



Citizen Oversight Committees in Law Enforcement

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Law enforcement officers are charged with performing a variety of difficult tasks in the communities they serve. In order to carry out these tasks officers are vested with high levels of autonomy and authority. Although most law enforcement personnel throughout the United States perform honorable and conscientious police work, enormous amounts of damage can be done by a single reported incident of police misconduct or corruption. In response to allegations of wrongdoing and the use of excessive force by officers, some police agencies have solicited public opinion and involvement in an effort to build bridges of trust and promote transparency. This often includes discussions of establishing a citizen oversight committee.

Citizen oversight committees are officially recognized groups composed of members of the community, often non-sworn civilians, who review complaints about police on behalf of the citizenry. Currently, there are more than 100 citizen oversight committees in the United States and approximately 18 percent of local law enforcement agencies in California have one. Each citizen oversight committee is a unique product of the environment that surrounds it. Citizen oversight committees generally fall into two categories or model types: they are either external or internal to the law enforcement agency. A current trend is to incorporate aspects of both external and internal models into a hybrid model.

While there are no validated “best practices” in creating citizen oversight committees, successful committees can include benefits such as: empowering citizens, promoting change within law enforcement agencies, improving police-community relations, and increasing police transparency. Despite these benefits, committees face a number of structural and political obstacles that can hinder their ability to create lasting and permanent change in the police agencies they oversee. Many officers believe that citizen oversight and outside investigations are “unfair and biased against them” because their presence implies an inability of police agencies to monitor and investigate themselves. Recent changes in police oversight, however, have shifted away from the “us v. them” mentality. Similar to the theories guiding Community Oriented Policing, contemporary citizen oversight committees have embodied values that seek joint partnerships with stakeholders involved in the oversight process.

Support from local politicians and police administrators as well as rank-and-file officers is crucial to the success of all citizen oversight committees. If city officials and the police department do not support the oversight body, it will have no access to the confidential documents and case evidence necessary to review incidents involving police misconduct. To be effective, citizen oversight committees must be skillful at getting policing issues on the city’s agenda so that officials will address, rather than ignore, suppress, or minimize problems in the police agency.

While there are many things to consider, some important questions to keep in mind when implementing a citizen oversight committee are:

- **Membership:** Who will sit on the committee? Do committee members need to have any specialized skills or knowledge beyond an ability to be fair, open-minded, and conscientious? Will they be paid or volunteer positions? Will positions be appointed or by application/qualifications? How will appropriate- and fair-minded citizens be recruited?
- **Power and Responsibilities:** Will the committee conduct investigations or just oversee the investigation process? Will the committee recommend or issue discipline? Will the committee have subpoena powers?
- **Governance:** Who will oversee the committee – an elected body or police administrator(s)? How will a committee be established – by charter or the electorate?
- **Funding:** How will the committee be funded? What costs will be associated with the implementation and maintenance?
- **Goals:** What is/are the goal(s) of the committee?

The success of citizen oversight committees rests on their ability to establish joint partnerships with stakeholders involved in the oversight process. Often citizen oversight committees balance the needs of the public, police officers, and law enforcement agencies in an effort to establish their legitimacy. However, citizen oversight committees should continue to adapt to changes in political leadership and internal departmental transitions so that their membership and legitimacy will remain a fixture for years to follow.

CITIZEN OVERSIGHT COMMITTEES IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Individuals who have sworn to protect and serve their communities are in a position of visible authority and are therefore held to a higher standard than the general public. California Penal Code Section 830 grants “Peace Officer” status to any individual meeting department and state standards. Police officers are vested with powers that include the ability to take away a person’s freedom or even their life in the performance of their official duties. Although most law enforcement personnel throughout the United States perform honorable and conscientious police work, enormous amounts of damage can be done by a single reported incident of police misconduct or corruption (Office of Community Oriented Policing Systems, 2007). With so many law enforcement agencies in the United States, it is imperative that relationships of trust exist between these agencies and their communities. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics’ Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies, in 2008, 60 percent of the more than 1 million full-time law enforcement officers were employed by local police departments. One can easily see how, with constant exposure to local citizens through investigations and patrol, it is crucial for these members of law enforcement and department executives to develop strong and positive bonds with the communities they serve.

