPS grant, some of the grants studied incorporated nonsupplant requirements. Others did not incorporate such requirements.

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In January 1997, the COPS Office began taking steps to increase the level of its monitoring. It developed monitoring guidelines, revised reporting forms, piloted on-site monitoring visits, and initiated telephone monitoring of grantees' activities.

As of July 1997, a COPS Office official said that the office had funding authorization to increase its staff to 186 positions, and it was in the process of hiring up to this level. In commenting on our draft report, COPS officials also noted that they were recruiting for more than 30 staff positions in a new monitoring component to be exclusively devoted to overseeing grant compliance activities.

COPS Office officials also said that some efforts were under way to review compliance with requirements of the Community Policing Act that grants be used to supplement, not supplant, local funding. In previous work,<sup>12</sup> we reported that enforcing such provisions of grant programs was difficult for federal agencies due to problems in ascertaining state and local spending intentions. According to the COPS Office Assistant Director of Grant Administration, the COPS Office's approach to achieving compliance with the nonsupplantation provision was to receive accounts of potential violations from grantees or other sources and then to work with grantees to bring them into compliance, not to abruptly terminate grants or otherwise penalize grantees. COPS Office grant advisers attempted to work with grantees to develop mutually acceptable plans for corrective actions.

Although the COPS Office did not do proactive investigations of potential supplanting, its three-person legal staff reviewed cases referred to it by grant advisers, grantees, and other sources. COPS Office officials said that they also expected that referrals to Justice's Legal Division will result from planned monitoring activities. Of the 506 inquiries that required follow-up by the Legal Division as of December 1996, about 70 percent involved potential supplanting.

In addition, Justice's Inspector General began a review in fiscal year 1997 that was to assess, among other things, how COPS grant funds were used, including whether supplanting occurred. In the course of this review, the Inspector General planned to complete 50 audits of grantees by the end of fiscal year 1997. The Office of Justice Programs also conducted financial monitoring of COPS grants, which officials said is to include review of financial documents and visits to 160 sites by the end of fiscal year 1997.

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<sup>12</sup>Proposed Changes in Federal Matching and Maintenance of Effort Requirements for State and Local Governments (GAO/GGD-81-7, Dec. 23, 1980).

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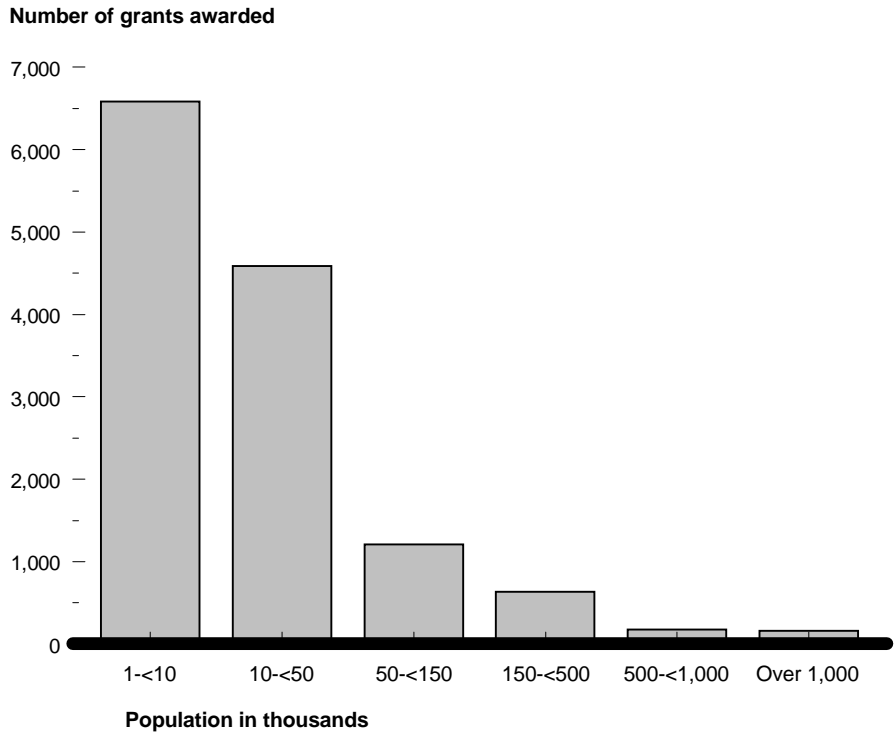
In April 1997, COPS Office officials said that they were discussing ways to encourage grantees to sustain hiring levels achieved under the grants, in light of the language of the Community Policing Act regarding the continuation of these increased hiring levels after the conclusion of federal support. The COPS Office officials also noted in commenting on our draft report that they had sent fact sheets to all grantees explaining the legal requirements for maintaining hiring levels. However, the COPS Office Director also noted that the statute needed to be further defined and that communities could not be expected to maintain hiring levels indefinitely. A reasonable period for retaining the officers funded by the COPS grants had not been determined.

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**Small Communities  
Were Awarded Most  
COPS Office Grants,  
but Large Cities  
Received the Largest  
Awards**

Law enforcement agencies in small communities were awarded most of the COPS grants. As shown in figure 1, 6,588 grants—49 percent of the total 13,396 grants awarded—were awarded to law enforcement agencies serving communities with populations of fewer than 10,000. Eighty-three percent—11,173 grants—of the total grants awarded went to agencies serving populations of fewer than 50,000.

