

# Designmatters/ Fellowship

SUMMER 2017

**Lauren Williams**

Media Design Practices Field 2019

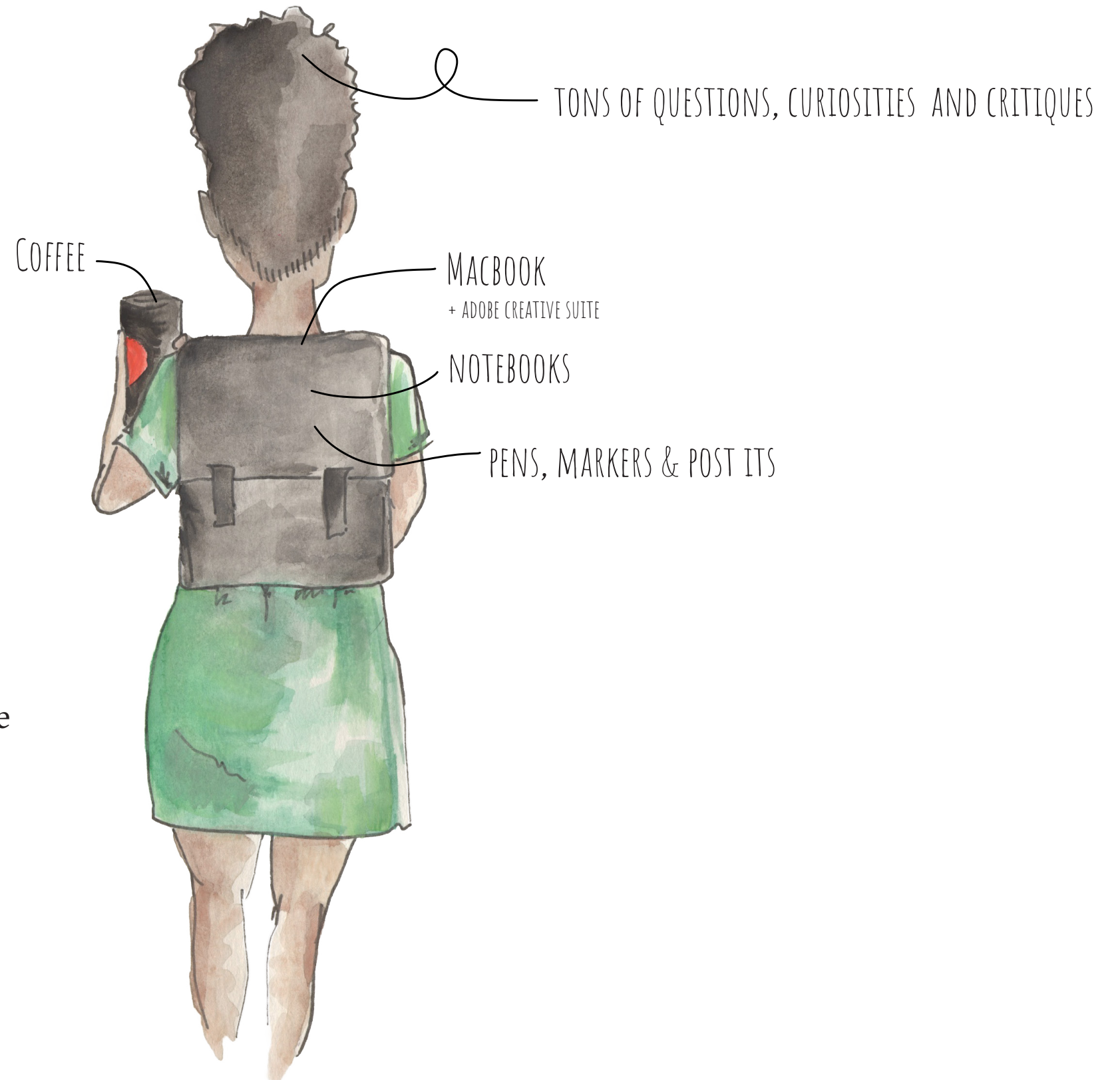
CITY OF LOS ANGELES  
INNOVATION TEAM



**I'm a designer developing a practice in visual and interactive media and critical research methods.**

I'm currently pursuing an MFA in Media Design Practices / Field Track (2019) at the **Art Center College of Design.**

Before Art Center, I worked at *Prosperity Now*, a national nonprofit intermediary that expands economic opportunity by helping American families build wealth and achieve financial freedom. My core interest is in social and economic inequality and injustice, especially as functions of race and racism in an American neoliberal context. I'm particularly interested in these phenomena as they manifest institutionally or systemically, and especially as they are either embedded in or can be addressed through public institutions. At the same time, my work is shaped by investigations into social trust and social capital, especially as components of social, economic and political function and progress.



