

Budget Analysis:
The Honolulu Police Department's Strategic Plan

Benjamin T. Moszkowicz

School of Professional and Continuing Education, University of San Diego

LEPS-590: Budget and Finance for Law Enforcement Leaders

Professor Gary Morrison

July 6, 2020

The Honolulu Police Department (HPD) is the primary law enforcement agency for the approximately one million residents and visitors who live and work on the island of Oahu in the state of Hawai'i. According to the City and County of Honolulu's Executive Program and Budget Fiscal Year 2020 (2019), during City Fiscal Year (CFY) 2020 (which ran from July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020), the HPD has 2,701 full-time equivalent (FTE) permanent employees and 64 FTE contract employees.

When the HPD's current chief, Susan Ballard, was appointed in late 2017, she immediately announced her vision for the department's future in a document titled "A New Beginning" (Ballard, 2017). Through a collaboration with executive leadership, the HPD published a strategic plan designed to last through the end of Chief Ballard's 5-year term. (*HPD Moving Forward*, 2018). The HPD explores five goals in their strategic plan; restore organizational and community trust, prevent and solve crime, recruit and retain quality employees, improve organizational efficiency, and improve training.

According to The Executive Program and Budget Fiscal Year 2020 (2019), the HPD's operating budget is just over \$300 million. This document, however, explores the HPD's budget in surprisingly limited detail. The HPD fills only 14 pages of the City and County of Honolulu's 406-page operating budget. In the section titled, "Spending to Make a Difference" the budget lists five main areas of focus for the HPD; reduction of property crimes, traffic safety initiatives, improving family and domestic violence awareness, executive management training and review, and fiscally responsible use of overtime (pg. B-204).

There is remarkably little overlap between the two lists, with both referring only vaguely to reducing crime and improving training. This disparity is likely due to the fast pace of HPD operations compared with the sedentary nature of the city's budgeting process. However, when the objectives and actions underlying the HPD's goals are examined, there is a significant correlation to the department's budget priorities.

A much closer examination of the individual element budgets for the CFY reveals that many of the HPD's stated objectives have significant budgetary support. For example, the Criminal Investigations Division created a cybercrimes unit, one of Chief Ballard's objectives, in 2018. However, because of the significant lead time required by the city budgetary process, it has taken nearly two years to support the unit with their own budget by transferring funds away from the Information Technology Division, which used to perform certain cybercrimes functions.

In another example, in 2018, the HPD created a Homeless Outreach Unit by placing officers from other divisions on "Special Assignment" and acquiring grant funds to purchase equipment. Only in CFY 2020-21, is the city catching up with the HPD's priorities by funding positions to hire community outreach specialists.

One area in which the HPD falls short is the department's failure to conduct a thorough review and reformulation of its strategic plan and accompanying budgetary documentation. According to the strategic plan and its underlying policy (*HPD Moving Forward*, 2018), the plan "is a living document that is in constant review. As indicated in departmental Policy 2.02, the goals and objectives are to be formulated and updated at least once a year" (pg. 7). Commanders are each responsible for reviewing their element's role in accomplishing the strategic plan's stated goals and objectives. However, no process exists by which they are reformulated or updated. Since the chief took office, neither department personnel nor the public has been provided with any updated goals and objectives.

In summary, the HPD's operations are much nimbler than the city's budgeting process, which often takes years to catch up. Despite this (and the vagueness of the city's budget publication), the HPD's budget is mostly in line with supporting its stated mission, goals, and objectives. A more transparent review, evaluation, and update or restatement of the department's goals would further reinforce both the trust and confidence that department personnel and the public have in the HPD's leadership.

References

Ballard, S. (2017, November). *A New Beginning*. 1 July 2020. Retrieved from <http://www.honolulupd.org>

Department of Budget and Fiscal Services. (2019). *The Executive Program and Budget Fiscal Year 2020*. 1 July 2020. Retrieved from <http://www.honolulu.gov>

Honolulu Police Department. (2018, August). *HPD Moving Forward*. 1 July 2020. Retrieved from <http://www.honolulupd.org>