**Figure 1: Number of COPS Grants Awarded by Jurisdictional Population, Fiscal Years 1995 and 1996**



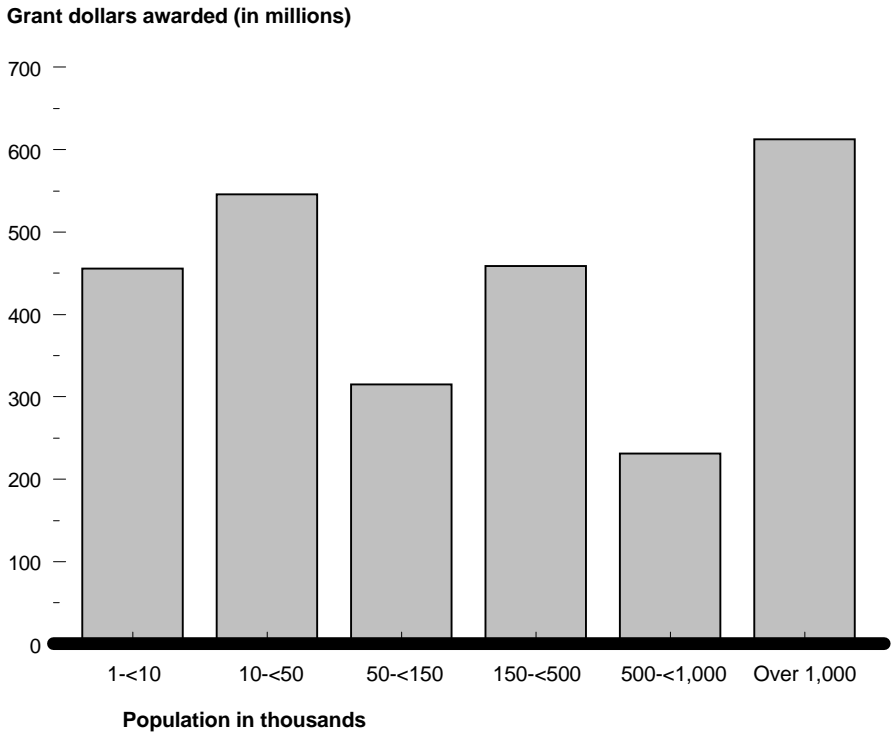
Note 1: Thirty-nine of 13,396 grantees for which we lacked population data are excluded.

Note 2: Number of grants awarded are shown in thousands.

Source: GAO analysis of COPS Office data, as of September 30, 1996.

Large cities—with populations of over 1 million—were awarded only about 1 percent of the grants, but these grants made up over 23 percent—about \$612 million—of the total grant dollars awarded. About 50 percent of the grant funds were awarded to law enforcement agencies serving populations of 150,000 or less, and about 50 percent of the grant funds were awarded to law enforcement agencies serving populations exceeding 150,000, as the Community Policing Act required. As shown in figure 2, agencies serving populations of fewer than 50,000 also received about 38 percent of the total grant dollars—over \$1 billion.

**Figure 2: Amount of COPS Grant Dollars Awarded by Jurisdictional Population, Fiscal Years 1995 and 1996**



Note: Thirty-nine of 13,396 grantees for which we lacked population data are excluded.

Source: GAO analysis of COPS Office data, as of September 30, 1996.

In commenting on our draft report, the COPS Office noted that these distributions were not surprising given that the vast majority of police departments nationwide are also relatively small. The COPS Office also noted that the Community Policing Act requires that the level of assistance given to large and small agencies be equal.

As of the end of fiscal year 1996, after 2 years of operation, the COPS Office had issued award letters to 8,803 communities for 13,396 grants totaling about \$2.6 billion. Eighty-six percent of these grant dollars were to be used to hire additional law enforcement officers. MORE program grant funds were to be used to buy new technology and equipment, hire support personnel, and/or pay law enforcement officers overtime. Other grant

funds were to be used to train officers in community policing and to develop innovative prevention programs, including domestic violence prevention, youth firearms reduction, and antigang initiatives. The Community Policing Act specifies that no more than 20 percent of the funds available for COPS grants in fiscal years 1995 and 1996 and no more than 10 percent of available funds in fiscal years 1997 through 2000 were to be used for MORE program grants. Table 2 shows the number and amount of the COPS grants (awarded in fiscal years 1995 and 1996) by the type of grant.