Instituting a successful program of police oversight is an inherently difficult task. Through the statutory assignment of power to law enforcement agencies, governments have entrusted police officers with the responsibility of “preserving order and protecting citizens” (West Virginia Advisory Committee, 2004, p. 2). As a result, police officers are typically given a large degree of autonomy to carry out their roles. This level of autonomy becomes troublesome when officers commit acts that cause the public to question the integrity of a police officer or agency. Instances of officer-involved shootings, use of excessive force, or perceived racial profiling can often challenge public trust in law enforcement agencies (De Angelis & Kupchik, 2007). Such violations of public trust often become high-profile incidents that create a demand for effective police oversight.

WHAT IS A CITIZEN OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE?

Citizen oversight committees are defined as officially recognized groups composed of community members, which may include non-sworn civilians, who review complaints about police on behalf of the citizenry (Buren, 2007). For example, they investigate instances of excessive use of physical and deadly force. Citizen oversight committees also investigate cases that include:

- Allegations of harassment of various groups (such as homeless populations, members of homosexual and ethnic communities, women and youth).
- Allegations of espionage on activist groups.
- Allegations that stem from the code of silence within police agencies.

Citizen oversight committees have historically emerged following riots, shootings, accusations of racism and discrimination, or incidents of significant use of force or police brutality. However, citizen oversight groups have not always been officially recognized or supervised by local governments or police agencies. Some police administrators began to accept citizen oversight of the police in the 1990s as citizens involved in the review process began to familiarize themselves with the internal workings of police agencies (American Civil Liberties Union, 2007; Mohr, 2007).

WHY HAVE A CITIZEN OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE?

Although only 18 percent of local law enforcement agencies in California have citizen oversight committees (Gardiner, forthcoming), many cities consider citizen oversight as an acceptable and appropriate way to include community members in the police process. In an era that stresses community involvement and partnerships, it allows a unique opportunity for community members and police administrators to hold police officers accountable for their actions (Buren, 2007) while improving transparency and community relations. The desire to add an independent voice to the investigation of police misconduct is a common thread that runs through the more than 100 citizen oversight organizations that exist in the United States today (De Angelis & Kupchik, 2007). The *Police Accountability and Citizen Review*, published by the International Association of Chiefs of Police in 2000, noted that when public concerns about police agencies lead to mistrust of law enforcement, program directors must consider making citizen oversight a “chosen response for addressing problems and administrative failures” (p. 2). The report also states that citizen review can be used to make police agencies accountable to the communities they serve. Even for agencies not facing a crisis of public trust, establishing a citizen oversight committee can be a vital and strategic way to solicit and incorporate citizen input while improving community trust and cooperation. This is especially true for agencies that ascribe to a community policing philosophy (92 percent of agencies in California (Gardiner, forthcoming)) and can be important when fighting for precious tax dollars.

MODELS OF CITIZEN OVERSIGHT COMMITTEES

Just as the nature of law enforcement is changing to keep up with rapidly evolving communities, so too are citizen oversight committees. Peter Finn states that “there is no single model (of citizen oversight), and it is difficult to find two oversight agencies that are identical” (2001, p. 6). Citizen oversight committees generally fall into two categories or model types: they are either external or internal to the law enforcement agency. Additionally, a current trend is to incorporate aspects of both external and internal models into a hybrid model (Mohr, 2007).

See Table 1 for a detailed list of characteristics of each model.

External Model Of Citizen Oversight Committees

Citizens often support external police oversight committees that follow the Citizen Review Board Model. Citizen Review Boards are independent from law enforcement agencies and are staffed, as well as paid for, by the legislative bodies holding jurisdiction. The committee head may or may not report to local government officials and its membership composition typically reflects the surrounding community it serves. Membership can include one individual or a group of people (Mohr, 2007). According to Peter Finn (2001), this is the most common and basic form of citizen oversight committees. As an external body, members of the community who make up the committee conduct their own investigation and present their findings to police department executives for review and approval (Finn, 2001).

External Models in Action

The Citizens’ Police Review Board of Oakland, California is an example of a civilian review board. It is composed of 12 civilian members, an independent counsel, and six staff members. The CPRB accepts complaints in person, by fax, and by mail. In the first half of 2011, the CPRB received 33 complaints, 14 of which concerned excessive force. The CPRB complaint process is external to the police department. The CPRB reports sustained allegations and discipline recommendations to the City Administrator, who then engages the Chief of Police and recommends disciplinary action (Citizens’ Police Review Board, 2011). The board does not discipline officers; it simply offers its assessment of the incident and recommends an outcome.

