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INTRODUCTION

Civilian oversight of law enforcement has been a crucial tool for enhancing accountability, transparency, and community trust in law enforcement; especially at the county level, where sheriffs often have jurisdiction over policing and custodial (or correctional) functions.

Since its inception in 2016, and with the more recent enhancement of duties and responsibilities via Measure P (passed November 2020), the Community Advisory Council (CAC) has been steadfast in its mission to increase the public's visibility into the policies, practices, and protocols of the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office (SCSO). To do so, requires collaboration and coordination primarily with the SCSO, as well as other stakeholders including County leadership, community coalitions, national associations, and the Independent Office of Law Enforcement Review and Outreach (IOLERO).

The CAC provides an imperative service that includes:

- **Increasing transparency** by increasing public visibility into how the Sheriff and Coroner's office functions, and how the SCSO delivers policing and corrections services.
- Augmenting **awareness around the legal framework governing law enforcement** to ensure that people know their rights, especially regarding IOLERO and its operations.
- **Encouraging community participation** in shaping the county's public safety landscape; and
- Improving communication and **the relationship between the Sheriff's Office and Sonoma County communities** and residents.

As civilian volunteers, CAC members represent the residents of Sonoma County and its communities. That makes you uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between community expectations, and current law enforcement practices and directives.

As a civilian volunteer oversight agency, the CAC confronts and works through inherent challenges to accomplish its objectives. Resource limitation (whether member time, Council budget, or access to experts and information) is a common hindrance for oversight agencies. Despite this, the CAC is committed to creatively and innovatively advancing its mission. By adapting and maximizing its resources and how members work together, it ensures that its oversight remains impactful and aligned with the community's needs.

This document serves as a playbook for tools and techniques commonly used by the CAC (and oversight agencies in general), to guide members as they do the work. It is best considered a living document that requires regular review and revision to reflect and inspire new operations.

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IOLERO & THE CAC

This is a partnership. IOLERO provides the administrative and investigative backbone for civilian oversight, while the CAC—a volunteer council of Sonoma County residents—serves as a direct channel for community voice and feedback. Together, they work to strengthen transparency, accountability, and public trust in the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office.

IOLERO's role is to serve as a resource for those in the community who feel their rights have been violated by a member of the Sheriff's Office. In addition, IOLERO aims to strengthen transparency and trust between law enforcement and the community by conducting independent audits, offering policy recommendations, and fostering engagement.

Recognizing the voluntary nature of the CAC, IOLERO also provides vital support to ensure the Council can effectively fulfill its mission. This includes:

- Offering logistical and administrative resources to help CAC members execute their responsibilities and comply with public meeting laws.
- Developing reports, research, and educational materials to support CAC discussions and recommendations.
- Aligning broader outreach efforts with the CAC's priorities and initiatives.

The CAC's role is to enhance IOLERO's mission by representing diverse perspectives and fostering public participation. It exists to:

- **Increase public visibility** into how the Sheriff's Office delivers policing and correctional services.
- **Create real avenues for community participation** in shaping law enforcement policy, practices, and priorities.
- **Engage and educate the public** about IOLERO, the Sheriff's Office, and the systems that shape public safety.
- **Model ethical, transparent, and accountable oversight** that is grounded in trust, fairness, and community voice.

It accomplishes these objectives by:

- Reviewing and recommending changes to law enforcement policies, practices, and training.
- Developing and implementing activities for the public that demystify oversight processes (e.g., hosting town halls, disseminating surveys, and facilitating listening sessions).
- Acting as a bridge across IOLERO, the Sheriff's Office, and the community to address concerns and provide feedback.

Collaboration in Practice

The partnership between IOLERO and the CAC focuses on:

- Increasing public visibility in law enforcement operations.
- Creating opportunities for community input to shape the County's public safety landscape in general, and its accountability and oversight efforts specifically.
- Making complex policies, laws, and public safety practices accessible and transparent.
- Ensuring community voices are heard and, whenever possible, reflected in policy decisions.

By blending investigative oversight with community engagement, IOLERO and the CAC ensure that civilian oversight remains transparent, equitable, and responsive to the needs of Sonoma County residents.