**Table 2: Number and Amount of COPS Grants Awarded by Grant Type, Fiscal Years 1995 and 1996**

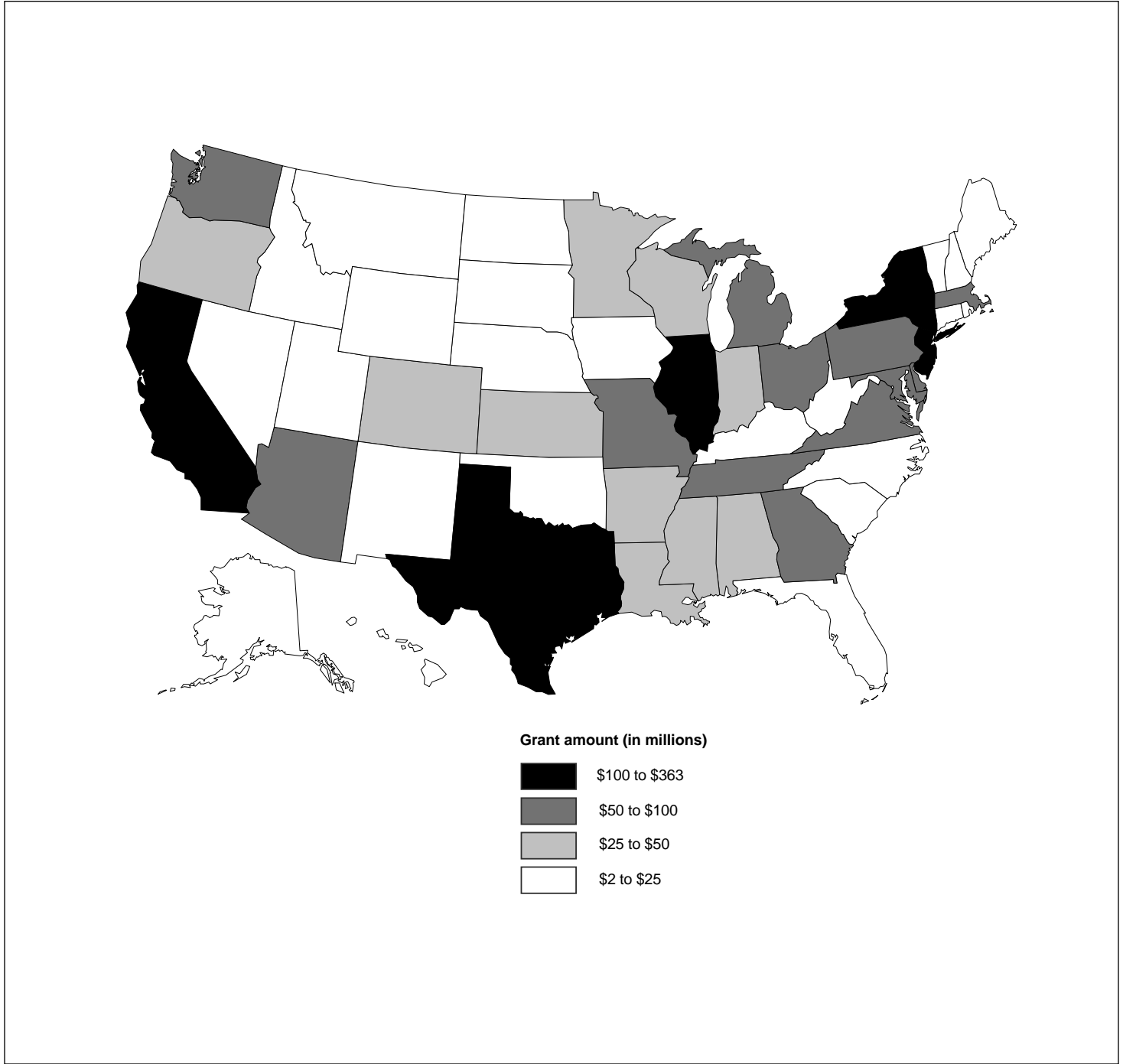
COPS Grant Program		
Grant type	Number of grants awarded	Amount awarded
Hiring	11,434	\$2.26
MORE program	1,565	.29
Other <sup>a</sup>	397	.08
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,396</b>	<b>\$2.63</b>

<sup>a</sup>Other grants include domestic violence, youth firearms reduction, and antigang initiatives.

Source: GAO analysis of COPS Office data, as of September 30, 1996.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of community policing grant dollars awarded by each state and Washington, D.C.

Figure 3: Total Amount of Community Policing Grants Awarded by State and Washington, D.C., Fiscal Years 1995 and 1996



(Figure notes on next page)

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Note: Grant amounts to four U.S. territories are not shown. Puerto Rico was awarded \$47 million, and American Samoa, Guam, and the Virgin Islands were each awarded \$2.7 million or less.

Source: GAO analysis of COPS Office data, as of September 30, 1996.

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## We Estimated That 61 Percent of MORE Program Grant Funds Were Spent to Hire Civilian Personnel

Our survey results showed that in fiscal years 1995 and 1996, grantees were awarded an estimated \$286 million (plus or minus 3 percent)<sup>13</sup> in MORE program funds to use for purchases of technology and equipment, hiring of support personnel, and/or payment of law enforcement officers' overtime. We estimated that, as of the end of fiscal year 1996, 61 percent of these funds had been spent to hire civilian personnel.

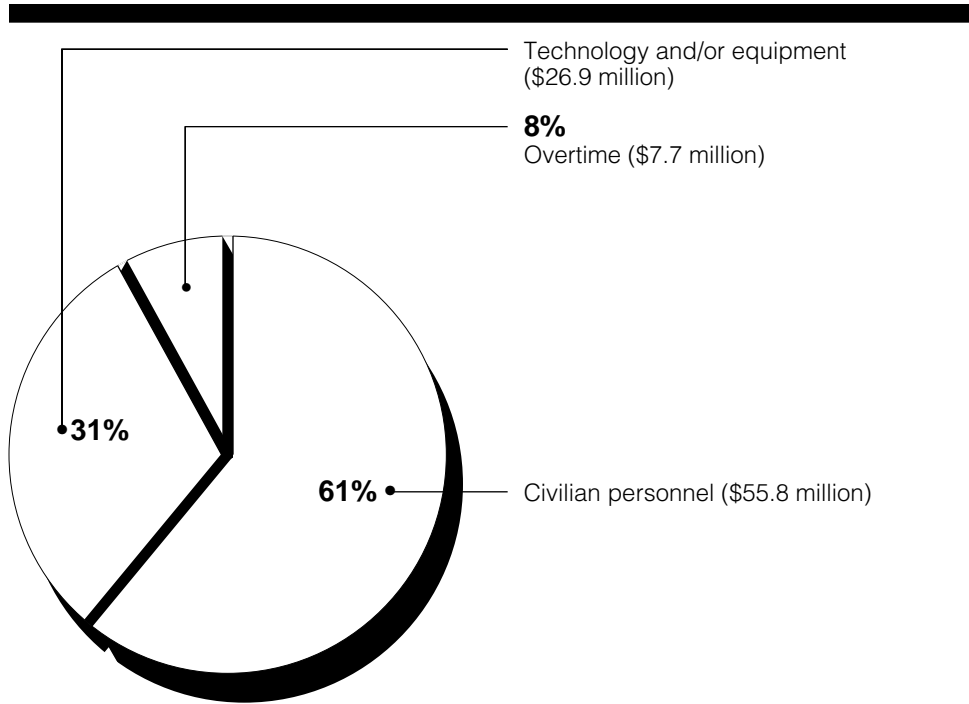
According to our survey, MORE grantees had spent an estimated \$90.1 million in fiscal years 1995 and 1996, a little less than one-third of the \$286 million in MORE funds they were awarded. Overall, we estimated that about 61 percent of the MORE program grant funds spent during the first 2 years of the program was to hire civilian personnel. About 31 percent of the funds went for the purchase of technology and/or equipment, primarily computers, and about 8 percent was spent on overtime for law enforcement officers. Figure 4 shows how these funds were spent.