Beyond reviewing complaints, the CPRB also recommends policies, many of which have been adopted by the Oakland Police Department since the committee was established in 1980. For example, in 2002, OPD adopted the recommendation to require officers to receive training on how to deal with suspects and community members suffering from mental illness. In 2003, the OPD did away with the use of wooden batons and sting grenades when dealing with crowd control. In addition, the OPD also agreed to work with the Executive Director of the CPRB and community leaders to revise OPD's policies regarding crowd control. In 2007, Oakland approved the recommendation that the OPD be trained in making critical decisions, review pursuit policies, and the adequacy of its databases regarding car pursuits. In 2010, the city of Oakland adopted the recommendation that the Oakland Police Department provide language access services in communities where English is not the predominantly spoken language (CPRB, 2011).

In addition to investigating complaints, the CPRB laid out a community engagement plan in early 2011 in an effort to inform the community about its services and to increase participation of new members. For example, the plan includes sponsoring community outreach programs presented in Spanish and Chinese to recruit new members for the CPRB from areas where English is not predominantly spoken (CPRB, 2011).

Table 1: Models for Civilian Oversight Committees

Internal Citizen Review <i>Police Auditor Model</i>	External Civilian Oversight Agency <i>Citizen Review Board Model</i>
Police administration finds least offensive.	Most popular with civilians.
Dependent on law enforcement agencies.	Based on independence from law enforcement agencies.
Police department (may) staff and fund this position.	Staffed and funded by executive/legislative body within jurisdiction.
Reports directly or indirectly to the Chief of Police.	Head may or may not report to the local government official.
Membership: Individual(s) who reviews allegations of police misconduct. Experts on police matters.	Membership: group or individual. Reflection of the surrounding community.
Can decrease public confidence in police agencies. Can be seen as part of the agency's internal affairs.	Can increase public confidence in police agencies. Can serve as deterrents of police misconduct.
Increased potential risk for preferential treatment of the law enforcement agency.	May lack knowledge of police. Police officers may not trust its decisions or recommendations.
Efficacy threatened due to the public's perception of partiality and by the perception of hierarchical rank of the internal monitor.	Efficacy threatened by lack of knowledge. Civilians will need training on legal matters.

Information for this graph adapted from: Mohr, Beth Anne (2007). *The Use of Performance Measurement in Civilian Oversight in the United States*. Retrieved from http://www.civilianoversight.net/NACOLEPerf_mgmt.pdf and from Finn, Peter. (2001). *Citizen review of police: Approaches and implementation*. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, NIJ #184430. Washington, D.C.

Internal Model Of Citizen Oversight

While community members often prefer the external model of oversight, police administrators tend to prefer internal review, which is the traditional and longstanding method of investigating allegations within a department. Peter Finn (2001) presents different approaches to internal oversight of police. One approach is for the investigations of police misconduct to be conducted internally, meaning police department members and executives, such as an Internal Affairs Division, conduct the investigation. In accordance with the mandates issued by the Department of Justice Section 14141, the Internal Affairs Division within the police department is responsible for investigating allegations of police misconduct and corruption. Police officers found to be noncompliant with departmental policy would be subject to sanctions, including state or federal prosecution (Simmons, 2010). While the inclusion of citizens in the process is limited and rare, this method is still employed by many departments and is often referred to as a citizen oversight committee despite its lack of citizen involvement (Finn, 2001).

A second approach to internal oversight is to have a system in which the investigation is still carried out by the IAD. However, citizens have a role in reviewing final reports that have already been approved. They can then take action and make recommendations based on their findings from previous and standing investigations (Finn, 2001).

A third approach to internal oversight employs the use of an auditor or contracted positions within a police department that are ultimately tasked with conducting a thorough investigation on behalf of a police department. This type of approach is commonly referred to as the Police Auditor Model and is most commonly found in departments and cities with higher operating budgets and more frequent use (Finn, 2001; Mohr, 2007).