# About/

The LA Innovation Team

The LA i-team is a mayoral office. They follow the *Bloomberg Philanthropies* model of innovation to tackle big problems and deliver better results for residents. Based in City Hall and reporting to Mayor Eric Garcetti, the team works side by side with City Departments, residents and local organizations to develop interventions aimed to alleviate the city's biggest challenges.

# /The Current Priority

During my fellowship, the i-team had partnered with the city's Police Department and Personnel Department **to create a police “workforce of the future.”** This priority focused on improving the way the city recruits, hires and retains officers going forward. When I arrived in May, the team was conducting research to better understand the priority area. Key research questions included:

- *Why do or don't potential candidates want to work for LAPD?*
- *What are people's perceptions of LAPD?*
- *How do those perceptions influence interest in LAPD careers?*
- *What is the application + hiring experience like?*
- *What challenges do candidates experience along the way?*

By the end of my fellowship in August, the team had begun implementing about 10 initiatives. This priority is expected to wrap up in mid-2018.

# About/

My Role

I provided **design support** for the i-team on their policing priority and for the Mayor's Office of Budget & Innovation on a range of miscellaneous projects. Design support included the following types of responsibilities:

## Design Research

- Defining research strategy
- Developing interview protocols
- Recruiting participants
- Conducting interviews
- Documenting responses
- Synthesizing findings

## Ideation

- Developing workshop agendas
- Making workshop materials
- Facilitating workshops
- Documenting ideas
- Synthesizing findings

## Storytelling

- Compiling research
- Defining target audiences
- Crafting arguments
- Creating graphics
- Writing copy
- Video editing

## Prototyping

- Defining design criteria
- Defining target audiences
- Using research to inform design decisions



# Design Research

Canvassing with Young Adults

**45 brief interviews with teens and young adults in target hiring demographics at LA Southwest Community College and the University of Southern California**

The purpose of these interviews was to understand participants' attitudes toward police and careers in policing. I was responsible for developing the interview script and protocols; prioritizing locations based on target demographics; collecting and documenting interview responses with another fellow; and synthesizing findings.





# Ideation

Mayor's Office Ideation Session

**A workshop with Mayor's Office staff to brainstorm ideas to address 12 key challenges**

The purpose of this session was to address key underlying challenges facing LAPD and Personnel's ability to recruit, hire, and retain officers. I contributed by crafting ideation prompts rooted in challenges uncovered from preexisting research findings; co-designing the session agenda; facilitating ideation exercises during the session; and synthesizing the findings afterward.

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# Ideation

Community Member Ideation Session

**Three ideation sessions with a total of 16 community members representing high-priority hiring demographics across LA**

The purpose of these sessions was to capture participants' perceptions about police and careers in policing. Participants shared their definitions of an "ideal" officer; described the roles police play in their neighborhoods and how those roles impact their communities; explored the primary motivations behind some of their community members' job choices; and examined LAPD job roles in which community members might be interested. I contributed by creating materials; helping design and facilitate the sessions; and drafting both narrative and visual syntheses of the findings.





## How do police impact your community?

These notes summarize a more detailed narrative report about how community leaders and the residents they represent experience and engage with police in their neighborhoods.

### **Most commonly** police are seen patrolling and monitoring neighborhoods for crime and public safety or responding directly to complaints or calls for help.

- Enforcing laws and serving as disciplinarians.
- Intimidating, bullying, terrorizing or antagonizing residents.
- Intervening in disputes or moments of crisis.
- Protecting property, both privately- and city-owned.

### **Less commonly,** participants observed police coordinating with community institutions like schools, businesses, Business Improvement Districts and social service agencies.

- Meeting with student groups or school administrators (e.g. LAUSD, colleges like USC) to teach members about public safety.
- Hosting events with Business Improvement Districts and business owners to build rapport in DTLA.

### **Least of all,** participants had experienced police communicating directly with residents to provide information about public safety.

