

ISLAND SECURITY POLICY INSTITUTE

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WHITE PAPER

Community Policing Policy for Small Pacific Island Jurisdictions

*A Framework for Law Enforcement in Communities Where
Everyone Is Connected*

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RESEARCH INDEPENDENCE STATEMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Community policing theory is built on a paradox that small Pacific Island law enforcement agencies live every day: effective policing requires close community relationships, while effective police organizational management requires institutional distance. In a 60-officer Pacific Island agency, this paradox is the operational reality of every shift.**
- **Small Pacific Island law enforcement agencies have a community policing asset that large metropolitan departments spend years trying to build: genuine, deep, authentic community embeddedness. The policy challenge is structuring this asset to leverage its advantages while managing its conflict-of-interest risks.**
- **Standard community policing frameworks do not address the specific conflict-of-interest, procedural integrity, and cultural calibration requirements of small island law enforcement — the scenarios that island officers actually face daily.**
- **ISPI's Community Policing Framework for Small Pacific Island Jurisdictions provides structured community relationship protocols, a recusal architecture for conflict-of-interest management, culturally calibrated engagement protocols, and community advisory structures.**

The community policing literature is built on a paradox that small island law enforcement agencies live every day: research consistently demonstrates that effective policing requires officers to build close community relationships, while police organizational theory consistently warns against the familiarity that close community relationships produce.¹ In a large metropolitan department of 2,000 officers, this paradox is manageable. In a Pacific Island territory agency of 60 officers, the paradox is the operational reality of every shift.

The officer who investigates a domestic violence complaint knows the subject personally. The officer who responds to a theft report at a local business knows the owner's family. The detective building a drug distribution case has attended the same church as the primary subject for fifteen years. These are not exceptional circumstances in small island law enforcement — they are the baseline condition from which every enforcement decision proceeds.

I. The Community Embeddedness Advantage

An officer in a 60-person Pacific Island territory agency is not organizationally distant from their community — they grew up in it, their family is embedded in it, and their professional identity and community identity are not separable in the way that standard community policing frameworks assume. This

embeddedness, properly managed, is a significant operational asset.² Community members who know their officers personally are more likely to share information about criminal activity. Officers who understand the cultural communication patterns of their community are more effective at eliciting cooperation. Officers with genuine community roots are more motivated to serve effectively.

ISPI's practitioner analysis of law enforcement effectiveness in small Pacific Island jurisdictions identifies community embeddedness — properly structured — as among the most significant law enforcement effectiveness assets available to these agencies. The policy challenge is not to create community embeddedness but to structure it so that its advantages are systematically leveraged while its risks are systematically managed.

II. The Conflict-of-Interest Challenge

The same community embeddedness that creates law enforcement effectiveness advantages also creates conflict-of-interest, bias, and procedural integrity risks that small island law enforcement agencies consistently report as among their most difficult management challenges.³ An officer who has a personal relationship with the subject of a domestic violence investigation faces a conflict between the procedural requirements of objective investigation and the social consequences of taking enforcement action against someone embedded in their personal social network.

The Recusal Architecture

ISPI's framework for conflict-of-interest management in small island law enforcement is built around a recusal architecture — a systematic process for identifying, documenting, and managing conflicts of interest through formal assignment protocols. The recusal architecture operates at three levels: patrol (documentation and supervisory review), investigative (formal recusal with case assignment protocols), and supervisory (leadership disclosure with personnel decision protocols).

III. Culturally Calibrated Community Policing

Pacific Island and Native Hawaiian community policing requires cultural calibration that standard curricula do not provide across four specific dimensions: communication pattern differences (indirect grievance expression as culturally normal), collective decision-making norms (extended deliberation before individual action), deference-based authority interaction (deferential behavior that may be misread as evasiveness), and extended family obligation norms (family protection obligations that may affect cooperation expectations).⁴

IV. Policy Recommendations

1. Develop and mandate island-specific community policing training for Hawaii and Pacific Island territory law enforcement agencies — including conflict-of-interest management, cultural calibration, and community embeddedness protocols — through DOJ COPS program requirements.
2. Establish formal conflict-of-interest disclosure and recusal requirements for small island law enforcement agencies through state and territorial law enforcement standards bodies.
3. Commission research on community policing outcomes in small Pacific Island jurisdictions — research that does not exist in the published literature — to provide an evidence base for policy development grounded in island law enforcement operational reality.
4. Fund a Pacific Island law enforcement community policing peer network through DOJ COPS enabling small island agencies to share effective practices and develop island-specific models collaboratively.

V. Conclusion

Small Pacific Island law enforcement agencies have a community policing asset that large metropolitan departments spend years and significant resources trying to build: authentic community embeddedness. The policy challenge is structuring it — leveraging the advantages while managing the risks through explicit organizational protocols. ISPI accepts commissions for community policing framework development, conflict-of-interest management protocol design, and cultural competency training program development. Contact ISPIGlobal@proton.me or visit ispiglobal.com/commission.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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The Island Security Policy Institute (ISPI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization based in Honolulu, Hawaii. ISPI produces practitioner-led research, policy analysis, training programs, and commissioned research on public safety, emergency preparedness, insider threat, and security policy for island and coastal communities worldwide. ISPI is registered as a federal contractor on SAM.gov under NAICS 541720. Warren Pulley, Founder & Executive Director.

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