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COMMUNITY AT THE CORE OF THE CAC

*"An IOLERO community advisory council is hereby established to **increase visibility for the public into the delivery by the sheriff-coroner of policing and corrections services**, to provide community participation in the review and establishment of sheriff-coroner policies, procedures, practices, training, and initiatives, and to engage the public to better understand the role of IOLERO and of the sheriff-coroner. The members of the IOLERO CAC shall adhere to the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE) Code of Ethics" (Sonoma County, California – Municipal Code, 2025, Article XXVII, Sec. 2-397).*

Community engagement is a cornerstone of the CAC's mission and effectiveness. When functioning at its best, the CAC serves a dual role: The first is to create meaningful pathways

for residents to provide input and share concerns. The second is to equip the community with clear, accessible information about the laws, practices, and systems that shape public safety in Sonoma County. The CAC bridges the gap between technical policy and lived experience through listening sessions, town halls, and public resources, fostering transparency and trust.

As noted in the 2023–2024 IOLERO Annual Report, the CAC has taken meaningful steps toward deepening its engagement efforts. It has expanded from outreach that *informs* the public, to practices that *invite the public to guide its priorities*. This shift reflects a broader commitment to participatory oversight and a belief that communities closest to the issues must be part of the solutions.

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RULES THE CAC ABIDES BY

Like other local government agencies, the CAC is obligated by its own rules that members and staff are expected to know and follow:

1. Measure P (IOLERO/CAC) (Sonoma County Ordinance No. 6333)

Passed by voters in 2020, this measure significantly expanded IOLERO's powers. It formalized the CAC's role as a key vehicle for community input, transparency, and oversight of the Sheriff's Office.

2. The CAC Bylaws

Adopted in June 2023, the bylaws outline how the CAC operates, covering everything from how members are appointed and organized, to how meetings are run and decisions are made. They affirm the CAC's role as a bridge between the public and IOLERO, focusing on transparency, equity, and ethical conduct.

3. NACOLE Code of Ethics

Like other oversight agencies, the CAC adheres to the NACOLE Code of Ethics. This nationally recognized framework promotes integrity, transparency, independence, and respect for community voice in civilian oversight. By aligning with these standards, the CAC grounds its work in nationwide best practices from oversight bodies.

4. Public Meeting Laws

California's public meeting rules, governed by the Brown Act and Robert's/Roberta's Rules of Order, promote public access, transparency, and efficient meeting management.

Brown Act: Governing public meetings for local legislative bodies like the CAC, the law includes several key requirements:

- *Quorum requirements:* More than half the appointed members must be present to take action or deliberate as a council. When a quorum is present, the meeting must be open to the public and an agenda must be posted at least 72 hours in advance. Discussion is limited to the items listed on the agenda, and public participation must be allowed on those items and general matters within the CAC's jurisdiction.
- *Prohibition on serial meetings:* CAC members may not engage in a series of communications that involve a quorum, whether directly or through intermediaries, to discuss, deliberate, or develop a shared position on an issue. These so-called *serial meetings* violate the Brown Act's intent, even if communication is spread across emails, texts, or individual conversations.
- Members should also avoid discussing CAC and/or IOLERO-related matters with the public outside of official CAC meetings, to maintain transparency and prevent the appearance of impropriety. The public is, however, encouraged to suggest items for future agendas through appropriate channels.

Robert's Rules of Order: This rule provides a framework for conducting meetings in an orderly manner. It outlines motions, voting, and debate procedures to ensure fair, efficient, and democratic decision-making.

Roberta's Rules of Order: An adaptation of Robert's Rules designed for online meetings that leverage technology and digital identity verification.

5. Commitment to civil engagement: Norms for dialogue and collaboration

Effective oversight depends on respectful, constructive dialogue that upholds freedom of speech while valuing diverse perspectives. CAC members are committed to fostering a collaborative environment where all voices can be heard, considered, and engaged respectfully and without disruption.

To support this, the CAC developed a shared set of norms that shape how members show up for one another, the community, and IOLERO staff. These practices reflect its commitment to professional, inclusive, and purpose-driven collaboration.

All CAC members, staff, and participants in CAC meetings or activities are expected to meet these shared expectations:

- Be tough on the topic, not on people.
- Respect all participants in the meeting.
- Respect others' perspectives, even when you disagree.
- Respect each other's time.
- Stay within the meeting's allotted time and content parameters.
- Practice active listening.
- Listen with an open mind to all information, including dissenting points of view.
- Speak to others as you would like to be spoken to.
- Allow others to speak without comment or intrusive sounds.
- Honor freedom of speech.
- Call each other "in" and address problematic behavior compassionately and respectfully.

These norms help keep the work grounded in shared purpose, even during difficult conversations or moments of disagreement.