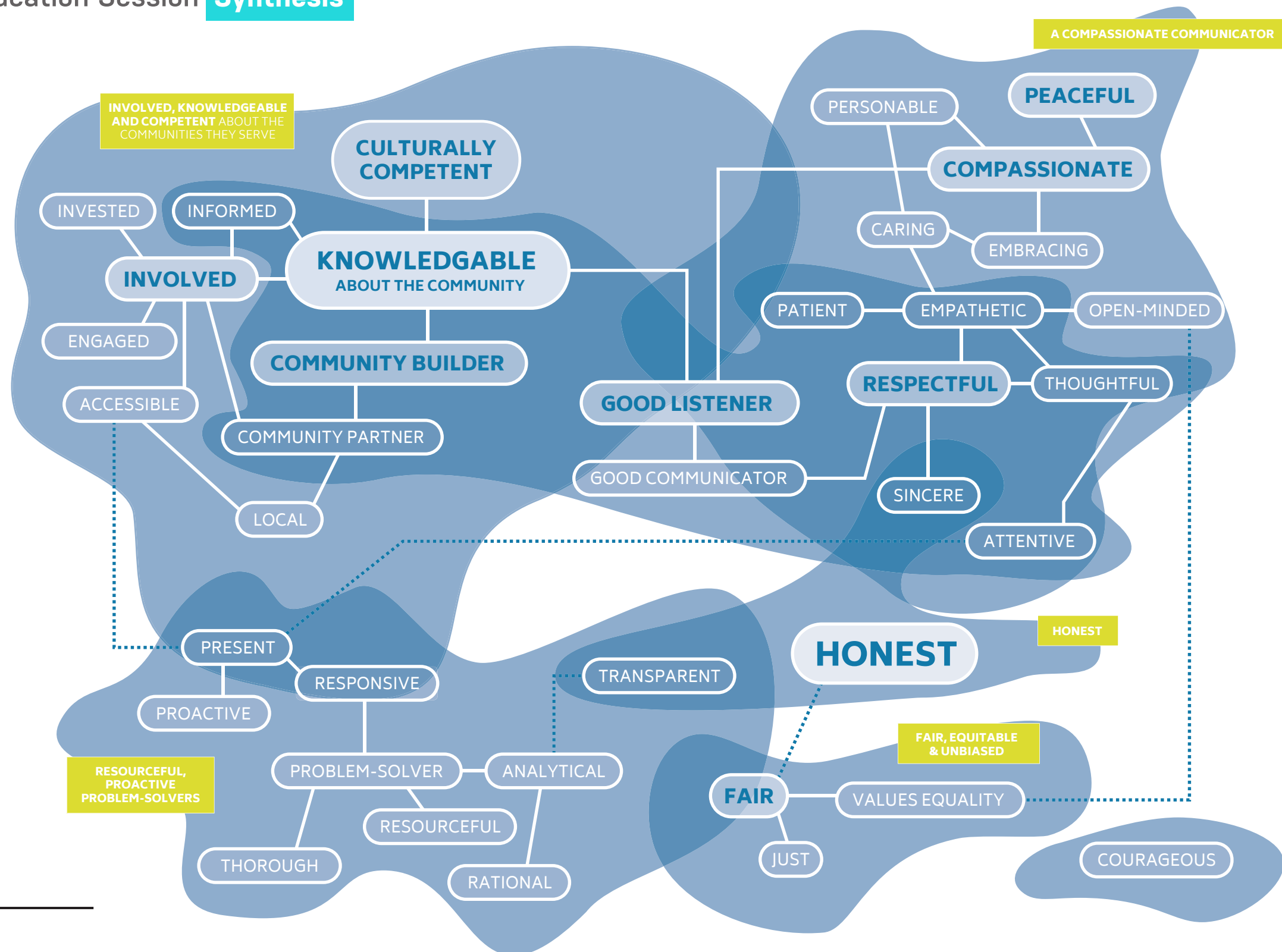
- Providing real-time social media updates about crime.
- Attending neighborhood events (e.g. Nickerson Gardens petting zoo).
- Meeting with students.



## What qualities does an "ideal" police officer have?

This map is an example of how I processed some of the responses gathered during the community member ideation sessions.

I arrived at the five themes featured here by grouping together commonly associated traits and—as themes emerged—considering where they overlap with one another in substantive ways.

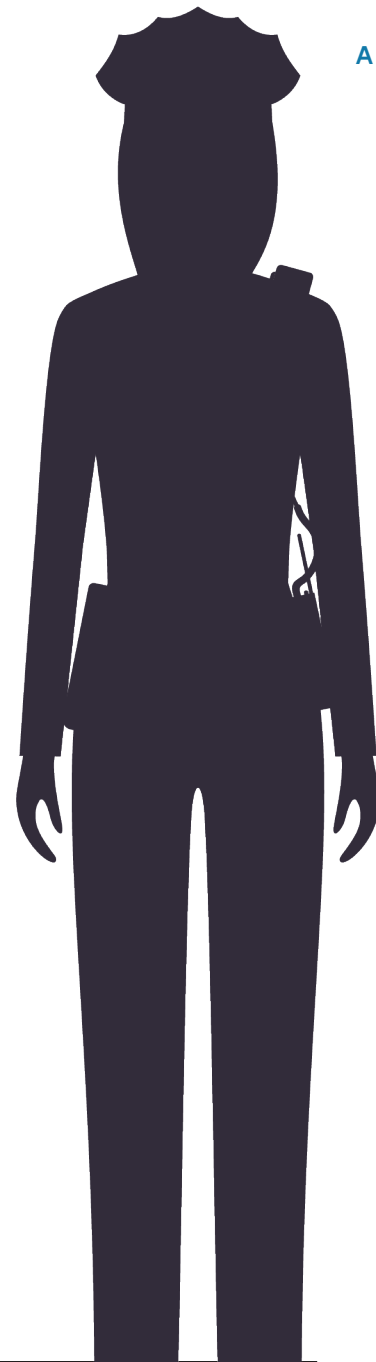


# Ideation

## Community Member Ideation Session **Synthesis**

How do officers demonstrate these "ideal" traits in your community?

