



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Joseph Chacon, Interim Chief of Police, Austin Police Department 

DATE: June 1, 2021

SUBJECT: 144th Reimagined Pilot Cadet Academy Update

On March 25, 2021, the City Council passed [Resolution No. 20210325-037](#) relating to a reimagined pilot cadet training academy for the Austin Police Department (APD). The resolution included expectations for the implementation of the [Blueprint](#), outlining a pathway to create a new, Reimagined Pilot Cadet Training Academy. On May 4, 2021, APD and the City Manager’s Office indicated that the work in the Blueprint would be completed prior to the commencement of the Pilot Academy. Since these Council dates, the APD Academy training staff has worked diligently to complete the tasks outlined in the Blueprint.

I am happy to report that we are on-track to start the Pilot Academy on June 7, 2021. We have completed almost all of the Blueprint tasks, and are on schedule to complete the remaining tasks prior to that date. This memo provides an update on the tasks that staff has completed, and I am certain that the remaining ongoing tasks will be completed prior to June 4, 2021. There are also ongoing tasks that will continue throughout the Pilot Academy.

Blueprint Tasks

There are 23 specific tasks outlined in the Blueprint and two additional tasks that have been prioritized. Of the 23 tasks, 17 have been completed. Three tasks are ongoing and will be completed prior to June 4, 2021. There are three other tasks related to the community participation in the training academy, specifically the Academy Curriculum Review Committee (ACRC) and the Community Video Review Committee (CVRC) that have started and will continue throughout the Pilot Academy. These tasks are noted as “continuing” in the chart below as the committees will assist with curriculum revision, course material evaluation, and making recommendations about community participation in academy instruction throughout the academy.

Community Involvement

The ACRC has assumed the responsibility of reviewing academy class lesson plans. Currently, 16 members form the committee representing the Austin community, the Equity Office, the Office of Police Oversight, Victim Services, APD, and academics from Texas State University. The department has issued contracts for all non-City committee members. The committee is reviewing academy lesson plans to make recommendations relating to and the confirmation of the inclusion of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) content, active learning components, emphasis of de-escalation, community teaching, Spanish language instruction, and trauma-informed training. This committee is also reviewing presentations, handouts, and other materials used at the academy instruction to verify that all elements noted are incorporated in the class materials. Since its inception, the full committee has met three times, with a fourth full committee meeting scheduled for the week of June 7th. The ACRC is expected to meet monthly thereafter, and workgroup meetings will occur every two weeks. The ACRC will continue to work on the academy curriculum beyond the 144th Academy class as this function is envisioned as a critical component to provide perspective on all academy development moving forward.

The CVRC has resumed the responsibility of reviewing all video materials that will be used in the Pilot Academy. Currently, nine members form this committee, including Austin community members and staff members from the Equity Office, APD, and multiple local universities. They have met six times since inception, and a review of videos is underway. The committee is scheduled to meet 22 times by February 28, 2022, to provide perspectives on any videos to be shown in the academy, including review of DEI content and emphasizing de-escalation. The CVRC will also prepare a final report for the community summarizing its work.

Culture of Adult Learning

Academy faculty have revised the curriculum to include principles of adult learning and active learning activities. The four key principles to adult learning instruction that have been utilized to frame the changes include:

- (1) engaging cadets in decisions about how training is planned, delivered, and executed;
- (2) incorporating cadets' past experiences into the learning process to provide context to their learning;
- (3) incorporating problem-solving instead of memorization for assimilating information;
and
- (4) emphasizing practical use of the information in the future.

All areas of instruction in the Pilot Academy have incorporated active learning activities. These active learning activities incorporate discussion, practice, review, and application. As these

activities activate cognitive networks that are different from those activated by reading or listening, cadets can learn and retain new information more effectively with this approach.

Transformational Change

In addition to the Blueprint tasks, the department has begun the Groundwater Analysis training conducted by Joyce James Consulting. This training focuses on the need for systemic change in institutions like policing. The training emphasizes that all systems and institutions are built on a racial hierarchy which produces racial inequalities. Beyond the content, the training creates a forum where APD staff can discuss these issues with Austin community members, hearing distinct perspectives from different groups related to interactions with the police.

APD Executive and Command, Police Activities League, and Recruiting staff, and all academy faculty have completed the initial two-day training. Future training of the Groundwater Analysis will include all Field Training Officers (FTO) and all cadets, including the cadets of the pilot 144th class. In addition, all FTOs will complete a refresher course consistent with the principles guiding the 144th Academy class before the February 2022 graduation.

Independent Evaluation

The City of Austin has retained Kroll & Associates to serve as the Independent Evaluator of this Pilot Academy. On May 27, 2021, a meet and greet was held between all academy staff and the Kroll evaluation team. This meeting aims to introduce the Kroll team to academy staff and set expectations for the evaluation.

Kroll will begin their evaluation on June 7th and will observe classes in person beginning June 21, 2021. They will meet again with the academy staff in person on June 22nd.