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COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

Community outreach and engagement are core to the CAC's mission and objectives. As a CAC member, you are encouraged to bring your perspective to your work while also centering the broader community. This means actively involving residents in oversight processes, ensuring their concerns and ideas come to the fore, and integrating their feedback to help shape policies and practices. It also means increasing community awareness in multiple areas, including the role of the CAC, IOLERO, the laws and legalities that direct law enforcement, and an individual's rights with regards to law enforcement.

The CAC's operations and ways of working emphasize diversity, and align with best practices outlined by NACOLE and similar organizations. These include other oversight bodies and, where relevant and appropriate, government agencies. Collectively, these organizations underscore that oversight bodies are most effective when deeply rooted in their communities, fostering a collaborative environment where trust can grow.

Community Outreach in Action

Community outreach is the foundation of the CAC's work to build relationships, raise awareness, and invite participation in oversight processes. Unlike engagement, which emphasizes collaboration and dialogue, outreach focuses on connecting with residents and community members where they are, and ensuring they are informed about the CAC's work, the role of IOLERO, and their rights when interacting with law enforcement.

Through various methods, including public events, media campaigns, and digital communications, the CAC ensures that information is accessible, straightforward, and widely distributed to diverse audiences across Sonoma County.

Means + Ways

CAC website

A comprehensive and well-maintained website can serve as a vital avenue for transparency, accessibility, and consistent communication with the community. As people access and absorb information in expanding ways, a website can serve as a central hub among many channels. The CAC website should house essential resources such as meeting agendas, annual reports, and research, as well as up-to-date information about the CAC's activities and oversight initiatives.

Currently, the CAC's central website is associated with and accessible through IOLERO's website, with separate webpages for its recommendations and reports. The CAC recently began developing web pages on its Ad Hoc initiatives and maintains these even after an Ad Hoc committee successfully achieves its goals. In this way, the CAC's activities are catalogued for review and possible replication later, in a repository for residents and visitors to access and reference.

By maintaining an up-to-date and user-friendly site, the CAC ensures that community members are kept informed, can access key information at any time, and can participate meaningfully in oversight processes.

Best practices for a comprehensive web presence

- **Collaborate with care** - Web content should be a shared effort among CAC members, with each contributor responsible for drafting accurate, relevant materials. All content must be reviewed and approved by CAC leadership before publication.
- **Be timely and informative** - Prioritize content that supports public understanding of oversight, law enforcement practices, and community safety. Use IOLERO's support to ensure materials are published in a timely, accessible, and accurate manner.
- **Distribute widely** - To maximize reach, share all website materials across CAC and IOLERO social media channels. Highlight them within CAC networks and reference them in relevant discussions to expand community awareness and engagement.
- **Ensure accessibility** - Ensure all website content is accessible by providing translations, adhering to accessibility standards and optimizing for different devices. When possible, use multimedia formats like audio, video, and infographics to accommodate diverse learning styles and make complex information easier to understand.

NICE TO HAVE

- Develop a content calendar to regularly refresh website materials, ensuring timely updates for meetings, reports, or new initiatives. This proactive approach will keep the community engaged, and will encourage them to keep visiting as they recognize the website as a reliable, up-to-date resource.
 - Review website analytics regularly to determine what content resonates most with the community. Incorporate user feedback to improve navigation, identify information gaps, and refine content to better serve community needs.
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IOLERO Newsletter

Another avenue for communication with community members and coalition groups is IOLERO's monthly newsletter. Community members are encouraged to subscribe and stay connected through this newsletter, which informs the public about the office's activities and developments in law enforcement oversight. The CAC coordinates with IOLERO to also use this platform to share updates on oversight initiatives and promote opportunities for community engagement.

Best practices for leveraging a newsletter/agency publication

- **Collaborate on content development** - CAC members, especially Ad Hoc committees, should consider their promotional needs early, and coordinate with IOLERO and/or shared

resources to broadly disseminate updates, perspectives, and insights. Planning out the year or, at minimum, flagging important dates, initiatives, and meetings, will enable you to prepare content and consider additional communications issues that might bolster messaging and programs (e.g., multimedia, accessibility, translation, etc.).