This diagram connects the traits community leaders would *like* to see officers exhibit to demonstrable behaviors, and offers examples of how they've seen these behaviors modeled in their own communities.



### A COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATOR

- Showing interest in community members' lives and neighborhoods **by participating in official/informal community meetings and events.**
- Communicating—both verbally and with body language—with a **demeanor and tone of voice that expresses calmness, politeness, respect and patience.**
- Treating residents** with dignity and respect.

### FAIR, EQUITABLE AND UNBIASED

- Interacting with residents based on **conversations in which they attempt to understand a situation**, not jumping to conclusions based on stereotypes (e.g. giving "fix-it tickets" to students who ditch school).
- Consistently **responding to calls** for help regardless of who asks.
- Treating different residents with the same respect** (e.g. using the same demeanor with a homeless resident as with a business owner in DTLA).

### RESOURCEFUL, PROACTIVE PROBLEM SOLVERS

- Connecting community members to resources** or one another when problems arise.
- Listening attentively, assessing situations and making decisions by weighing the alternatives** at their disposal and potential impacts.

### INVOLVED, KNOWLEDGEABLE AND COMPETENT ABOUT THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE

- Visiting community hubs** like senior centers, local businesses, churches, and other social groups, not just in moments of crisis.
- Calling on the appropriate community members/or leaders** in critical situations and respecting the social hierarchies established within different cultural groups.
- Showing interest in community members **by inquiring about their lives** and asking how they're doing.
- Partnering with—but in support of and showing deference to—long-standing community organizations** in moments of crisis.
- Using the correct language and terminology** when responding to community needs (e.g. not referring to women with mental health issues as "crazy").
- Approaching residents of different cultures in **culturally appropriate ways.**
- Taking classes** on cultural norms and cross-cultural communication.
- Acknowledging their own **implicit bias.**
- Approaching women who have experienced sexual assault **with sensitivity and in ways that don't re-traumatize them.**

### HONEST

- Telling the truth** even if there's no one around to question them.

Informal meetings between police and community members help familiarize officers with residents, which might **help mitigate some residents' fear and break down barriers to community-police relationships.** "We had an event in Nickerson Gardens...you go into the community and this was the first time that the police weren't there just to raid them. We brought a petting zoo and the kids had never seen this."

Participants stressed the importance of having ongoing interactions with officers, not just one-off events. "We had officers come in and build relationships with the [high school] football team, **so they weren't strangers when they saw them in the community.**"

Churches in many different communities (e.g. African-American, API) are **credible community hubs** that bring residents together to celebrate, engage in fellowship or problem-solve collectively. Some churches offer a more formal but relatively neutral events—and draw in other cultural groups with which congregation members are associated— where police officers and community members can humanize and reconcile with one another.

Community-based organizations providing services and shelter to people experiencing homelessness and/or mental health issues **already partner with LAPD officers to provide training on trauma-informed care.**

