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### Assignment 1: Client Background

The Oneida County Police Department serves Madison County, responding to roughly 10,329 citizens in a 22 square mile radius. The mission statement of the department is “to protect life and property through the enforcement of laws and the providing of service to the community.” Indicator crimes, such as domestic violence and theft, are the issues most commonly reported and dealt with in their jurisdiction. With just 28 sworn-in officers in the agency, split between the support services, criminal investigations and protocol divisions, the department officers are spread thin. Their office did receive funding from the Department of Justice in June of 2021 as part of the Rural Violent Crime Reduction Initiative; this funding has been in effect since May 2023. With the grant, they have been able to create hot-spot maps of Central New York, based on five years of data, to identify the areas in which assault, burglary, criminal possession of weapons and robbery are most prevalent, in hopes to better understand why these crimes are happening. However, with a community outreach budget of only \$1,500, the department is limited in its ability to engage with the people they serve.

Communication is an area in which the Oneida Police Department struggles. Steve Lowell, Chief of Police, is hoping to create and sustain open lines of communication with the community, with a special focus on engaging the youth. The only form of social media that the department currently uses is Facebook; their page has about 38,000 followers. However, if they are hoping to engage the community youth, Facebook is not the ideal social media platform to

reach them. Chief Lowell brought up how he would like to sync the department's Facebook page to an Instagram account, in hopes to reach a wider audience, especially young people. However, an increased social media presence means more constraints in regards to the First Amendment and Freedom of Speech. Social media comment sections are becoming increasingly filled with dangerous rhetoric. But, with the limits put in place by the First Amendment, police departments need to be extremely careful as to what they choose to censor in their comment sections. The Freedom of Information Act, known as FOIA, places an added stress as to what the department can do to monitor their social media pages. Since they have difficulty monitoring their Facebook page's comment section as it is, adding an Instagram page to their profile before they can get a better grasp on patrolling their Facebook comment section would be ill-advised. In terms of print communication, Chief Lowell maintains that the department has great relationships with both the *Oneida Dispatch* and the *Rome Sentinel*.

A communications issue that's especially pressing the Oneida County Police Department is a lack of understanding of who their communities are. An audience must be established first in any campaign before strategies and tactics can be devised. Connecting with the younger population is a great idea for the department, but a more specific description, such as age range, gender, sex, socioeconomic status and political affiliation, of who they want to reach and who is in their community will help us create more pointed strategies. In terms of which communities we are aiming to reach, another important group in their jurisdiction to consider is the Native American community. The original Oneida Indian Reservation is in the department's territory, and the strategies implemented to better connect with people on the reservation could be vastly different from methods used to reach citizens not on the reservation. The 2022 census reported nearly 25,000 households in Madison County. Different strategies and tactics are needed for

different sectors of the population, so it's important to define a few specific communities or groups that the department is hoping to target as a part of this campaign.

Something the department can benefit from is a unified brand identity, and once that is developed, it will be able to be transferred to various social media platforms and community outreach organizations. With a stronger brand identity comes a stronger connection to the communities it engages with. In maintaining transparent communication with the community, the department hopes to tackle public safety and crime reporting in a holistic way.