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<sup>13</sup>Because the mail survey results came from a sample of 366 MORE program grant recipients out of a universe of 1,524 recipients, all results were subject to sampling errors, along with other potential sources of errors associated with surveys, such as nonresponse and question misinterpretation. For the \$286 million estimate, the 95-percent confidence interval of plus or minus 3 percent indicates that we are 95-percent confident that the interval from \$279 million to \$293 million includes the actual dollar amount grantees had been awarded. Unless otherwise noted, all dollar estimates in this report for this survey have 95-percent confidence intervals of plus or minus 4 percent or less of the dollar value of the estimate. All percentage estimates have 95-percent confidence intervals of plus or minus 6 percentage points or less. Number estimates have 95-percent confidence intervals of plus or minus 9 percent of the number.



**Figure 4: Estimated MORE Program Grant Funds Spent for Technology And/or Equipment, Civilian Personnel, and Overtime, Fiscal Years 1995 and 1996**



Note: Total spending was an estimated \$90.1 million.

Source: GAO survey of a nationally representative sample of 366 of 1,524 MORE program grant recipients.

Time savings achieved through MORE program grant awards were to be applied to community policing. Allowable technology and equipment purchases were generally computer hardware or software. Some technology/equipment items, such as police cars, weapons, radios, radar guns, uniforms, and office equipment—such as fax machines and copiers—could not be purchased with the grant funds. Additional support resources for some positions, such as community service technicians, dispatchers, and clerks, were allowable. Law enforcement officers’ overtime was to be applied to community policing activities. Overtime was not funded for the 1996 application year.

Distributions of MORE program grant expenditures were heavily influenced by the expenditures of one large jurisdiction, the New York City Police

Department. This police department was awarded about one-third of the total amount of MORE grant funds awarded and had spent about one-half of all MORE grant funds expended nationwide. About 86 percent of the money that the department spent, or \$38.7 million, was for the hiring of civilian personnel. Excluding the New York City Police Department's expenditures, the highest percentage of expenditures went for purchases of technology and/or equipment, which represented about 48 percent of the MORE program grant spending by all other grantees.

Table 3 shows the percentages of MORE grant funds expended for all survey respondents, the New York City Police Department, and all other survey respondents after excluding the New York City Police Department.

**Table 3: Percentage of MORE Grant Funds Expended by Survey Respondents, Fiscal Years 1995 and 1996**

Dollars in millions			
Percentage of MORE program grant expenditures, by survey respondents			
Type	All survey respondents	New York City Police Department	Survey respondents, excluding the New York City Police Department
Hire civilian personnel	61%	86%	38%
Purchase technology and/or equipment	31	12	48
Pay law enforcement officers overtime	8	2	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

In commenting on our draft report, COPS officials noted that nearly two-thirds of the MORE program funds awarded nationwide were for purchases of technology and/or equipment. The officials believed that significant local procurement delays may explain our finding that most expenditures through fiscal year 1996 were for civilian personnel hiring.

**Survey Respondents Reported Redeployments to Community Policing Resulting From MORE Program Grants**

We asked survey respondents to calculate the number of officer full-time-equivalent positions that their agency had redeployed to community policing as a result of MORE program grant funds spent in fiscal years 1995 and 1996. The respondents were asked to do these calculations using instructions provided to them in the original MORE program grant application package. (See p. 18 for a discussion of how these calculations were to be made.)

We estimated that nearly 4,800 (plus or minus 9 percent) officer full-time-equivalent positions had been redeployed. Of these, about 40 percent of the positions were redeployed as a result of technology and/or equipment purchases, about 48 percent of the positions were attributable to hiring civilian personnel, and about 12 percent of the positions were a result of law enforcement officers' overtime. The total full-time-equivalent positions were associated with an estimated \$82 million, or about 91 percent of the MORE program grant funds spent, because some survey respondents reported that they were not able to calculate positions redeployed to community policing. The most common reasons the respondents cited for not being able to do so were that equipment that had been purchased had not yet been installed, and/or that it was too early in the implementation process to make calculations of time savings.

We estimated based on our mail survey responses that about 2,400 full-time civilian personnel were hired with MORE program funds spent in fiscal years 1995 and 1996. The most frequently reported technology or equipment purchases were mobile data computers or laptops, personal computers, other computer hardware, and crime analysis computer software.

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## New Officers and Redeployments to Community Policing Count Toward the Goal of 100,000 New Officers on the Street

As of June 1997, a total of 30,155 law enforcement officer positions funded by COPS grants were estimated by the COPS Office to be on the street. COPS Office estimates of the numbers of new community policing officers on the street were based on three funding sources: (1) officers on board as a result of COPS hiring grants; (2) officers redeployed to community policing as a result of time savings achieved through technology and equipment purchases, hiring of civilian personnel, and/or law enforcement officers' overtime funded by the MORE grant program; and (3) officers funded under the Police Hiring Supplement Program, which was in place before the COPS grant program.

According to COPS Office officials, the office's first systematic attempt to estimate the progress toward the goal of 100,000 new community policing officers on the street was a telephone survey of grantees done between September and December, 1996. COPS Office staff contacted 8,360 grantees to inquire about their progress in hiring officers and getting them on the street.

According to a COPS Office official, a follow-up survey, which estimated 30,155 law enforcement officer positions to be on the street, was done

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between late March and June, 1997. The official said that this survey was contracted out because the earlier in-house survey had been extremely time consuming. The official said that, as of May 1997, the office was in the process of selecting a contractor to do three additional surveys during fiscal year 1998.