Internal Models in Action

Perhaps the best examples of internal citizen oversight committees in the southern California region are found in the sheriff's departments of Orange and Los Angeles counties. In 2001 the Office of Independent Review was established in Los Angeles County; Orange County followed by forming its own OIR in 2008. Both the Orange County and Los Angeles County OIRs operate as independent contractors, not as employees of either county. Staffed with several attorneys and support staff, each OIR is tasked with monitoring the county sheriff's department and ensuring that the investigation and handling of critical incidents or allegations of employee misconduct are conducted in a thorough, fair and effective way. Additionally, while both offices have an active role in tracking claims throughout the entire investigation period, it is important to note that neither OIR has any official power or role in the outcome of the investigation. Rather, they act as conduits between the public and the county sheriff's department. As stated in Orange County's OIR core principles, "Rather than conducting its own investigations, [the] OIR monitors and contributes to OCSD's [Orange County Sheriff's Department] existing protocols" (Office of Independent Review, 2012).

Another example of this model is found in San Jose. The San Jose Independent Police Auditor is one of individual membership. Judge LaDoris H. Cordell heads the San Jose IPA, which was established in 1993 by a city ordinance. According to the 2011 IPA Year End Report, the mission of the IPA is to ensure and instill confidence in the complaint process. The auditor reviews investigations and make recommendations regarding San Jose Police Department's policies and procedures. The IPA is internal in the sense that it does not actually investigate complaints. When the IPA receives a complaint, she forwards it to the Internal Affairs division of SJPD for investigation. It is the SJPD who issues the findings for allegations and decides whether or not to discipline. The IPA gets involved to ensure that the complaint process meets the Peace Officer's Bill of Rights, and that standards and investigation timelines are met (Independent Police Review, 2011).

HYBRID MODEL OF CITIZEN OVERSIGHT COMMITTEES

In response to rapid developments, community oriented policing, and an increased number of complaints and investigations, many police and sheriff departments have adopted “hybrid” systems of oversight, which borrow features from both internal and external models. The Citizen Police Complaint Commission of Long Beach, California is an example. It was created by the electorate in 1990 in order to investigate instances of police misconduct, particularly in the areas of use of excessive force, wrongful arrest, and racial and sexual harassment. Additionally, the CPCC is also involved in community outreach. Its members hold forums and work with educators to present information to members of the community (Citizen Police Complaint Commission, 2009).

The CPCC is external in that it is composed of nine members appointed by the Long Beach City Council and two at-large members appointed by the mayor. The commission investigates allegations, makes recommendations to the City Manager, represents the community of Long Beach, and oversees the complaint investigation process. The CPCC is internal in that it works in conjunction with the Long Beach Police Department Internal Affairs Division to investigate cases submitted directly to the LBPd. Complaints can be submitted by mail, telephone, in person, online or directly to the LBPd Office of Internal Affairs. While the CPCC cannot discipline or recommend penalties, it does have the power to subpoena and conduct hearings (CPCC, 2009).

BENEFITS TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

While there are no validated “best practices” in creating citizen oversight committees, successful committees can include benefits such as: empowering citizens, improving community-police relations, promoting change within law enforcement agencies, and increasing police transparency. Though law enforcement agencies widely vary in their structure and degree of government support, interjecting this independent voice into police investigations has the power to “improve the public’s faith in the fairness of the complaint process” by giving the appearance of objectivity not available through internal police investigations (WVAC, 2004, p.15). Thus the existence of a citizen oversight committee with valid input into the process can improve the perceived legitimacy of the law enforcement agency and its officers in the eyes of the public. Officers and agencies that are seen as “legitimate” are more effective and receive more support and cooperation from the community (Tyler, 2002).

By creating citizen oversight committees, individuals are able to exert external pressure that is “critical in moving police organizations to change” (Bass, 2000, p. 152). This ability can lead to a great sense of empowerment to groups of citizens who have traditionally felt marginalized by law enforcement agencies. This is especially true of minority groups who are often the victims in cases of police misconduct. Cases of unwarranted use of force, wrongful deaths, and racial profiling have all led to antagonistic relationships between police agencies and minority populations (Liederbach, Fritsch, Carter, & Bannister, 2007).

Civilian oversight committees can help improve an agency’s relationship with the community. Not only does a strong relationship between a community and a police department facilitate community-officer interactions, but it also helps to increase the community’s understanding of police work, build trust and reassurance in the work of officers, help facilitate investigations and promote various community policing models that bring justice and peace to a community (Finn, 2001). Another potential benefit of instituting a civilian oversight committee is that it can promote change within law enforcement agencies. Among some of the benefits are the discouragement of police officer misconduct and improvement of existing policies and procedures. Additionally, organizational change brings about improvements which lead to increases in police officer support and executive leadership, as well as vindication to officers wrongfully accused or that are subject to investigation (Finn, 2001).

