

2023 NACOLE Candidate Questionnaire

Name *

Edward W. Harness

Position Sought *

- ☐ President (2-year term)
- ☐ Vice-President (2-year term)
- ☒ Board Member-At-Large (3-year term)

Geographic Location *

Louisville, KY

Current Employment *

Office of Inspector General - Louisville

How long have you been involved with NACOLE and how did you initially become involved? *

I've been involved with NACOLE since 2015. First as an individual member then as an organizational member. I initially became involved when I began seeking appointment to executive level police oversight positions throughout the U.S.

Which NACOLE Committees have you served on? Have you had other involvement in NACOLE as a volunteer? *

I have served on the Scholarship committee, and the Conference committee. In addition I was the Executive Director of the CPOA in Albuquerque when we hosted the national conference in 2016.

Please share highlights of your background/experience in law enforcement oversight or jail and prison oversight. *

My law enforcement experience began as an MP in the Army. From there I became a Police Officer in the city of Milwaukee. I left policing to attend law school. While a city of Milwaukee Police Officer I earned a Bachelor's Degree in Management of Criminal Justice Operations.

My oversight experience began as a volunteer Police Commissioner, for Whitefish Bay, WI. I served in that role for 7 years. In the aftermath of the shooting of Michael Brown (Ferguson, MO) I decided to pursue oversight as a profession.

In late 2015 I was appointed Executive Director of the Civilian Police Oversight Agency (CPOA) in Albuquerque, NM. The CPOA was a newly formed iteration of oversight for Albuquerque. The previous oversight entity was found by the DOJ to be too closely aligned with the police department. The DOJ determined the Independent Review Office failed in its oversight mission. I served two three years terms at CPOA restoring independence and trust in the organization.

November 2021 Louisville Metro Govt. appointed me to be its first Inspector General. My task is to design and staff a system to perform oversight in conjunction with the newly formed Civilian Review & Accountability Board. These entities were formed in response to the killing of Breonna Taylor.

Why do you want to serve on the NACOLE Board? What makes NACOLE's mission important to you? *

I embrace the values of NACOLE and want to be a part of its on-going success. Policing will not change itself. At my core I believe the community should set the standards for how it wants to be policed. That can only happen with effective civilian oversight. There's a reason the constitution makes Commander-In-Chief of the armed forces a civilian.

What skills/qualities do you have that you expect to contribute to the organization as a member *
of the NACOLE Board?

Advocacy, pragmatism, and insight. My office displays the 13 essential elements for effective oversight. The staff and I see those everyday. When speaking with elected officials I explain my role is to advocate for the oversight process. That means sometimes the answers we provide will not be popular or politically expedient.

While it may not seem so, in oversight, time is on your side. Putting forth investigation results or policy recommendations that are not politically expedient; necessitates you take the time to get it right.

There was a time I thought independent oversight meant our agency must operate as a loner within the government. I learned overtime it means we must build relationships with all members of the community; police, elected officials, community advocates, and community members with various beliefs. You do that by advocating for the process in an honest and forthright way.

On a practical level this is my second start-up. One cannot explain the resistance a newly formed oversight agency will face, until you've experienced it yourself. The police do not want, nor do they believe they need to change. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

What goals do you have for your service on the NACOLE Board, and what would you most like to accomplish as a member of the Board?

My goals are to support the direction of the Executive Director and the collective vision of the Board. Additionally I'd like to be a resource for the oversight start-ups across the nation.

Also, we need to be on the forefront of the biggest issue IMHO in policing; officer candidate selection. Candidate selection processes are unduly narrow, and antiquated. NACOLE needs to be the leader in expanding the candidate resource pool for officer candidates. This will create safer communities across the nation.

This form was created inside of National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement.

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