In addition to collecting data through telephone surveys on the numbers of new community policing officers hired with hiring grants, the COPS Office reviewed information provided by grantees on officers redeployed to community policing as a result of time savings achieved by MORE program grants. To receive MORE program grants, applicants are required to calculate the time savings that would result from the grants and apply the time to community policing activities. To assist applicants in doing these calculations, the COPS Office provided examples in the grant application package.

The following is an excerpt from one sample calculation:

“Hessville is a rural department with 20 sworn law enforcement officers. Officers in the Hessville Police Department spend an average of three hours each per shift typing reports by hand at the station. Based on information collected from similar agencies that have moved to an automated field-report-writing system, the department determines that if all of the patrol cars are equipped with laptop computers, the same tasks will take the officers only two hours each per shift to complete—a [time savings] of one hour per officer, per shift.

“On any given day, 10 officers in the Hessville Police Department will use the four laptop computers being requested (some laptops will be reused by officers on different shifts) to complete paperwork in their patrol cars. Since each officer is expected to save an hour of time each day as a result of using the computers, 10 hours of sworn officer time will be saved by the agency each day, which would equal approximately 1.3 FTEs (full time equivalents) of redeployment over the course of one year, using a standard of 1,824 hours (228 days) for an FTE.”

The COPS Office also counted toward the 100,000-officers goal 2,000 positions funded under the Police Hiring Supplement Program, which was administered by another Justice component before the COPS grants program was established. An official said that a policy decision had been made early in the establishment of the COPS Office to include these positions in the count.

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## Special Law Enforcement Agencies Were Awarded Less Than 3 Percent of All Hiring Grants

Special law enforcement agencies, such as those serving Native American communities, universities and colleges, and mass transit passengers, were awarded 329 hiring grants in fiscal years 1995 and 1996. This number was less than 3 percent of the 11,434 hiring grants awarded during the 2-year period.

We reviewed application files for 293 of these grants and found that almost 80 percent were awarded to Native American police departments and university or college law enforcement agencies. Other special agencies included mass transit, public housing, and school police. The COPS Office also considered new police departments as special agencies. The awards to special agencies averaged about \$291,000 per grant.

The 293 special agency grantees applied most frequently to use officers hired with the COPS funds to (1) write strategic plans for community policing, (2) provide community policing training for citizens and/or law enforcement officers, (3) meet regularly with community groups, and (4) develop neighborhood watch programs and antiviolence programs.

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## Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report for comment to the Attorney General and received comments from the Director of the COPS Office. The comments are reprinted in appendix III. The COPS Office also provided some additional information and oral technical comments.

The COPS Office generally agreed with the information we presented and provided updates on the progress of the office on some of the issues addressed in the report. These comments are incorporated in the report where appropriate.

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We are sending copies of this report to the Ranking Minority Members of your Committee and Subcommittee and other interested parties. We will also make copies available to others on request.

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The major contributors to this report are listed in appendix IV. Please feel free to call me at (202) 512-3610 if you have questions or need additional information.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Norman Rabkin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'N'.

Norman J. Rabkin  
Director, Administration of  
Justice Issues

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**Abbreviations**

COPS	Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
MORE	Making Officer Redeployment Effective

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# Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

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To determine grant program design features in the Public Safety Partnership and Community Policing Act of 1994, we reviewed the act and its legislative history and discussed the results of our review with COPS Office officials.

To determine how the COPS Office monitored the use of grants it awarded, we reviewed documentation on monitoring procedures and interviewed officials about actions taken and planned.

To determine how COPS grants were distributed nationwide, we obtained COPS Office data files on all grants awarded in fiscal years 1995 and 1996, and we analyzed the distributions by grant type; by population size reported to the COPS Office; by recipient jurisdictions according to COPS data; and by state. The data reflect the number of grants for which applicants have been advised that they will receive funding and for which they have received estimated award amounts. They do not reflect dollar amounts of funds obligated by the COPS Office or actually spent by agencies that received the grants.

To determine how law enforcement agencies used grants under the MORE program, we surveyed by mail a stratified, random sample of 415 out of a total of 1,524 agencies that had been awarded MORE grants as of September 30, 1996. Using COPS Office application data, we stratified the grant recipients into four population categories, according to the population of the jurisdiction served, and six total MORE grant award amount groups. The population categories were: fewer than 50,000; 50,000 to fewer than 100,000; 100,000 to fewer than 500,000; and 500,000 and over. The MORE grant award amount categories were: fewer than \$10,000; \$10,000 to fewer than \$25,000; \$25,000 to fewer than \$50,000; \$50,000 to fewer than \$75,000; \$75,000 to fewer than \$150,000; and \$150,000 or more. Regardless of population size, we selected all agencies that had accepted grants of \$150,000 or more. We received usable responses from 366, or 88 percent, of our contacts with the sample of 415 agencies. All survey results were weighted to represent the total population of 1,524 MORE program grant recipients.

Our questionnaire asked agencies to provide the following information as of September 30, 1996: (1) the total amount of MORE program grant funds accepted; (2) the categories under which grant funds were spent—technology and/or equipment, civilian personnel, or law enforcement officer overtime; (3) the types of technology and equipment purchases made or contracted to make; (4) the types of civilian personnel

hired; and (5) the number of officer positions redeployed to community policing, according to calculations of time savings achieved through MORE program grant spending.

We pretested the questionnaire by telephone with officials from judgmentally selected MORE program grant recipients, and we revised the questionnaires on the basis of this input. To the extent practical, we attempted to verify the completeness and accuracy of the survey responses. We contacted respondents to obtain answers to questions that were not completed and to resolve apparent inconsistencies between answers to different questions.

To determine the process the COPS Office used to calculate the number of officers on the street, we interviewed officials and reviewed documentation on how calculations were made.