Af. Am. Fraternity & Sorority Groups

Block Clubs

Churches

College Student Organizations

Community-Based Mental Health Organizations

Community-Based Youth-Serving Organizations

Cultural Organizations

Gender Equity Organizations

High School Students

Neighborhood Councils

Local Colleges & Universities

Parks & Recreation

Tech Companies



# Ideation

LAPD & Personnel Ideation Session

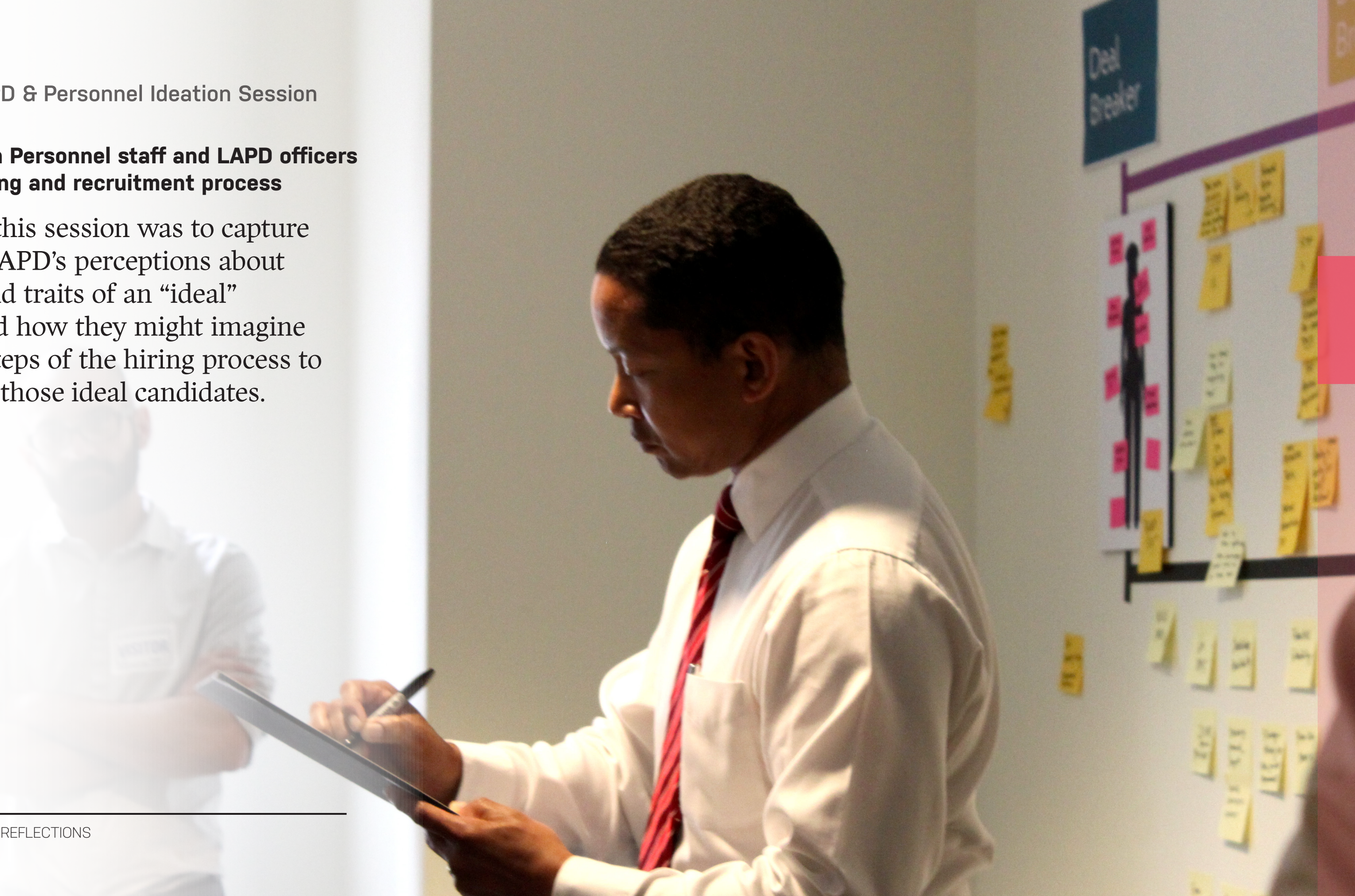
**One workshop with Personnel staff and LAPD officers involved in the hiring and recruitment process**

The purpose of this session was to capture Personnel and LAPD's perceptions about the behaviors and traits of an "ideal" police officer and how they might imagine modifying the steps of the hiring process to capture more of those ideal candidates.

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# Ideation

## Police Science & Leadership Class Exercise

**Designed an exercise to enlist 31 officers to generate ideas about how to appeal to different audiences**

The purpose of this exercise was to gather ideas from a new audience. The prompts encouraged new officers to consider how their own identities shaped their interest in policing and use those reflections to inform recruitment strategies for others in their communities. I was responsible for developing and testing the exercise; creating worksheets to capture officers' responses; attending the final class session to review officers' proposed strategies; and synthesizing reflections based on their proposals.