CHALLENGES TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF CITIZEN OVERSIGHT COMMITTEES

Citizen oversight committees often face political and administrative challenges to successful implementation. A major barrier is the competing powers between the police and oversight bodies. In some instances, government agencies issue police departments certain privileges or grant them powers that make police officers immune to oversight (Lewis, 2000). Another barrier centers on the external oversight committees’ inability to obtain important documents, which subsequently inhibits their ability to hold police officers accountable for their actions. Colleen Lewis (2000) suggests that government agencies use tactics that subject oversight committees to limited access to reports or in some cases reports that are biased. Further, police agencies have historically believed that their expertise in law enforcement makes them solely qualified to develop agency reforms, resulting in top-down governance and reform efforts (Simmons, 2010). Breaking down these mental barriers is the first step in realigning police culture and reforming police accountability procedures. *See Table 2 for a list of challenges for successful implementation of a civilian oversight committee.*

Table 2: Factors which can help and hinder the development of civilian oversight.

	Obstacles	Opportunities
Political Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicians who have a “law and order” agenda not conducive to oversight. • Politicians may limit oversight powers through legislation or budgets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political shifts (e.g. newly elected officials, peace accords, transitions to democracy) can produce favorable conditions for oversight.
Police cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaigning by police unions can challenge oversight agencies. • Lack of cooperation by police departments can undermine effectiveness of oversight. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police support and access facilitates effective investigation and audits. • Responsive police departments will implement recommendations for reform.
Activist support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep mistrust of police (e.g. where there is history of systematic human rights abuses) may deter activists from constructive engagement with police reform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobbying by community groups can help drive police reform.
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited resources for oversight agencies can result in ineffectiveness and failure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-resourced oversight agencies have a greater chance of meeting their objectives.
Management and leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor management and leadership can lead to ineffective oversight agencies and unmet public expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective management creates conditions for efficient and effective investigations. • Strong leadership can raise the profile and create political and public support.
Public attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of crime can offset support for police accountability. • Where oversight agencies do not appear independent, they may lose public support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outrage at police abuses can prompt action to improve oversight.

Recreated with permission from Miller, J. & Merrick C. (2002). *Civilian Oversight of Policing: Lessons from the Literature*. Vera Institute of Justice. pg. 15.

Once established, civilian oversight groups must deal with a number of obstacles that can reduce the satisfaction of individuals participating in the review process. One of the most important hurdles for any new organization is acquiring power within the existing bureaucratic framework. For example, it is difficult for citizen oversight committees to succeed if they “lack the authority to directly discipline officers and modify police department policies” (Clarke, 2009, p. 11). Furthermore, if city officials and the police department do not support the oversight body, it will have no access to the confidential documents and case evidence necessary to review incidents involving police misconduct. Thus oversight bodies must negotiate with (and sometimes exert pressure on) police agencies to adopt their recommendations. Otherwise, the oversight body is only able to produce suggestions for officer discipline and procedural changes. Oversight bodies with no statutory mandate have little leverage in their negotiations with police agencies and can become symbolic groups rather than a force for change and reform. While the existence of an oversight group signals an increased level of objectivity to the public, they may actually lack the power and ability to reform the police agency they oversee. If this is the case, committee members (and possibly the community at large) may be left with negative rather than positive feelings towards the agency.

A further challenge is that external oversight committees are dependent on the internal investigative reports produced by police agencies. Clarke found that these external oversight committees agree with police department findings 90 percent of the time (2009). This makes it extremely unlikely that members of external oversight committees will produce findings that differ from the ones put forth by an internal police investigation. This is a continual uphill battle that makes it difficult for external oversight committees to obtain or wield any power over police agencies and can lead individual members to feel as if they are not making a difference in their community (Clarke, 2009).

To be effective, citizen oversight committees must be skillful at getting policing issues on the city’s agenda so that officials will address rather than ignore, suppress or minimize problems in the police agency (Bass, 2000). This is especially true of issues involving law enforcement, as there has traditionally been great pressure for politicians and other officials to support police agencies to avoid appearing soft on crime. There is also an institutional incentive for politicians and district attorneys to downplay issues of police misconduct in order to promote harmony between themselves and rank-and-file police officers. Politicians or prosecutors who are seen as overly aggressive in their investigations of the police face the possibility of retaliatory acts that stifle efforts for future cooperation with law enforcement agencies. This leads many officials outside of police departments to adopt a hands-off approach to the investigation of police misconduct (Clarke, 2009).