- **Ensure audience-centric content** - Because the Sonoma County community is broad and diverse, aim for clear, concise, conversational yet professional language. Break down complex concepts such as legal obligations or policies into plain language, and include summaries or visuals (e.g., infographics) to make information more accessible and easily understood.
- **Be mindful of timing** - CAC members are responsible for ensuring content is accessible and understood by all members of Sonoma's diverse communities. To promote inclusivity and engagement, the CAC translates all materials into Spanish; therefore, plan accordingly to allow sufficient time to prepare and deliver content effectively.
- **Focus on a call to action** - Clearly articulate the 'so what' by including calls to action or actionable items in articles and materials, highlighting upcoming meetings, surveys, or engagement opportunities. These elements help keep readers engaged.

NICE TO HAVE

- **Cross-promotion and engagement** - Maximize the newsletter's reach and impact by liking and sharing it across social media platforms, including your personal accounts if appropriate. Discuss the focus areas in the latest issue and share them among your local community networks. Use analytics to track subscriber growth, email open rates, and community feedback. This will help you to refine content, improve visibility, and focus on what resonates most with readers.
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Social Media

Social media is a powerful tool for outreach and awareness, allowing you to share information on platforms that community members and residents are likely already using.

The CAC's social media protocol is primarily dictated by Sonoma County's 9-1 Policy for Official Use of Social Media Sites, which was approved by the County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors in April 2011. The policy sets clear guidelines for officially administered accounts. It does not regulate personal social media use by employees or volunteers like CAC members unless they post in an official capacity. However, the line between personal and professional

roles can easily blur, especially when social media activity might be perceived as conflicting with or compromising the integrity of CAC's oversight work. With that in mind, exercise discretion and refer to the County's social media policy for best practices and expectations.

While social media is great for real-time engagement, official CAC sites remain the primary public information source.

An overview of County policy

- According to the policy, every county-run social media account is considered an extension of the county's network. That means it must follow the same rules that apply to other government communications, including public records retention and accessibility standards.
- Social media posts are considered public records; therefore, all content must be archived and managed according to records retention policies.
- If an agency allows public comments, it must clearly state the purpose of the discussion and set ground rules.
- Comments that are off-topic, profane, discriminatory, promote illegal activity, or compromise public safety can be removed. While these platforms allow public participation, CAC accounts are not open forums for unrestricted speech; they exist to support the agency's mission and facilitate constructive dialogue.
- When posting on behalf of the county, employees and contractors must ensure that content is accurate, professional, and aligned with the agency's public service role.
- No confidential information should be shared, and political endorsements or commercial promotions are strictly off limits unless specifically approved.
- Each agency must identify its official presence and be transparent about who maintains the account.
- To keep things running smoothly, agencies must designate responsible staff, maintain account access records, and enforce compliance with this policy.
- The county's Information Services Provider (ISP) oversees social media approvals, technical standards, and public comment policies to ensure consistency across all county departments.

This policy ensures that social media is used ethically, legally, and effectively to serve the public. Setting clear expectations allows Sonoma County agencies to engage with the community transparently, and professionally align with public service values.

Access and familiarize yourself with the full policy [here](#).

Events

Hosting, attending, and participating in community events is essential for CAC members to stay connected with residents, build trust, and remain informed about community developments. It's essential to be mindful of quorum constraints when attending events, even social gatherings. More than five CAC members constitute a quorum, triggering Brown Act requirements and turning the event into a public meeting (see earlier for more details).

When organizing or attending events, CAC members should coordinate to determine availability and designate a member best suited to represent the group. The team should also consider key talking points and be mindful of what might be inappropriate to discuss in a public setting (e.g., speculation about ongoing investigations or personal opinions on the Sheriff and/or SCSO).

Being invited to participate in or attend an event is an even more powerful opportunity than hosting one yourself. Partnering with other community organizations or agencies can amplify your message, expand your network, and provide access to new resources and outreach practices. It's a chance to get out into the community, represent the CAC, build stronger relationships, and elevate the Council's mission by aligning with others who share similar goals. These partnerships create more avenues for exposure, and increase the likelihood that people will connect with the services and message.

Tabling

Tabling is a widely used community engagement strategy in which oversight agencies set up informational booths or tables at gatherings, public events, or spaces. By establishing a consistent presence in the community, the CAC meets people where they are, and fosters authentic, human-centered connections. Over time, this visibility helps community members become familiar with the Council, its branding, and its mission.

Direct, face-to-face interactions enable community members to provide genuine and immediate feedback, ask questions, share information, and build greater trust in the CAC and its role in the community. Beyond building rapport, tabling is a powerful platform for

educational outreach, sharing important information, clarifying misconceptions, and raising awareness about the Council's services and individuals' rights. Regular participation increases the Council's visibility, fosters recognition, reinforces its commitment to transparency, and helps to build long-term community trust.