To describe funding distributions and uses of COPS hiring grants in special law enforcement agencies, we used a data collection instrument to review the COPS Office's grant application files of hiring grants accepted by special law enforcement agencies. We reviewed 293 of the 329 (89 percent) hiring grants that were awarded to special agencies in fiscal years 1995 and 1996, according to COPS Office data. The 36 files that we did not review were in use by COPS Office staff at the time we did our work.

# Community Policing Projects in Locations We Visited Emphasized Prevention, Problemsolving, and Partnerships

We looked at how community policing was implemented in six locations that had received COPS grants. The locations we visited were Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, and Oxnard, CA; Prince George's County, MD; St. Petersburg, FL; and Window Rock, AZ (Navajo Nation).

These locations were judgmentally selected to include four city or county police departments and two special law enforcement agencies. The departments we visited were in varying stages of implementing community policing activities. They served communities with populations ranging from 155,000 to over 1 million. Table II.1 provides additional information about the locations we visited.

**Table II.1: Locations We Visited**

Location	Population	Law enforcement agency	Sworn officers	Officers dedicated to community policing at time of visit
Los Angeles, CA	3,600,000	Los Angeles Police Department	8,915	1,093
Los Angeles County, CA	1,500,000	Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority Police Department	329	12
Oxnard, CA	155,000	Oxnard Police Department	179	18
Prince George's County, MD	758,000	Prince George's County Police Department	1,283	120
St. Petersburg, FL	240,000	St. Petersburg Police Department	480	52
Window Rock, AZ (Navajo Nation)	186,000	Navajo Department of Law Enforcement	253	0

Note: Numbers of community policing officers are those serving in positions dedicated for community policing. Officials noted that officers in nondedicated positions also used community policing practices.

Source: Law enforcement agency officials in the locations we visited.

In each law enforcement jurisdiction, we did structured interviews with the police chief or community policing coordinator, a panel of community policing officers, and representatives of local government agencies and community groups involved in community policing projects. We discussed community policing projects and asked interviewees to characterize the level of support by their organization for community policing and to

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Community Policing Projects in Locations  
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discuss what they viewed as major successes and limitations of community policing for their communities. Table II.2 lists the interviewees by job title.

**Table II.2: Interviewees Commenting on Community Policing Implementation in the Six Locations We Visited**

Location	Interviewees
Los Angeles, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Commander, Los Angeles Police Department</li> <li>•Panel of community policing officers, Los Angeles Police Department</li> <li>•District Director, City Council, 3rd District</li> <li>•Program Coordinator, Criminal Justice Planning Office</li> <li>•Chief Inspector, Los Angeles, Department of Building &amp; Safety</li> <li>•Executive Director, Barrio Action Group</li> <li>•Executive Director, Challenger Boys &amp; Girls Club</li> <li>•Executive Director, Los Angeles Free Clinic</li> <li>•Co-Chair, Rampart Community Police Advisory Board</li> <li>•Co-Chair, 77th Street Community Police Advisory Board</li> <li>•Co-Chair, West Valley Community Police Advisory Board</li> <li>•Researcher, California State University, Fullerton, Department of Criminal Justice</li> <li>•Researchers, University of Southern California, Social Science Research Institute</li> </ul>
Los Angeles County, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Chief, Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) Police Department</li> <li>•Panel of community policing officers, MTA Police Department</li> <li>•Senior Code Law Enforcement Officer, City of Lawndale</li> <li>•Probation Officer, County of Los Angeles</li> <li>•Project Director, Estele Van Meter Multi-Purpose Center</li> <li>•Assistant Principal, Manchester Elementary School (MTA officers work with students on campus)</li> </ul>
Oxnard, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Police Chief, Oxnard Police Department</li> <li>•Panel of community policing officers, Oxnard Police Department</li> <li>•Assistant City Manager, City of Oxnard</li> <li>•Chair, Inter-Neighborhood Community Committee (liaison between neighborhood councils and city departments)</li> <li>•Marketing Director, AT&amp;T</li> <li>•President, Channel Islands National Bank</li> <li>•President, Colonial Coalition Against Alcohol and Drugs</li> <li>•Executive Director, El Concilio (Latino multiservice nonprofit)</li> <li>•Coordinator, Interface Children and Family Services</li> <li>•Director, Instructional Support Services at the Oxnard High School District</li> <li>•Member, Sea Air Neighborhood Watch</li> </ul>

(continued)

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**Community Policing Projects in Locations**  
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<b>Location</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>
Prince George's County, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Community Policing Director, Prince George's County Police Department</li> <li>•Panel of community policing officers, Prince George's County Police Department</li> <li>•Public Safety Director, Prince George's County</li> <li>•Prince George's County Multi-Agency Services Team (county agencies and the police address crime concerns in communities)</li> <li>•Chair, Public Safety Issues, Interfaith Action Committee (consortium of churches involved in social service issues)</li> <li>•Vice President, Government Affairs, Apartment and Building Owners Association</li> <li>•Resident Manager, Whitfield Towne Apartments</li> </ul>
St. Petersburg, FL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Chief and Director of Special Projects, St. Petersburg Police Department</li> <li>•Panel of community policing officers, St. Petersburg Police Department</li> <li>•Neighborhood Partnership Director, Office of the Mayor</li> <li>•Executive Director and staff, St. Petersburg Housing Authority</li> <li>•Administrator and staff, St. Petersburg Department of Leisure Services</li> <li>•Chief, St. Petersburg Fire Department</li> <li>•Executive Director and staff, Center Against Spouse Abuse</li> <li>•Coordinators, Black on Black Crime Prevention Program and Intervention Program, Pinellas County Urban League</li> <li>•Director, Criminal Justice Administration, Operations Parental Awareness and Responsibility (PAR), Inc.</li> </ul>
Window Rock, AZ (Navajo Nation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Chief and Captain, Navajo Department of Law Enforcement</li> <li>•Panel of community policing officers, Navajo Department of Law Enforcement</li> <li>•Executive Director, Division of Public Safety, Navajo Nation</li> <li>•Program Coordinator; Navajo Housing Authority; Window Rock, AZ</li> <li>•Security Chief; Window Rock Unified School District; Fort Defiance, AZ</li> <li>•Program Coordinator; Sanders School District; Sanders, AZ</li> <li>•Coordinators; Positive Alternatives for Youth/ACES (a nonprofit organization which sponsors activities for Navajo youth); Window Rock, AZ</li> <li>•Community Planning Committee; Navajo, AZ</li> </ul>