Finally, many officers believe that citizen oversight and outside investigations are “unfair and biased against them” because their presence implies an inability of police agencies to monitor and investigate themselves (De Angelis & Kupchik, 2007, p. 654). There is also the perception that strong police accountability measures weaken the crime-fighting efforts of the police by limiting officer desire to engage in potentially dangerous situations for fear of negative repercussions (Bass, 2000). Unions representing the interests of law enforcement organizations across the country frequently use this argument to oppose the adoption of citizen oversight committees. Unions also portray citizen oversight committees as lacking the expertise to effectively conduct investigations and having an engrained anti-police bias. In recent years the threat of domestic terrorism has also placed barriers between the police and the community as police departments have become “more militarized and less responsive to citizens’ concerns” (Liederbach et al., 2007, 272). This manifests itself in an adherence to the closed culture that typically surrounds law enforcement agencies.

IS A CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE RIGHT FOR YOUR COMMUNITY?

Activist groups, human and civil rights advocates, and concerned citizens have played an important role in the development and implementation of citizen oversight committees. However, the formation of police oversight groups has been met with great resistance. Current research suggests that a lack of support for citizen oversight committees has made it difficult to establish new oversight committees (Perry, 2006). Community groups often find themselves under-resourced, politically oppressed, or lacking meaningful community support. These challenges create barriers in the communities' ability to establish legitimacy during the oversight process. The future of citizen oversight committees is contingent on the support of law enforcement agencies, police officers, mass media, public officials and the local community.

Despite challenges and obstacles, the role of police oversight remains an important component in holding law enforcement agencies and police officers accountable for their actions as well as improving community relations. The implementation of a citizen oversight committee has many benefits to both a community and a law enforcement agency. *See Table 3 for a self-assessment checklist of considerations before establishing a citizen oversight committee.* While there are many things to consider, some important questions to keep in mind when implementing a citizen oversight committees are:

- **Membership:** Who will sit on the committee? Do committee members need to have any specialized skills or knowledge beyond an ability to be fair, open-minded and conscientious? Will they be paid or volunteer positions? Will positions be appointed or by application/qualifications? How will appropriate and fair citizens be recruited?
- **Power and Responsibilities:** Will the committee conduct investigations or just oversee the investigation process? Will the committee recommend or issue discipline? Will the committee have subpoena powers?
- **Governance:** Who will oversee the committee – an elected body or police administrator(s)? How will a committee be established – by charter or the electorate?
- **Funding:** How will the committee be funded? What costs will be associated with implementation and maintenance?
- **Goals:** What is/are the goal(s) of the committee?

The success of citizen oversight committees rests on their ability to establish joint partnerships with stakeholders involved in the oversight process. Often, citizen oversight committees balance the needs of the public, police officers and law enforcement agencies in an effort to establish their legitimacy. However, citizen oversight committees should continue to adjust to changes in political leadership and internal departmental transitions so that their membership and legitimacy remain fixtures for years to follow.

Table 3: Self-assessment checklist for establishing a citizen oversight committee.

Characteristics	External	Internal	Hybrid	YOUR CITY
<i>Committee Members</i>				
Citizens	✓		✓	
Volunteer committee members	✓		✓	
Includes hired police agency staff		✓	✓	
Police employees only		✓		
Paid committee members	✓	✓	✓	
Includes hired staff (not police employees)	✓	✓	✓	
<i>Committee power/purview</i>				
Issue discipline			✓	
Recommends discipline	✓	✓	✓	
Makes policy recommendations	✓	✓	✓	
Subpoena power			✓	
<i>Responsibilities</i>				
Conducts hearings	✓	✓	✓	
Conducts investigations into complaints and allegations of misconduct	✓		✓	
Only reviews final, approved reports by police agency/personnel	✓	✓	✓	
Investigates non-complaint issues (e.g. Oakland crowd control)	✓		✓	
Monitors process on behalf of police		✓	✓	
Monitors process on behalf of citizens	✓		✓	
Engages in community outreach	✓		✓	
Investigates corruption	✓	✓	✓	
Investigates police brutality	✓	✓	✓	
Investigates all complaints (including rudeness)	✓	✓	✓	
<i>Committee reports to</i>				
Chief of Police/Sheriff		✓	✓	
Government officials	✓		✓	

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