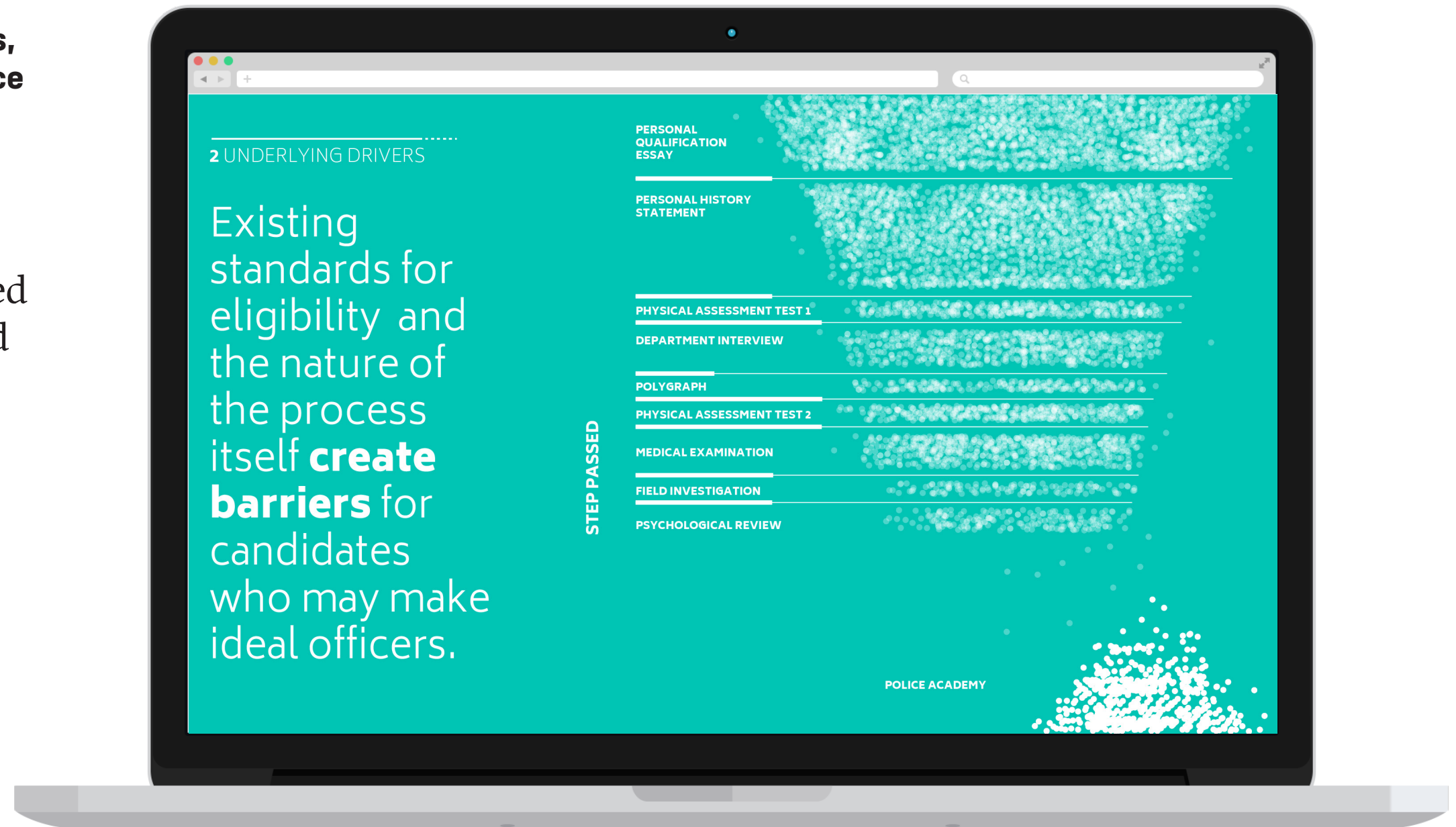


# Storytelling

Project Narratives

**A series of slides with extensive visual aids, tailored depending on the intended audience**

The purpose of these narratives was to explain the origins of the project, summarize high-level research findings, and set the stage for proposed initiatives. These narratives were used to present initiatives to Personnel and LAPD for consideration and to communicate about the project with public audiences. I contributed to the visual language and helped construct the storyline; many external partners weighed in along the way.



# Prototyping

## Officer Spotlights

**Video, photo and social media content featuring stories that profile LAPD officers in a relatable, appealing light, plus supporting materials to equip the i-team to continue iterating**

The purpose of this project was to dispel myths or misconceptions about officers and enlighten people—especially those in priority hiring demographics like women, Asian Americans and African Americans—about the varied and complex identities represented among LAPD officers. With another fellow, I developed a framework for collecting stories; identified the specific types of profiles to capture; designed interview questions; built a database of officers to spotlight; conducted, recorded and photographed interviews with four officers; and created digital media content as prototypes.



