**Data as Dialogue: Open Data for Public Safety and Law Enforcement**

A core objective of the What Works Cities initiative is to help cities implement meaningful and sustainable open data programs with an eye towards engaging the public. One of the largest and most prominent functions of local government is public safety, and interactions with police are one of the most common ways communities engage with their local government. Accessible information on how police departments operate is a vital part of maintaining and, in some cases, improving the relationship citizens have with law enforcement. Cross-departmental sharing of police data can also foster improved outcomes for police departments seeking to jointly solve problems.

Because open data is a powerful tool in both broadening impact and bridging trust between law enforcement and the people they serve, the [White House Police Data Initiative](https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/05/18/launching-police-data-initiative) — a direct response to President Obama’s [Task Force on 21st Century Policing](https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/04/09/using-technology-and-data-improve-community-policing-police-data-initiative) — is mobilizing leading jurisdictions and their open data programs across the country to establish a community of practice around police open data. Participants of What Works Cities have already cemented their place as forerunners in the civic transparency space, but the unique challenges of striking a balance between privacy and access with regards to law enforcement data make knowledge sharing on the subject especially important. For these reasons, we encourage cities involved in the What Works Cities initiative to **join the 34 police departments who have committed to the White House Police Data Initiative** as they work towards improving the use of data and technology to build community trust and improve results. This collaborative of law enforcement agencies comes together to learn from one another by sharing their open data challenges and successes through **bi-weekly calls and annual convenings.**

Interested cities can get in touch with their What Works Cities contacts to get more information. Cities can also **contact Denice Ross** who co-leads the initiative via email at [dross@omb.eop.gov](mailto:Denice_W_Ross@omb.eop.gov). Agencies that participate have a distinct opportunity to showcase their commitment towards law enforcement transparency by highlighting **3 open datasets about policing** (not crime, but rather data about the activity of policing) that they will work towards opening in coming months. Some examples of high-value datasets that police departments have opened through the initiative include [Dallas’ portal for officer-involved shooting data](http://www.dallaspolice.net/ois/ois.html), [citizen complaints data in Indianapolis](https://www.projectcomport.org/department/IMPD/complaints/) and [employee characteristics of the Louisville Metropolitan Police Department](http://portal.louisvilleky.gov/dataset/lmpdcharacter-data).

**Hall of Justice: Survey the Landscape of Data on Policing**

Just last month, the Sunlight Foundation — a partner of the White House Police Data Initiative — launched “[Hall of Justice](http://hallofjustice.sunlightfoundation.com/),” a tool that allows users to search through a robust inventory of publicly available datasets on criminal justice topics.

Because the types of datasets about policing that the initiative strives to make public are nonspecific, we encourage police departments to explore examples of data that agencies across the country have released by navigating the site. Included is an interactive map to search by location and an option to filter through “open data” by toggling the “Access Type” parameter. Many relevant datasets can also be found under the “Category — Law Enforcement” dropdown.

Feel free to delve into our research on privacy issues with this data under “Policy Briefs” [here](http://sunlightfoundation.com/criminaljustice/).