For oversight agencies, tabling is vital for connecting with residents in person. It creates an accessible space for residents to engage directly with the Council's work.

Best practices for effective tabling

- **Be prepared** - Do your homework to confidently speak about your role and related topics, such as the CAC, IOLERO, the Sheriff's Office, and public safety. Remember, it's not a test; just be authentic, genuinely curious, and empathetic. For example, if you're asked something you don't know, simply acknowledge it and offer to follow up with more information.
- **Practice facilitation and active listening** - Tabling is an excellent opportunity to increase awareness. It's also a prime time to listen to community members' firsthand experiences and gauge their sentiments on specific issues. Be prepared to listen actively and take note of what you hear. You're not expected to solve problems on the spot. Instead, focus on understanding concerns and then bring them back to the CAC and/or IOLERO. From there, determine if the issue is isolated, a broader trend that demands action, or something to monitor further.
- **Don't be shy** - Your table should be visually inviting, but even if it's not always packed with people, don't hesitate to engage passersby. Ask if they're familiar with the CAC or IOLERO, and share materials that you have on hand. Offering snacks, swag, or freebies can draw people in. Once they approach your table, you can forge a connection and listen to their concerns, ideas, and perspectives.
- **Encourage visitors to attend a monthly CAC meeting** - Many people who stop at your table will not know about IOLERO or the regular CAC meetings. If you speak to someone who seems engaged in the conversation, encourage them to attend a CAC meeting to learn more and share their perspective.

NICE TO HAVE

Have a call to action - Include a call to action at your table to turn passive engagement into active participation.

Keep it simple - People will only spend a few minutes at your table, so ensure the ask is quick by focusing on one or two meaningful actions. A simple request, like signing up for updates or completing a short survey, is effective.

Make it practical - Effective calls to action should be relevant, straightforward, and easy to complete. For example, ask residents to submit feedback on law enforcement policies at a neighborhood safety event rather than offering a general flyer about oversight.

Always incorporate a clear follow-up plan - A successful call to action isn't just about immediate action, it's about building lasting engagement and trust.

Speaking Engagements

Occasionally, members of the CAC are invited to speak on panels or participate in other speaking engagements. CAC members should solicit these invitations from other groups in which they participate. These opportunities are highly encouraged as they provide valuable engagement with the community and the opportunity to share insights about the role of accountability and oversight in public safety.

Like events and tabling, any opportunity to connect with the public and highlight the impact of the CAC's work is crucial. Speaking engagements also allow members to emphasize the interconnected nature of public safety; how it influences and is influenced by broader social issues such as economic development, housing, and quality of life.

These engagements also offer an excellent opportunity to collaborate with other groups, including the Sheriff's office, that serve Sonoma County communities. Participation demonstrates the CAC's commitment to working alongside others to foster positive change.

Best practices when accepting speaking engagements

- **Ensure alignment** - When accepting speaking engagements, it's essential to ensure alignment between the event, and the CAC's values, mission, and purpose. Consider who is inviting you, where the event is being held, and the topic you've been asked to speak on. Research past events, speakers, and themes. The groups you associate with and the spaces you engage in directly reflect the CAC's credibility and reputation. Partnering with or attending events that conflict with the CAC's mission or the communities it serves can risk

eroding trust and legitimacy. Additionally, participating in events without a clear connection to public safety may dilute your message and impact.

- **Know your audience and tailor your message** - Customize your message to fit the event's theme and topic. Consider your audience's makeup and areas of interest, then speak to those to ensure what you say resonates. Expect to focus mostly on the fundamentals, such as your role, the work and mandate of the CAC and IOLERO, their relationship, and the SCSO. Use clear, concise, easy-to-follow and impactful statements, and avoid using jargon.
 - **Be ready for tough questions** - You may be asked challenging questions or be confronted by members of the public who are upset and frustrated. Do your best to anticipate questions that might arise and prepare for them. Exercise emotional intelligence and empathy as you respond calmly and factually. If you don't have an answer, offer to follow up afterward.
 - **Make a connection** - While it may not always be possible, consider how to engage the audience. Creating opportunities for interaction—as simple as a show-of-hands question—enhances the impact of your message. Even if live engagement isn't feasible, always bring materials that clearly explain the CAC's efforts and have a means of capturing attendee information. Only do so with the agreement or collaboration of the host partner.
 - **Follow up after the event** - Thanking attendees, sharing additional resources, answering any remaining questions, or summarizing key points reinforces the CAC's commitment to transparency and continued engagement, leaving a lasting, positive impression.
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Media Invitations

IOLERO staff participated in the **2024 Sonoma County Media Relations Training**, which covered key strategies for navigating media interactions and communicating effectively with the public. The training included:

- Tools for working with the media
- Best practices for digital communication
- Tips for interviews and public messaging
- An overview of the County's Communications Team and protocols

The complete **Sonoma County Media Relations Guide** and the county's media policy are available in the CAC Resource Binder on Google Drive.