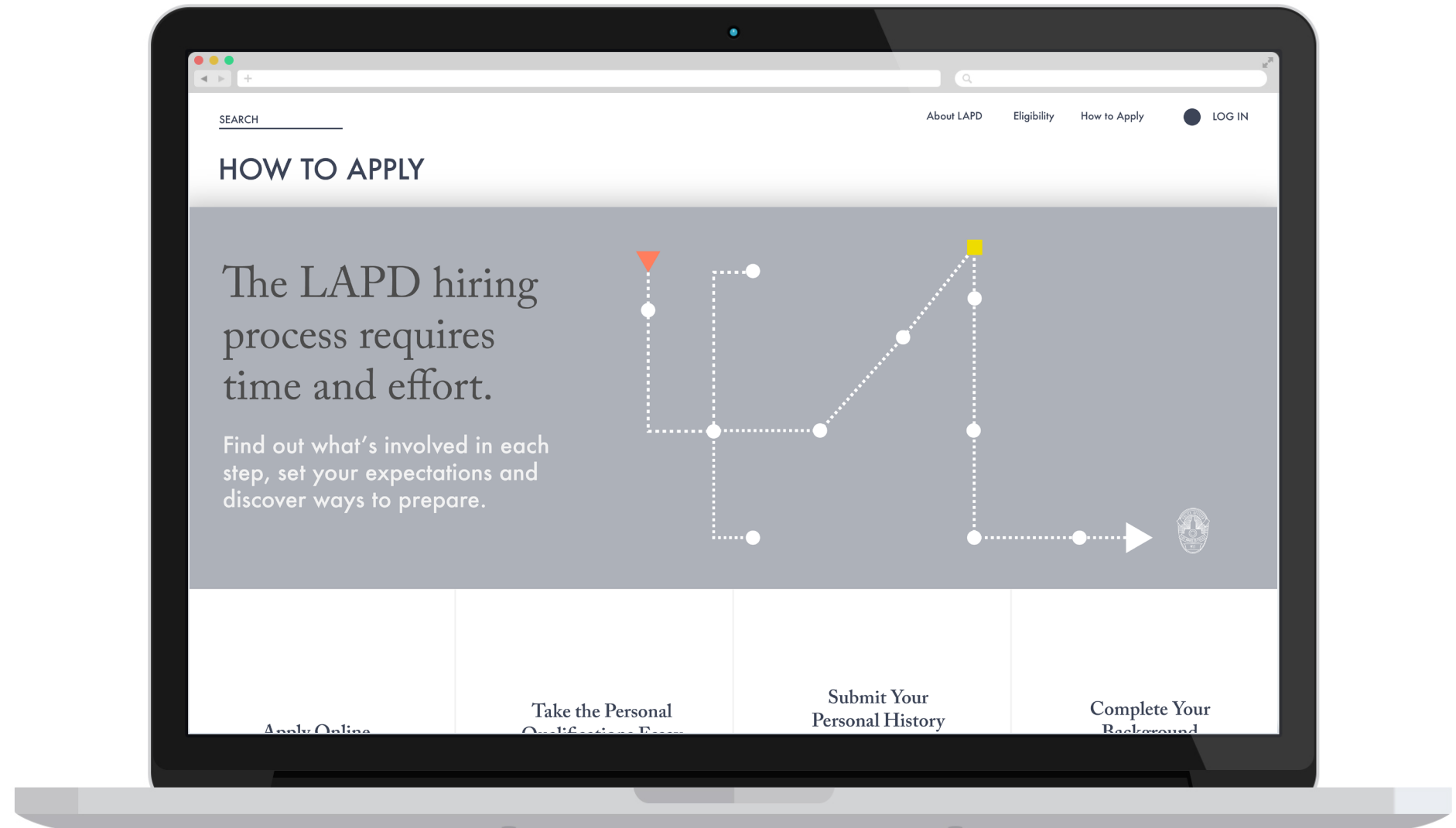


# Prototyping

Enhancing Application Resources

## A prototyped interactive website and supporting materials to equip the i-team to continue iterating

The purpose of this project was to make the case for comprehensive updates to the online and print resources currently given to aspiring candidates about the application and hiring process. With another fellow, I reviewed and created an inventory of existing print and online resources; developed a set of design criteria; prototyped a new information architecture for a redesigned website; and created an interactive prototype of a refined set of web resources.