Six law enforcement agencies we visited—three city police departments, one county police department, a Native American police department, and a mass transit police department—had a variety of community policing projects under way. The projects illustrated three key principles of community policing identified by the COPS Office: prevention,

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problemsolving, and partnerships. Representatives of community groups and other local government agencies working with the police on community policing activities were generally supportive of the community policing concept.

Table II.3 provides examples of community policing projects in these locations. The projects ranged from starting 18 community advisory boards in neighborhoods throughout a major city to curbing drug activity by working with the resident manager and residents of an apartment complex.

**Table II.3: Selected Examples of Community Policing Projects in Locations We Visited**

<b>Law enforcement agency</b>	<b>Project description</b>
Los Angeles, CA, Police Department	The police department established 18 Community Police Advisory Boards. Each board consisted of 25 volunteers whose roles were to advise and inform area commanding officers of community concerns (e.g., enforcement of curfew laws and education on domestic violence). Each board used community and police support to address the problems that had been identified. Interviewees said the boards had been effective in helping the police to build trust, involve citizens, solve problems, and reduce citizens' fear of crime.
Los Angeles County, CA, Metropolitan Transit Authority Police Department	The transit authority was part of a task force that addressed problems associated with loitering and drinking by day laborers on railroad property. Using community policing techniques such as problem identification and specific actions, such as clearing shrubs, painting over graffiti, and securing railroad ties that were being used to build tents for shelter, the task force resolved the problems.
Oxnard, CA, Police Department	"Street Beat" was an award-winning cable television series sponsored by local businesses and the cable company. Interviewees said the weekly series had been one of the department's most effective community policing tools. Over 500 programs had been aired since 1985. Street beat offered crime prevention tips and encouraged citizens to participate in all of the department's community policing activities. Over 300 departments contacted the Oxnard Police Department for information on replicating the television series in their cities.

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<b>Law enforcement agency</b>	<b>Project description</b>
Prince George's County, MD, Police Department	Citizens, the resident manager, and a community policing officer worked to remove drug dealers from an apartment complex. The community policing officer used several successful tactics, including citing suspected drug dealers, most of whom were not residents, for trespassing and taking photographs of them. Citizens formed a coalition that met with the community policing officer in her on-site office, thereby increasing the willingness of residents to come forward with information on illegal activities. Some disorderly tenants were evicted. The resident manager estimated that drug dealing at the complex was reduced by 90 percent.
St. Petersburg, FL, Police Department	Community policing helped to improve relations between police officers and the residents of a shelter run by the Center Against Spouse Abuse. Interviewees said that the shelter had a policy, until about 1992, that police could not enter the property. Residents were distrustful of the police. Some had negative experiences when officers went to their homes to investigate complaints of abuse. For example, residents reported that officers failed to make arrests when injunctions were violated. Since the inception of community policing, interviewees said that officers were more sensitive to victims when they investigated spouse abuse cases. Officers visited the shelter to discuss victims' rights, and residents were favorably impressed by their openness. The community policing officer in the neighborhood was praised by the shelter director for his responsiveness. On two occasions, he responded quickly to service calls, arresting a trespasser and assisting a suicidal resident.
Window Rock, AZ Navajo Department of Law Enforcement	A police official noted that the department was in the early development phase of community policing, attempting to demonstrate a few successful projects that could be used in locations throughout the over 26,000-square-mile reservation. One interviewee said that gang activity was partially a result of teens having nothing to do on the reservation. A community policing project had officers working with youth groups to develop positive activities and encourage participation by organizing a blood drive, sponsoring youth athletic teams, and recruiting young people to help elderly citizens. Another community policing project was the development of a computer database on gang activities and membership.

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## Community Groups and Local Government Representatives Generally Supported Community Policing in Their Neighborhoods

We asked interviewees representing community groups and local government agencies participating in community policing activities to characterize the level of support their organization had for community policing in their neighborhoods. Thirty-two of the 39 interviewees said that they were supportive of their local community policing programs. Seven other interviewees offered no specific response to this question, except to say that they felt it was too early in their implementation of community policing to make assessments.

We also asked interviewees representing law enforcement agencies, community groups, and local government agencies what they felt were the major successes and limitations of community policing. Responses on community policing successes emphasized improved relationships between the police and residents and improvements in the quality of life for residents of some neighborhoods. Responses on limitations emphasized that there was not enough funding and that performance by some individual community policing officers was disappointing.

Summaries of several responses on the major successes of community policing were the following:

- “I have seen a big turnaround in some apartment complexes. The entire atmosphere of these places has changed. People are outside. Children are playing. This is due to efforts of community policing officers to get drug buyers and sellers off of the properties.” (A community group representative.)
- “There have been big-time changes here as a result of community policing. The police have developed a much higher level of trust from public housing residents than existed before. Residents will work with the police now and provide them with information. In this public housing complex, the sense of safety and security has increased. Before the community policing officers were on patrol, residents did not want to walk past the basketball courts into the community center. That is not a problem any longer. The police worked with the Department of Parks and Recreation to improve lighting and redesign a center entrance. We are now offering a well-attended course on computers at the center. People are enjoying the parks. They are even on the tennis courts. Our community policing officer has been successful in working with problem families and the housing authority staff. We provide referrals, counseling, and other resources. We have either helped families address their problems or had them evicted from our units. There are many individual success stories of young people

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developing better self-esteem and hygiene as a result of interacting with the community policing officer.” (A housing authority director.)

