

Ferguson Collaborative Monitor Survey

Responses by Lemire Team

Please send all responses to fergusoncollaborative@gmail.com by Saturday, June 25, with the subject heading "Survey Response"

Questions may also be sent to the same email address.

1. Will your team be soliciting community input during the selection process or shortly after you are chosen, and will you make your team available for community Q&A sessions during the selection process?

In many respects, the consent decree's implementation is only as successful as the community believes it to be. As such, we view community input throughout the selection process and beyond as crucial to our efforts. To that end, we recognize that a public forum may be included in the selection process, and if true we will welcome this opportunity to introduce our team to the community and solicit community input during this session. Moreover, we believe that Judge Catherine Perry, the presiding judge, laid the foundation for this level of accessibility when she provided the community an opportunity to testify during the fairness hearing in federal court prior to accepting the terms of the Consent Decree. We intend to continue on that path. If selected, one of our first items of business will be to introduce ourselves to the community and to undertake an extensive information gathering process through local forums and Q&A sessions.

2. Describe the methods your team will use to share information and solicit community input, especially from those most impacted by unconstitutional policing, during the process of implementing the consent decree?

Our outreach efforts will be multi-faceted and will rely heavily on local organizations, including the Ferguson Collaborative, that have undertaken nearly two years of grassroots work to improve police/community relations. We recognize the challenges of community engagement but do not view them as insurmountable. If selected, our team will establish both a physical and internet presence in Ferguson from which we will use the mail and the web to share information and solicit input. However, we know that the digital divide impedes the ability of many in the community, particularly those most impacted by unconstitutional policing, to participate meaningfully in the implementation process. As such, we will take our engagement efforts directly to the community. We will reach out to community groups and neighborhood associations and ask them to provide us a platform from which we can share information with their existing networks. When permitted to do so, we will address these groups to solicit feedback and report on the status, progress, and challenges of the implementation process. In addition, notice of community forums and Q&A sessions will be sent by mail, advertised via local media, and posted in every neighborhood. These meetings will be held where those impacted are most likely to be reached: churches, community centers, the St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley, and the Sports Complex.

3. Who on your team will be specifically defined as a liaison to the community? How would that person define his/her point of view on community policing, and the importance of the community's ability to guide local policing?

Felicia Pulliam, a member of the Ferguson Commission, will serve as our community liaison. In that role, she will guide, facilitate, and support a new partnership between residents, the police, municipal government and other impacted parties with the goal of transforming policing, improving safety and healing broken relationships in the community. Felicia believes that, in order to provide service to any constituency, an organization must know what those served both need and want. Gathering that information requires that the organization, in this case the police, actively listen to the community and those empowered to speak on behalf of affected residents. The police must also begin the process of reconciliation by recognizing its role in the creation and fostering of attitudes of mistrust of the police that pervade the community. Only then will the police garner support for implementation of an effective community policing program. While Felicia will lead our engagement efforts, our team believes that the entire police department, including administrative personnel, should appreciate the importance of community service. We are committed to ensuring that the community policing philosophy pervades the entire department and is not made the responsibility of a small group of officers. To that end, the team will review and revise policies and training curricula to ensure that exposure to community policing principles begins at the recruit level and is reinforced through field and in-service training.

4. Describe your team expert's approach to problem-oriented policing, involving the partnership of police with other governmental agencies or social service organizations to solve specific community issues.

Many of the issues plaguing communities like Ferguson are rooted in systemic inequities that law enforcement is ill-equipped to solve on its own. The police can and must partner with other agencies to address these issues. Most of our team has practical experience in problem-oriented policing and in creating and fostering partnerships with governmental agencies and social service organizations. We believe that, in order to engage the community as problem-solvers and sustain trusting relationships, the police must possess the skills to deescalate and mitigate conflict, facilitate conversations, and promote cooperation and collaboration. One area in which problem-oriented policing can be most impactful is in police response to youth. To effectively engage youth and curb delinquent behavior, officers must develop a range of responses that include informal counseling guided by the principles of restorative justice to referral of youth to community-based mental health and social service agencies. Police departments must implement policies that familiarize officers with these community-based alternatives and encourage them to utilize them in lieu of arrest. This approach can be equally effective for police addressing family violence, homelessness, and other specific community issues.

5. Describe your expert's approach to civilian oversight, and what types of models he/she has found to be most effective.

Natashia Tidwell, an attorney and former police officer, will lead our team in this area. She brings experience as both an internal affairs investigator and as a member of a civilian oversight board in Boston. As discussed in the report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to civilian oversight. While best practices and the successes/failures of particular jurisdictions must be taken into account, a civilian oversight mechanism must be tailored to fit the community in which it will exist. Finding the "right fit" requires an assessment of several areas, including the police department's strengths and weaknesses, state and local law, and the status of police/community relations. With that said, our team views the selection of an appropriate civilian oversight mechanism as crucial to creating and sustaining police/community relations in Ferguson for the foreseeable future. Recently, Natashia and her fellow panelists authored a report addressing insufficiencies in the structure, authority, and duties of the largely advisory Boston panel. The board's report advocated for expanding the community's role in reviewing complaints and enlarging the board's oversight authority to include review of use-of-force investigations. In preparing the report, Natashia researched and evaluated several nationwide models and attended training provided by the National Association of Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement. In her view, hybrid models, mechanisms that include both civilian participation in complaint intake and resolution along with oversight and review of completed internal affairs investigations are the most effective.

6. Will you advocate to the Court that Monitor status updates be held in open court, and will you develop a process to channel community feedback to the Court as part of your status reports?

If engaged as Monitor, we will prioritize transparency and open communication with the Ferguson community. Judge Perry's fairness hearing and solicitation of public testimony indicate the Court's commitment to transparency in the early stages. We hope that it will continue throughout the implementation process. To that end, we will advocate for our written reports to be filed with the Court and made publicly available. During the implementation phase, issues may arise that will necessitate the Court to hold hearings. We anticipate that those hearings will be open to the public and we will not object to this. Furthermore, the Consent Decree tasks the Monitoring Team with developing, distributing, and collecting surveys of the Ferguson community to gauge their experiences and perceptions of the Ferguson Police Department, public safety, and the Municipal Court. We intend to buttress the survey process by engaging in informal conversations with the community about these topics. We anticipate that the results of this work will be incorporated into our Court filings and made publicly available. Finally, we should note that we are bound by the terms of the Consent Decree and subsequent court rulings. Decisions made by the U.S. Department of Justice and the City of Ferguson may circumscribe our ability to make available to the public any of the work described above.