# Miscellaneous

## Associate Community Officer Program Flier

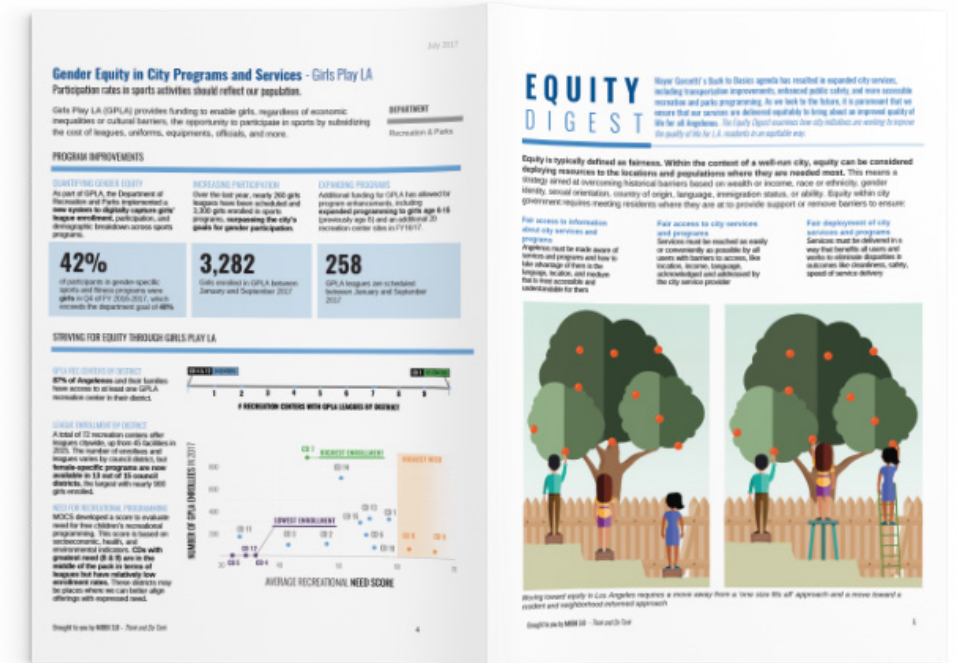
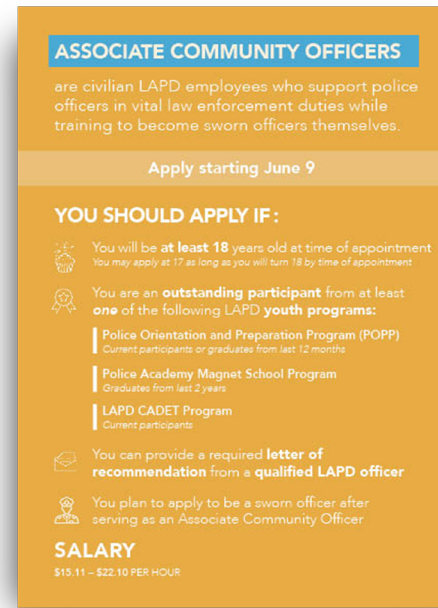
Designed a flier to advertise LAPD job opportunities to young adults who graduated from high school or community college training programs

## Gender Equity Coalition Meeting

Helped create prompts for and facilitate an ideation session with gender equity liaisons from about 15 different City departments

## Equity Digest

Contributed graphics, synthesis and storytelling support to compile a 4-page brief that illustrates how initiatives supported by the Mayor's Office have enhanced equity for LA residents





# Reflections/

**The depth and breadth of organizational change required to accommodate innovation is difficult to manage in any organization.**

The change management that accompanies implementing new processes, shifting expectations or rearranging priorities is *especially* challenging when dealing within and across large, resource-constrained City agencies. It's hard to evaluate questions like: How open will they be to exposing and addressing unpleasant challenges experienced by their clients or caused by their systems? How much capacity will they have to implement changes? What are they most afraid of? Why? The answers to these kinds of questions will ultimately shape the substance, feasibility and quality of any interventions an i-team develops with its partners.

**People assume government is slow, but *not all* government moves at the same speed. Plus, speed isn't always an attribute.**

My experience this summer underscored the fact that City government is, in many ways, more nimble and fast-moving than federal or state. On one hand, this is encouraging: a promising project can go from “idea” to fully-funded initiative in a few months' time if the political will and power exist. On the other hand, it can be intimidating and restrictive: project time frames are often compressed by political urgency and funding cycles, so every deadline becomes an fire to be put out rather than a strategic endeavor.

**Data is only as meaningful as our understanding of the context that surrounds it; but, design can build and communicate that context.**

A core component of innovation models like Bloomberg's is their adherence to a “data-driven approach.” But, data without contextual framing doesn't provide much direction for innovation. It doesn't help to know that an issue exists without understanding *why* that issue exists or what drives it. Design research methods can generate much needed context by uncovering and giving voice to the realities of people, places and institutions about which we have data. Visual and communication design can shape the ways we tell stories with those research findings. Design world-building, speculation and prototyping can help test our assumptions about how new, creative ideas will be received. While designers' skill sets are perceived as unique in their creativity and technicality—our command over pen and paper, a Macbook and the Adobe Creative Suite is in high demand—we still have work to do to make the case for design in corporate and civic spaces as more than a visual and/or aesthetic afterthought.

# Reflections/

**My experience left me with more questions than answers.** In future research, I'm interested in leveraging design to examine the relationships and interactions among police officers, police institutions and residents in order to contribute to the dialogue about how policing could and should evolve to meet the public's needs.

What can we learn from representing and critiquing these relationships (historical, current and/or ideal) through design?

How does trust or mistrust between police officers, institutions and residents influence how they interact?

What role do officers and the police department play in public life? What role should they play?

How can we challenge assumptions or redefine long-held narratives about how these actors interact through making?

How might we imagine different realities or futures of policing?

What would it take to create a police force that operates the way the public wants?

Why do we need police?

How can design shift beliefs, assumptions and behaviors about how officers, institutions and residents interact?



# Thank You

## DESIGNMATTERS

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*Plus our 16th floor neighbors—  
the Operations Team and Census  
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