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: HOW TO DO IT

Community engagement is about collaboration, building mutual trust through conversation, listening, and shared problem solving. For the CAC, it means creating space for residents to inform, influence, and shape the oversight process. Engagement goes beyond telling the public; it invites them to take part.

Because the CAC is a public agency, engagement efforts must follow formal requirements to ensure transparency and fairness. Per the bylaws and rules regarding official meetings, the CAC is subject to quorum requirements. A specific number of members (quorum) must be present to conduct business and make decisions, ensuring that any actions or recommendations reflect a representative portion of the CAC. If enough members are present to constitute a quorum, the session must be recognized and abide by the rest of the public meeting rules. This allows for public presence and demonstrates a commitment to transparency and inclusion. The requirement aligns with standard good governance practices for public bodies, providing legitimacy and accountability in the Council's oversight activities.

While compliance with open meeting laws like the Brown Act is strongly encouraged, sometimes oversight agencies need the flexibility to move quickly, or meet and work at a frequency that makes adhering to open-meeting rules untenable. CAC members should be discerning when making such decisions. The following sections include ways of maintaining community connection and input.

Means + Ways

Monthly Meetings

The Community Advisory Council convenes monthly. At the time of writing, these meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 6:00 p.m., as stipulated in the CAC bylaws. Permanent changes to meeting schedules require an amendment to the bylaws. These in-

person meetings (also available virtually) are open to the public, ensuring transparency and community involvement. The SCSO is invited to send a liaison to attend and participate in the meetings.

Regular monthly meetings are pivotal for:

- **Ensuring timely oversight:** Consistent meetings allow the CAC to promptly address developments within the Sheriff's Office, communicating with the Sheriff's liaison, and responding to community concerns.
- **Facilitating community engagement:** Monthly gatherings provide a structured platform for residents to voice their perspectives, fostering trust and collaboration. They also provide an opportunity for residents to communicate with the Sheriff's liaison to CAC.
- **Maintaining accountability:** Regular sessions enable the CAC to monitor progress on policy recommendations and ensure that the SCSO adheres to agreed-upon reforms.

These meetings are conducted per the Brown Act, guaranteeing that agendas are publicly posted at least 72 hours in advance and that the public can participate.

For the most current meeting schedules, agendas, and locations, please refer to the IOLERO Calendar.

Ad Hoc Committees (Ad Hocs)

Oversight agencies, including the CAC, are responsible for being informed and studying, reviewing, and providing insights on policing protocols, policies, and procedures.

An Ad Hoc committee (sometimes called a Task Force or simply Ad Hoc) is a subset of members that convene regularly to work on a particular issue or focus area over a specified time. This approach is often used in police oversight to address specific issues, respond to high-profile incidents, and review and discuss policing trends impacting communities.

Ad Hocs differ from other committee configurations in that they are temporary. Unlike, for example, a steering committee, Ad Hocs typically form to address a particular issue and then dissolve once they've completed their mandate.

Ad Hoc topics should be:

- Impactful or potentially impact the community

- Public safety-specific and/or SCSO-focused
- Required or related to charter requirements

Ad Hocs are primarily established at the yearly CAC strategic planning session when important and relevant issues are identified.

Best practices for an effective Ad Hoc

Clear mandate and objectives - Discuss and agree on a well-defined mission with specific goals and a clear scope of investigation. **All Ad Hocs are expected to use SMART goals** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) to ensure clarity, accountability, and forward momentum. This keeps the work focused, actionable, and easier to track over time.

Inclusive community representation - Whenever possible, Ad Hoc committees should include or engage community members from outside the CAC. Involving community stakeholders and integrating their voices ensures that the committee's efforts and recommendations reflect the concerns and needs of those most impacted by the SCSO.

Follow-up mechanisms - An Ad Hoc committee should anticipate providing progress reports to the CAC at regular intervals, or when requested by the CAC Chair, Vice Chairs, or other members. Upon completing its stated goals and objectives, the committee should prepare a full report for the CAC, relevant partners, and stakeholders. These reports shall be posted on the IOLERA website.