- “Community policing has changed how we practice law enforcement in a substantial way. We applied community policing strategies to a distressed neighborhood plagued by crime. The area had prostitution and drug dealing, and service calls to the police were high. We worked with residents and landlords to improve the situation. Closer relationships developed, and we began working on crime prevention with community groups, schools, and parents. Property managers provided better lighting for their property, cut their weeds, and screened tenants more carefully.” (A community policing officer.)

Summaries of several responses on major limitations to community policing were:

- “Community policing is working here, but we still have a long way to go. The challenge for the department is to convince the force that community policing is not a fad and is not a select group of officers doing touchy/feely work, but that it is a philosophy for the whole department. I think we need to reengineer the entire police department structure to fully integrate community policing into the community. I don’t believe we have decentralized the department enough. For example, I think detectives should be out in the community with community policing officers, instead of at police headquarters. They should know the people in the areas to which they are assigned.” (A director of public safety.)
- “We don’t have “Officer Friendly” yet, even though overall attitudes have improved. The concept is good. The limitations are in the individuals doing the work. Some are good. Some are not.” (A community group member.)
- “Some residents have an unrealistic expectation of what community policing can do and what it cannot do. The majority of calls for service involve social problems. Some residents expect the police to solve all their social problems, such as unemployment and mediating family and neighbor disputes.” (A local government official.)

# Comments From the U.S. Department of Justice



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Office of the Director

July 30, 1997

Mr. Norman J. Rabkin  
Director, Administration of Justice Issues  
General Government Division  
United States General Accounting Office  
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Community Policing: Issues Related to the Design, Operation, and Management of the Grant Program (job code 182027)

Dear Mr. Rabkin:

We appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on the July 24, 1997, draft General Accounting Office Report, "Issues Related to the Design, Operation, and Management of the Grant Program," on the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS).

First, let me update you on the progress of this office on a number of fronts including some of the issues discussed in the report. To date, the Administration's police hiring efforts have given communities an additional 62,000 officers to be put on America's streets. Law enforcement agencies have reported to us that over 30,000 of those officers have already been hired, trained and are currently providing law enforcement services in their communities.

As you noted in the report, grant monitoring is a responsibility of the COPS Office. During our first two and one-half years and as a new office with staffing levels severely limited by congressional appropriations, we faced and met an enormous challenge to implement new grant programs and then process an unprecedented number of grant applications in a very short time frame. These demands did not allow resources to be dedicated to monitoring in the early stages of the program. However, as we have grown, we have embarked on an aggressive plan to increase our proactive monitoring activities within the confines of our resources. This plan has already shown results, with site visits to 138 large and small jurisdictions across the country and the monitoring of more than \$1.5 billion worth of grants. In addition, we are currently reviewing over 6,000 grantee progress reports.

In June, we created a new monitoring component to be exclusively devoted to overseeing grant compliance activities. We are currently recruiting over 30 staff members to carry out these efforts. We also continue to work closely with the Department of Justice's Inspector General and the Office of Justice Program's Office of the Comptroller in both programmatic and fiscal monitoring efforts. It should be noted that OJP's Office of the Comptroller piloted a risk-based financial monitoring plan during FY '97 for both

**Appendix III**  
**Comments From the U.S. Department of**  
**Justice**

OJP and COPS grants. This pilot plan resulted in an additional 160 on-site visits, 533 internal financial reviews, and we anticipate full implementation in FY 1998.

As you pointed out, the vast majority of our grants are to relatively small jurisdictions and for only one or two officers. This is not surprising given the fact that the vast majority of police departments nationwide are also relatively small. However, the level of assistance given to large and small agencies is equal -- by statute. Distribution of our grant funds remains true to the statutory requirement that 50% of our grant funds go to jurisdictions serving populations over 150,000 and 50% to those under 150,000.

The COPS MORE program has been enthusiastically received by law enforcement. In 1995, 1996 and 1997, the program has been very competitive, with requests for grant funds exceeding available funding. We have found, however, that significant local procurement delays have slowed the ability of some jurisdictions to redeploy existing sworn law enforcement officers into community policing. This is particularly true for equipment and technology, which represent nearly two-thirds of MORE funds awarded. That delay may explain your finding that most expenditures to date have been for civilians hired for sworn officer redeployment. There is no doubt that, when fully implemented, MORE grants have resulted in significant levels of redeployment in a highly cost efficient manner.

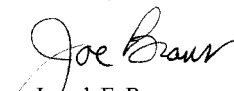
The COPS Office will continue to track the numbers of officers hired and actually on the street by contacting each of our grantees every four months. As you noted, this task -- contacting thousands of grantees on a regular basis -- is time consuming and resource intensive. It is nonetheless an important measure of our progress towards achieving the goals of the 1994 Public Safety Partnership and Community Policing Act.

We also remain committed to implementing and enhancing community policing efforts nationwide, including providing funds to those law enforcement agencies serving tribes, public housing residents and campuses. Our experience to date has demonstrated that such agencies can successfully implement the philosophy of community policing to address crime and fear of crime through problem-solving partnerships with their community.

Finally, I was pleased to see that your site visits to a number of communities involved in community policing yielded such positive feedback. This is also consistent with what we continue to hear from our grantees. We regularly receive a substantial number of unsolicited testimonials confirming the popularity of community policing, COPS grant programs, and our willingness to be flexible, responsive and nonbureaucratic in meeting state and local needs.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment, as well as the professionalism and courtesy shown by your staff throughout the course of your review.

Sincerely,



Joseph E. Brann  
Director

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