Our goal throughout this process has been to create a new, reimagined police academy. With the support of the City Manager's office, City staff, and our community partners, I am confident that the department is on the right path to achieving that.

Table 1: Blueprint Status

	Task	Status	Notes
MARCH	(1) New training manager within command staff	Complete	
	(2) Evaluate course schedule to implement active learning opportunities	Complete	All lesson plans have been reviewed and revised, and now includes at least one active learning component. Also see #19 Academy Curriculum Review (ACR).
	(3) Establish Academy Curriculum Review (ACR) Committee	Complete	Committee members have been selected; term details finalized April 24, 2021; contract terms to be delivered to committee members week of April 26, 2021.
	(4) Confirmation of the History of Race & Policing Course with 8 hours of course work	Complete	This course has been incorporated into the Academy course schedule.
	(5) Course content evaluated for ways to incorporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) content	Complete	Courses for DEI content have been identified and incorporate. Also see also #19 ACR review.
	(6) Design evidence-based exit interview and formalize follow-up procedures with the cadets who have left the academy	Complete	A newly designed in-person exit interview will be administered by either the Academy Division Manager or the Training Supervisor. An online exit survey will also be administered to cadets who leave the Academy.
APRIL	(7) Hiring of Training Supervisor	Ongoing	Interviews have been completed and the top candidate has been identified. A second candidate has also been identified in the event that the first does not take the position.
	(8) Outreach to community organizations	Complete	APD Instructors have reached out to community organizations who previously worked with the Academy. In addition, instructors have begun contacting other

	Task	Status	Notes
			community groups soliciting community assistance.
APRIL	(9) Formalize video review process	Complete	Video Review Committee has met six times since March 15, 2021, and review process has been adopted. Committee members have met with Academy instructors, and contracts for the community members have been issued.
	(10) Finalize course schedule	Complete	Schedule complete with only minor logistical changes, if they arise.
	(11) Design pilot pre-academy workshop with community input	Complete	Workshop content finalized; 34 organizations and panelists confirmed.
	(12) Identification of courses that would be best taught and/or co-taught by various experts in the community	Continuing	Initial courses have been selected for community teaching, and the ACRC has assumed the role of making additional recommendations via the curriculum review process. These recommendations will be implemented pending availability of subject matter experts and costs. Contract details for community teaching have been established.
	(13) Identify/select/retain subject matter experts and community members to teach in selected courses	Continuing	Initial community members have been identified for community teaching. Working with ACRC and community members to identify additional subject matter experts.
	(14) Review final Kroll report and develop and implement action plan	Ongoing	Kroll Associates, Inc.'s final report recommendations have been reviewed and are addressed below in Table 2.
MAY	(15) Set adult learning theory expectations for academy faculty	Complete	Phase 1 review managed by Academy Division Manager. All lesson plans now incorporate adult learning theory elements.
	(16) Formalize academy faculty evaluation/review process	Ongoing	Working with identified academic partners to develop evaluation/review process. Draft process and evaluation tools to be complete prior to June 4, 2021.

	Task	Status	Notes
MAY	(17) Implement groundwater analysis into curriculum	Complete	This process has been incorporated into the Academy course curriculum.
	(18) Review Equity assessment and develop action plan	Ongoing	Initial Academy action plan submitted to Equity Office for comments. Additional planning is ongoing to determine the interaction between the Academy's action plan and the Department's overall action plan.
	(19) Review pilot courses by ACR	Continuing	ACRC review of classes has begun and will continue throughout the Pilot Academy.
	(20) Final review of any videos selected for use by ACR	Complete	Video review committee will retain video review duties during 144 th Cadet Class. No videos will be shown during the 144 th Cadet Class until approved.
	(21) Ensure that trauma-informed training is incorporated	Complete	APD's Victim Services will have a full-time staff member dedicated to the academy starting in the beginning of June 2021. Three staff members from Victims Services are participating in ACR. Victim Services will be co-teaching "Victims of Crime" and "Domestic Violence" courses and participating in Academy role play. The dedicated staff member will be working with academy staff to determine other opportunities to incorporate trauma-informed training during the 144 th class.
	(22) Finalize purchase of Learning Management System	Complete	Vendor has been selected and funding has been isolated.
	(23) Retain independent evaluator	Complete	Kroll Associates, Inc. retrained as evaluator.

Task 14 involves developing and implementing an action plan related to the final Kroll academy report. The report makes 18 short-term recommendations that are related to the Blueprint tasks

noted above. In several cases, the recommendations mirror the Blueprint tasks, while in other cases they are tangential. Table 2 presents the status of these short-term recommendations.