Additionally, when an Ad Hoc committee's work involves recommendations to the Sheriff for review and potential implementation, it is good etiquette to engage with the Sheriff or their designate to discuss findings, gather feedback, and refine recommendations before publicly sharing the committee's process and outcomes. By doing this, you will also foster a collaborative partnership.

Ensure lasting impact - Particularly when addressing complex or long-term issues, some Ad Hocs propose follow-up structures or transition their recommendations to a more permanent body, such as a steering committee or a standing CAC agenda item. This continuity helps sustain momentum and support meaningful implementation.

Transparency and communication - Regular public updates and a final publicly available report help to maintain transparency, build trust, enhance community awareness, and keep pressure on authorities to enact the committee's recommendations. For the duration of the Ad Hoc, the committee should consider other means to strengthen community awareness about

the issue in question, creating an easily accessible and regularly updated repository of research, recordings, and outputs

How to execute an Ad Hoc

It helps to approach and organize an Ad Hoc as if it were a unique project with a framework to organize activities and integrate milestones. Make time to discuss and develop a plan with clear phases, acknowledged logistical requirements, and milestones that lead to action. Here's a simple framework to help organize the work:

1. Discovery and Learning

Get grounded in the topic. Gather relevant research, best practices, model policies, and input from subject matter experts or key stakeholders. This phase helps members build shared understanding and identify where the Ad Hoc can have the most impact.

2. Planning and Design

Map out the work. Decide what activities must happen, such as reviewing policies, drafting recommendations, hosting forums, inviting experts, or consolidating perspectives. Assign roles, set timelines, and ensure deliverables align with your goals. There may be many moving parts to executing this stage, including:

- *Logistics*: scheduling, preparation for meetings, running the meeting, following up, keeping notes, responding to queries, creating and updating web pages
- *Outreach*: surveys, public forums, promotional material, language access (if required)

Consider and incorporate these elements as necessary for the overall objective.

3. Reporting and Decision-Making

Ad Hocs report progress during regular CAC meetings. When work is ready for action or endorsement, prepare a clear summary or presentation, including key findings, options, and a recommended path forward. Help the full CAC and the public understand the “why” and “how” of your work.

Checklist:

- Have a clear vision of the desired outcome.
- Establish **SMART goals** to define objectives.
- Create a roadmap with clear deliverables, timeline, accountability structure, and approach to tracking progress.
- Ensure alignment of outputs and division of labor.

Listening Sessions

A listening session is a structured gathering where community members share their experiences, concerns, and perspectives with an agency or organization. Unlike town halls or special meetings, which often involve presentations or discussion, listening sessions are designed for active listening. They provide a space for participants to speak freely, while CAC members and supporting staff pay attention and record anecdotes, suggestions, concerns, and responses to prompts.

For law enforcement oversight agencies like the CAC, listening sessions are crucial tools for building trust, identifying systemic issues, and shaping oversight priorities based on direct community input. They create a safe forum for community members, especially those who may feel unheard or who avoid traditional public meetings, to voice concerns about the SCSO, public safety, and accountability in a setting centered on their experiences.

Best practices for effective listening sessions

- **Set clear objectives** - Define the session's purpose (e.g., gathering feedback on a specific policy, understanding community concerns, or informing future oversight efforts). Be transparent about how input will be used and commit to meaningful follow-up so participants see the impact of their contributions.
- **Create a safe and inclusive space** - Choose welcoming, neutral, and accessible locations. Address potential barriers, such as language access and physical accessibility. To encourage open sharing, set ground rules to maintain a respectful and open dialogue and consider offering anonymity or non-attribution, especially for sensitive topics. Thoughtful facilitation ensures broad participation, particularly from historically marginalized groups.
- **Facilitate, don't dominate** - The CAC's role is to listen, not to defend or explain. Use neutral facilitators when possible.
- **Document key takeaways** - Capture key themes, recurring concerns, and insights while maintaining anonymity where needed. This helps identify patterns and inform oversight priorities.

- **Follow up with action** - Show that community voices matter by summarizing key themes, outlining next steps, and providing updates on addressing concerns. Transparent follow-up strengthens trust and accountability.
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Town Halls and Special Meetings

Town halls are a key tool in oversight and outreach, providing a structured forum for public dialogue and an opportunity to expand community awareness. Whereas listening sessions prioritize community voices without direct response, town halls typically feature the oversight agency alongside key stakeholders (e.g., subject matter experts, impacted community representatives, and, at times, law enforcement), engaging in discussion directly with or in front of the public.

