

WHAT WORKS

An Effective Practice
Case Study from the ICMA
Center for Performance
Measurement

Featuring

The City of Mesa, Arizona



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As Economic Strains Persist, Mesa Promotes Police Service Excellence with Frequent Performance Reviews

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Few states have been hit harder by the economic crisis of the late 2000s and early 2010s than Arizona. With seriously declining revenues and some of the highest foreclosure rates in the nation, local governments across the state are grappling with budget reductions well into double-digit percentages. One direct effect reported by the Mesa police department is the loss of 73 sworn positions in 2009, down from a 2008 year-end total of 828 positions.

In spite of these drastic staff reductions, however, the city continues to boast one of the fastest response times to top-priority police calls of all jurisdictions reporting to the ICMA Center for Performance Measurement™. Originally featured for its excellent response time in the 2008 print edition of *What Works*, Mesa remains a strong performer in 2010.

In its 2009 CPM submission, the city reported an average response time to top-priority police calls of 4.4 minutes. This includes the time from receipt of call to arrival on scene. The mean and median for all jurisdictions reporting were 6.6 minutes and 5.8 minutes, respectively.

Rigorous analysis remains important; greater frequency boosts results

In 2008, Mesa personnel attributed the city's excellent response time to rigorous collection and application of performance information using a local adaptation of the CompStat model. In 2010, they still do. So what's new?

In addition to the rigorous monthly performance reviews described in 2008, the department is also conducting daily and weekly reviews:

- **Daily reviews**—The city includes four geographic policing districts, each with a crime analysis team composed of a crime analyst, a crime analysis technician, and a criminal intelligence officer. Each weekday morning, the team plots the previous day's criminal activity on a map and provides the map to the district commander, who in turn uses it to set mission priorities for the day. (The department plans to provide analysis on Saturday and Sunday when staffing and other resources permit.)
- **Weekly reviews**—Each week, the district commanders gather with the assistant chief for operations to review data from each of their districts, looking for hotspots and citywide trends. The team makes changes in deployment and patrol strategy within and across districts in response to what it finds—including the movement of district-level resources like gang response units from one district to another when conditions warrant.

Department leaders encourage and recognize district chiefs for collaborating to meet policing challenges citywide—and afford them the

Case Profile

Population:

478,014

Square miles:

133

Median household income:

\$49,116

Form of government:

Council-manager



For additional information about the practices described in this case study, please contact Detective Stephen Badger, at 480/644-3670, or stephen.badger@mesaaz.gov.

opportunity to do so in these solution-oriented weekly meetings.

- **Monthly**—As shared in 2008, the department’s monthly reviews include written submission of performance statistics to the police chief, followed by an in-person meeting attended by the chief, assistant chiefs, geographic district commanders, and support personnel. Performance data are presented and used to stimulate discussion about successes and improvement targets within the department. The meetings are open to the public and the media. Most last approximately four hours.

Mission improvements—not the data—are considered the product of all of these periodic reviews. By closely monitoring performance in this iterative fashion, Mesa is able to track progress toward objectives and shift resources nimbly.

The police department also participates in the city manager’s quarterly MesaStat review of all city departments.

Moving from beat to zone patrol

Among the changes the Mesa police department has implemented as a result of its CompStat process is a shift from beat- to zone-focused patrol.

Under the beat concept, officers were deployed to the same areas each day; each district included approximately seven beats, each staffed by a single officer. Using the new zone plan, officers are deployed in teams of 2-3 to approximately three zones drawn daily based on the previous day’s results.

To ensure its efficacy, the department conducted a six-month pilot study of the zone deployment strategy in a single district before implementing it citywide.

Encourage conversation, not confrontation

While extolling the benefits of CompStat, Mesa personnel also take care to acknowledge the reputation for confrontation that CompStat has developed in some communities. They emphasize, however, that Mesa pursues a constructive approach to its CompStat activities, “valuing conversation above confrontation.”

*Mesa pursues a constructive approach to its CompStat activities,
“valuing conversation above confrontation.”*

CompStat meetings frequently involve frank discussions of tough issues, but civility rules. The department specifically eschews the use of “gotcha” tactics in its CompStat work. It maintains CompStat as a tool to engage department personnel in the enthusiastic pursuit of continuous improvement—not to embarrass or penalize them.