Table 2: Kroll Associates Short-term Recommendations

Task	Status	Notes
(1) Provide the new Division Manager with sufficient authority and the backing of APD leadership to implement and incorporate adult and active learning models into Academy instruction and to implement recommendations on pages 10-11 of Dr. Villanueva’s Review Analysis and Strategic Plan.	Completed	Dr. Anne Li Kringen was hired and authorized to make any and all necessary changes to academy curriculum consistent with recommendations from Kroll. Dr. Kringen reports to the Assistant Chief over Headquarters. Blueprint task 1
(2) Hire a Training Supervisor to assist the Division Manager in updating and standardizing curriculum according to the adult and active learning models.	In progress (projected completion of June 2021)	Blueprint task 7
(3) Procure and implement an automated Learning Management System (LMS) by the start of the 145th cadet class.	Complete	Blueprint task 22
(4) Create an internal curriculum review committee to evaluate current syllabi and curriculum for each class. Evaluate for ways to incorporate DEI content into all aspects of training. Ensure that messaging throughout Academy training consistently emphasizes the ethical responsibilities of policing and a sensitivity to community concerns.	Continuing	This responsibility has been given to the ACRC to incorporate community perspectives into the review process. Blueprint tasks 4, 5, and 19
(5) Establish and formalize a process to continue the work of the Community Video Review Panel (Panel) to allow for regular community review and input into police training videos that were not reviewed previously.	Complete	Blueprint task 20

Task	Status	Notes
(6) Replace “Will-to-Win” with a “Self-Defense” exercise near the end of Academy training. Institute a defensive tactics program early in the Academy that teaches cadets proper defensive tactics before they are tested in aggressive fight scenarios. Testing and challenges should occur after Physical Training when recruits are warmed up and stretched out to reduce injuries.	Complete	<p>“Will-to-Win” has been replaced by a “Self Defense” exercise that will occur after cadets have been fully exposed to defensive tactics instruction. The current schedule shows this exercise occurring in week 23. Cadets will have previously received training in all aspects of defensive tactics, as well as communication, de-escalation, and community engagement prior to this exercise.</p> <p>APD will ensure to emphasize “defending oneself” and “self-defense” to address the “warrior vs. guardian” issue and will ensure that cadets are properly warmed up and stretched to reduce potential injuries.</p>
(7) Modify or eliminate sandpit and sandbag exercises and other military-style punishments.	Complete	This practice has been eliminated as of Feb. 1, 2021 per instructions of APD leadership.
(8) Expand physical fitness training to a daily regimen and ensure that physical fitness, team building exercises, and other physically and psychologically stressful exercises are completely separated from academic, classroom-based training.	Complete	<p>APD has agreed to separate academic training from physical fitness, team building and other physically and psychologically stressful training exercises, and to place all physical fitness activities on the calendar. APD has incorporated daily PT into the calendar for the first 12 weeks of Academy training and scheduled PT for 3 times per week in the remaining 18 weeks of training.</p>
(9) Proactively reach out to community leaders, activists, and critics who are willing to work productively with APD to present genuine community perspectives and concerns about public safety as part of Academy training and community engagement programming.	Complete/ continuing	<p>APD has begun to proactively reach out to community members to incorporate more diverse community perspectives in Academy training. This process has resulted in community partnerships to support community engagement training, curriculum review, video review, and community teaching.</p> <p>Blueprint tasks 8, 9, 11, and 13</p>

Task	Status	Notes
(10) Ensure “The History of Police and Race in America” course covers the content outlined in the OPO-approved curriculum, and that this and other DEI-related content is reinforced throughout the Academy.	Ongoing	Course has been added to the schedule. Negotiations are underway with a subject matter expert to instruct the course. Blueprint task 4
(11) Implement additional community outreach and immersion strategies.	Complete	APD has added 39 hours of scheduled time to focus on community engagement programming, including outside speakers from community organizations. APD also plans to have cadets spend time in a pre-academy environment working directly with Recruiting and District Representatives in partnership with community leaders and organizations. Blueprint tasks 8, 9, 11, and 13
(12) Thoroughly review all other DEI-related courses to determine which courses can be effectively co-taught by an outside civilian or academic content expert with an APD instructor.	Continuing	Several courses have been identified for community teaching, and ACRC has assumed review of course to identify additional opportunities for community teaching. Blueprint tasks 5 and 19
(13) Use existing officer base to temporarily assign diverse officers of exceptional skills to assist with Academy instruction to increase diversity of Academy staff.	Ongoing	Three vacant instructor positions have been posted internally and applications are under review.
(14) Incorporate anti-racism and cultural diversity training and workshops into the Academy curriculum.	Complete	Joyce James Consulting LLC has been retained to conduct the Groundwater Analysis workshop with cadets. Blueprint task 5
(15) Reinstitute practice of following-up with a cadet who leaves the Academy for any reason.	Complete	Academy interview and survey protocol for all separations adopted. Blueprint task 6

Task	Status	Notes
(16) Develop a mentorship program for all cadets, especially recruits of color.	Complete	APD has reinstated the Women's Mentorship Program and retained Joyce James Consulting LLC to develop a mentoring program for all cadets. A mentorship luncheon for cadets is scheduled for June 13, 2021.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
 Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager
 Farah Muscadin, Director of Office of Police Oversight