



# PCOC Study Process

Office of Police Conduct Review

2017

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## Introduction

The Police Conduct Oversight Commission (Commission) assures that police services are delivered in a lawful and nondiscriminatory manner and provides the public with meaningful participatory oversight of police policy and procedure. Commission members have a variety of responsibilities including shaping police policy, auditing cases, and engaging the community in discussions of police procedure. The Commission strives to be the citizen advisory group the community relies upon to openly discuss policy and procedures of the Minneapolis Police Department, to voice concerns regarding law enforcement/civilian interactions, and the organization that advances credible and meaningful feedback, without obligation to political influences, for the betterment of the City of Minneapolis. [For more information about the work of the Commission, meeting times and locations, and meeting minutes, please visit the Commission website.](#)

Additionally, in the Police Conduct Oversight Ordinance, the Commission has direction to conduct programs of research and study to achieve the mission of the ordinance. As such, the Commission conducts research and study related to problematic conduct recognized in complaints or matters of public concern raised by the community. By conducting research and study, the Commission aims to achieve an accurate picture of current practices, innovative procedures outside of Minneapolis, and/or community feedback related to the research question. Studies may lead to the issuance of recommendations to the MPD, City Council, or other appropriate body but relate directly to the results of research.

Experience combined with the review of misconduct cases serves as the basis for the generation of topics for research. However, commissioners are volunteers, and as such, they are not expected to perform the multitude of tasks associated with a project. To do so, commissioners work with analysts from the Office of Police Conduct Review (OPCR), supervised by the legal analyst. Commissioners create the ideas that lead to research and study, provide guidance to analysts throughout the project, and form final recommendations after the research concludes.

The research and study process is divided into four phases:

1. Project Formation and Initial Survey
2. Methodology Development
3. Fieldwork and Report Drafting, and
4. Final Report and Recommendations

## Project Formation and Initial Survey

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When commissioners have an idea for research and study, they may meet with analysts from the Office of Police Conduct Review to discuss it. Analysts may advise the commissioner on the feasibility of conducting the research<sup>1</sup> and assist in the creation of potential research questions that could address the underlying issue. If it is not clear whether the project is feasible, analysts may conduct an initial survey of the topic. Data may be accessed at this phase but is not retained for further analysis beyond assessing the feasibility of the study. The initial survey may also include meetings with relevant MPD parties, community stakeholders, or research partners.

Analysts may also advise the commissioner on the economy of conducting the research and study, primarily whether a research and study could be completed without expending a prohibitive amount of staff resources. OPCR analysts are responsible for conducting research for all commissioners as well as the OPCR. As such, analysts may not participate in a project if it aims to answer a meaningless question or expends a detrimental amount of resources.<sup>2</sup>

After the initial consult with OPCR analysts, the commissioner may put forth a motion and description of the project to the full commission for a vote. The project and research questions do not have to be fully realized at this stage, and the initial vote does not determine whether the study will be conducted. Commissioners vote on whether the study will be sent to the audit committee to develop the methodology to be followed during the research and study. If so, the methodology development phase begins.

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. A study comparing MPD practices with nonpublic data held exclusively by another city.

<sup>2</sup> Ex. A study that examines of thousands of hours of body camera recordings to determine which model of a certain type of vehicle is most frequently stopped.

## Methodology Development

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If the Commission votes to refer a topic of research and study to the Audit Committee, OPCR analysts will create an initial draft methodology in consult with the sponsoring commissioner to be presented at the next committee meeting.

Methodologies typically include:

1. Background: description of the events that led to the motion for research and study
2. Study Goals: the broad categories of subjects to be analyzed
3. Research Questions: specific questions that the study will attempt to answer
4. Method of Analysis/Sample Collection: a description of the way in which research will be conducted (data to be collected<sup>3</sup>, interviews, best practices surveys)
5. Limitations: Any known limitations on research that may impact the ability to complete the research and study
6. Appendix: Any documents related to the research and study that provide value at the initial stage

The Audit Committee typically receives an advance copy in preparation for the meeting and provides feedback on the proposed methodology. The methodology may be revised at the meeting or remanded to OPCR analysts for further work. If the methodology is acceptable, the Audit Committee may vote to refer it to the Commission. The Commission may vote to approve the methodology, modify it at the meeting, end the research and study with no further action, or refer it back to the Audit Committee for additional work.

If the Commission approves the methodology, relevant stakeholders are notified and the fieldwork phase begins.

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<sup>3</sup> If nonpublic data will be accessed for the purposes of the study, the data to be accessed and the reasons for doing so will be stated in the methodology to ensure only essential data is collected.

## Fieldwork and Report Drafting

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During the fieldwork phase, the method of analysis is executed. Both the method and duration of fieldwork differs greatly depending on the nature of the study and the questions to be answered. While OPCR analysts will not work outside the scope of the study goals, the method of analysis may change when necessary to accurately answer research questions. OPCR analysts provide progress updates to the Audit Committee throughout the fieldwork phase and may provide draft updates to the Commissioner working on the project.

When nonpublic data is accessed for the purposes of research and study, OPCR analysts will ensure that no nonpublic data is released in discussions of the work outside of the analysis group unless a criminal act is suspected. In the event criminal activity is discovered, the matter will be referred to the City Attorney for review. Any nonpublic data will be converted to public summary data for inclusion in the final report. Analysts will observe § 172.85 of the Police Conduct Oversight Ordinance which requires compliance with all provisions of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.

Relevant parties may be interviewed during the course of the research and study process. This typically occurs after initial data analysis and research on the subject. The participants will know they are being interviewed relating to the research and study.

OPCR analysts will then draft the initial analysis and answer research questions when possible. Once fieldwork is completed, OPCR analysts will consult with the Commissioner who put forth the original motion that created the study or another Commissioner selected to monitor the work to discuss the results of the research and the initial draft of the report. If questions cannot be answered, analysts will note the limitations of the study and specific reasons for the missing information.

If participants were interviewed for the study, their comments that may be included in the report will be provided to them for approval. OPCR analysts will not publish comments or identifying information provided to them if the participant does not wish them to be available to the public.

The initial draft does not include recommendations without commissioner input. OPCR analysts may make suggested recommendations, but commissioners issue the recommendations. In the event that the Commission issues recommendations unsupported by the analysis, OPCR analysts may attach a letter explaining the opinion of the analysts.

## Final Report and Recommendations

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The initial draft of the completed study is first presented to the Audit Committee for input. Like prior parts of the research and study process, the Committee may revise, approve, or remand the study as well as attach recommendations to results. If recommendations involve changes to MPD Policy, the results may be referred to the Policy and Procedure Committee for further analysis. If the study is approved, it is presented to the Commission for final comment, revisions, and approval. If approved, the study and recommendations are typically submitted to the chief of police or the chief's designee with an offer to meet with the sponsoring commissioner and OPCR analysts to discuss the results.

When a study is approved that contains recommendations, OPCR analysts will typically create a recommendation implementation checklist to be included with the study. The Audit Committee is responsible for monitoring the progress of recommendations and, if recommendations are rejected, recording the reasons for doing so.

