

OIG IN BRIEF

Why OIG Did This Report

The New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) is the largest City department, and from 2008 – 2013 the City devoted more than one quarter of its general fund budget to the NOPD. Total spending on police ranged from \$163 million to \$187 million, on average 27 percent higher than what appeared in the budget.*

The OIG wanted to find out what value citizens were getting for this large expenditure of public funds: was it possible to connect NOPD spending to policing performance and safety outcomes? Also, were NOPD resources allocated effectively? Was it possible to tell how much NOPD spent on specific activities or functions; for example, how much NOPD spent on training its officers? And was this information readily available to decision-makers and the public?

From 2008 through 2013 police expenditures varied as much as 12 percent in a single year. Was it possible to see the effect of these spending fluctuations on public safety outcomes? Is NOPD being funded at the appropriate level? Are tax dollars being spent in a way that results in the best possible outcomes?

With rising pension costs, additional spending associated with federal consent decree requirements, and discussions of a 45 percent increase in NOPD's force size, these questions should be central to the public conversation about policing.

* Total expenditures with indirect and other costs calculated for 2008–2012.

A report to the City of New Orleans, May 6, 2015.

View [OIG report I&E 13-0001](#). For more information contact Nadiene Van Dyke at (504) 681-3200 or nvandyke@nolaig.org.

New Orleans Police Department Funding

What OIG Found

The City's budget books and ResultsNOLA reports did not link public safety outcomes to spending, so there was no way to tell if fluctuations in spending affected public safety. Moreover, NOPD data were unreliable and could not be used to evaluate NOPD performance. Finally, public budget documents do not reveal the total cost of policing.

Between 2009 and 2010 NOPD funding dropped by 12 percent, mostly due to the exhaustion of federal disaster funds used to fund police overtime. The Field Operations Bureau, which staffs patrols and responds to calls for service, experienced the largest drop in funding. Increases in spending after 2010 covered rising pension costs, but the man-hours lost after 2009 were not replaced. An analysis of the effect the marked reduction in funding had on the NOPD's performance could help policy makers make informed decisions about allocating scarce financial resources. However, the City provided little information that could shed light on a possible relationship between spending less money on police and outcomes related to policing from 2008 through 2013. Evaluators attempted to use a more comprehensive model to measure NOPD performance, but found that much of the data was unreliable.

What OIG Recommended

The City should adopt a more complete police performance measurement model and evidence-based policing practices, which will provide decision makers with information they need to allocate appropriate resources to the NOPD. The City should also institute better controls on data collection as noted in several reports and audits.

The City did not provide consistent information in the materials it prepared for the Council prior to budget adoption and the performance measures contained in ResultsNOLA included little evidence that the strategies police employed worked or why. Police work is multi-dimensional and no single performance measure will provide a reliable picture of police performance. Evaluators recommend that the City adopt a more comprehensive police performance model and clearly link research-based strategies and policies proven to be effective to agreed-upon public safety outcomes.

Numerous reports have documented flaws in NOPD data collection and have provided recommendations about how to improve data integrity. The NOPD should follow the recommendations of previous reports to improve data quality. Recommendations to improve data quality focus on two main themes: improvements in supervision so data are reliably and accurately collected, and less reliance on catch-all categories.

The recommendations presented in this report are intended to assist the Council, Mayor, and NOPD Superintendent with creating a budget and managing the police force to ensure the best outcomes for the lowest cost. It is critical that decision-makers be able to evaluate the performance of the NOPD and determine whether evidence-based strategies were employed effectively to improve public safety goals and outcomes. That information can then be used to understand how budgeting and deployment decisions affect police services.