These events often include a panel discussion or brief presentation before opening the floor to public Q&A or informal conversations afterward. In this way, town halls foster understanding and clarify public safety and oversight issues.

Sometimes, the CAC or IOLERO may also convene a *special meeting* to address time-sensitive matters outside the regular meeting schedule. While these meetings require only 24 hours' public notice and must stay tightly focused on the posted agenda, they are still subject to the Brown Act's transparency rules. Oversight bodies should use this tool judiciously, ensuring that urgent timelines never come at the cost of public trust or participation.

Why host a town hall or special meeting?

Town halls and special meetings are helpful for complicated issues requiring time and space to understand, absorb, and debate. Some reasons to host include:

- **Policy changes (significant or contentious implications)** - When a policy requires substantial changes or the proposed changes impact public safety, oversight, or accountability in ways that may spark controversy or widespread debate, a town hall offers a space for community dialogue and input. Town Halls are useful for gathering public input on policies, priorities, or recommendations before they are finalized.
- **A new law or legal decision with broad impact** - Legislative changes, court rulings, or ballot measures that influence law enforcement practices, civilian oversight, or public rights

may require public education and discussion in the form of a town hall to ensure the community understands the implications and has a voice in shaping responses.

- **Community crisis or significant incident** - If a critical incident involving law enforcement occurs (e.g., use of force, misconduct allegations, or a high-profile case), a town hall can provide a forum for the community to voice concerns and receive updates.
- **Public safety trends or emerging issues** - When there is a growing concern about crime trends, law enforcement practices, or oversight matters, a town hall allows for broader discussion and information sharing.
- **Council updates** - If the CAC is making significant changes to its operations, launching new initiatives, or releasing a critical report, a town hall can help educate the public and gather feedback.
- **Community-driven concerns** - If residents or advocacy groups have raised ongoing issues related to policing and oversight, hosting a special meeting can demonstrate responsiveness and commitment to transparency.
- **Collaboration with other stakeholders** - Special meetings can bring together various public safety (including SCSO), legal, and community partners to discuss shared issues, ensuring a well-rounded conversation.

These events foster transparency, offer residents the opportunity to raise concerns, and allow oversight bodies like the CAC to invite speakers, experts, and impacted residents to share their perspectives, findings, and recommendations. When done right, they can also be another space for respectful debate and discussion with the SCSO to help bridge the gap between the community and law enforcement.

Best practices for a successful town hall

- **Clearly define the purpose** - Clarity on objectives ensures that panelists and attendees understand the event's intent and stay on track.
- **Ensure accessibility and representation** - The event should be held in a neutral, welcoming space with considerations for language access, disability accommodations, timing, and transportation. Additionally, panelists should reflect on the diverse communities impacted by policing and oversight.
- **Set ground rules for constructive dialogue** - Public safety discussions can be highly charged. Establishing clear guidelines, such as time limits for speakers, respectful engagement expectations, rules of conduct, and moderated Q&A sessions, helps maintain a

productive atmosphere.

- **Facilitate, don't dominate** - The CAC should guide discussions but allow space for community input. Where possible, consider engaging skilled, neutral moderators to help ensure the conversation remains balanced and community-driven.
- **Provide multiple ways to participate** - Not everyone is comfortable speaking publicly. Offering alternative methods such as written comment cards, online submissions, or breakout discussions ensures broader engagement.
- **Follow up with transparency** - Town halls should not be one-off events. Share materials ahead of time, leverage your web presence and social media platforms to socialize the topic, and familiarize community members with the issue. Document key takeaways, share them with attendees, and outline how the Council will act on community feedback. This reinforces accountability and builds trust.

CONCLUSION

This playbook is designed to support the CAC in its work, offering guidance, tools, and expectations for work individually and collectively. It reflects the values embedded in Measure P, the CAC bylaws, and the nationwide best practices from oversight bodies.

As the CAC's work evolves, this document should, too. Members are encouraged to revisit it regularly, reflect on what's working, and suggest necessary improvements. Oversight is not static; it requires iteration with integrity and shared purpose.

Whether you're leading an Ad Hoc, hosting a town hall, reviewing a policy, or just starting your first term, this playbook is here to help you stay focused on what matters most: building trust, advancing transparency, and ensuring the community's voice is at the heart of public safety in Sonoma County.