

INTRADEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

November 21, 2014
14.2

TO: The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Chief of Police

SUBJECT: NEXTalk TEXT-TELEPHONE FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED AUDIT
(IAID No. 14-032)

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. It is recommended that the Board of Police Commissioners REVIEW and APPROVE the attached NexTalk Text-Telephone for the Hearing Impaired Audit.
2. It is recommended that the Board of Police Commissioners REVIEW and APPROVE the attached Executive Summary thereto.

DISCUSSION

Internal Audits and Inspections Division conducted the NexTalk Text-Telephone for the Hearing Impaired Audit to evaluate compliance of Department personnel with related Department directives.

If additional information regarding this audit is required, please contact Arif Alikhan, Special Assistant for Constitutional Policing, at (213) 486-8730.

Respectfully,



CHARLIE BECK
Chief of Police

Attachment

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT

*NEXTALK TEXT-TELEPHONE FOR THE
HEARING IMPAIRED AUDIT*

(IAID No. 14-032)



Conducted by
INTERNAL AUDITS AND INSPECTIONS DIVISION

CHARLIE BECK
Chief of Police

October 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
NEXTALK TEXT-TELEPHONE FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED AUDIT
Conducted by
Internal Audits and Inspections Division
Third Quarter, FY 2013/14

PURPOSE

In accordance with the Los Angeles Police Department (Department) Audit and Inspection Plan for fiscal year (FY) 2013/14, Internal Audits and Inspections Division (IAID) conducted the NexTalk Text-Telephone for the Hearing Impaired Audit to evaluate compliance with Department policies and procedures. The audit included a review of the policies and procedures regarding personnel assigned to Area front desks when providing service to the hearing-impaired members of the public, implementation of the TTY computer application, as well as subsequent training as it pertains to the use of the TTY.

BACKGROUND

The Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) Audit for FY 2012/13 was postponed, due to the installation and implementation that was in progress of the NexTalk SimpliciTTY (NexTalk TTY) computer application for the hearing-impaired at all geographical Area front desk computers.¹

The NexTalk TTY computer application replaced the Department's obsolete TDD equipment. The more widely accepted term used for TDD is TTY, which is the acronym used for teletype, teletypewriter or text-telephone. The NexTalk TTY is a computer application that allows the use of a Local Area Network computer to place and receive calls from people who use TTYs for telephone communications by typing back and forth with text displayed on a screen. The telephone on the designated TTY computer at an Area front desk will sound a "ring" and a NexTalk pop up window will appear when there is an incoming TTY call.

The NexTalk TTY computer application became operational on October 9, 2012, and the related Special Order No. 3, February 20, 2013, Answering Department Telephones – Revised; Telephone Calls Placed to geographic Areas and Divisions via Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf – Renamed and Revised; Business Cards – Formatting and Language Guidelines – Revised; and Watch Commander's Daily Report, Form 15.80.00 – Revised and the NexTalk Teletype (TTY) User Quick Reference Guide, were both published. Although IAID has conducted Department-wide TDD audits in the past, this is the first audit that assesses the NexTalk TTY computer application.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In viewing the overall goal of the Department's NexTalk TTY computer application, there was indication the Department served the hearing-impaired community through the implementation of the NexTalk TTY computer application. This was evidenced by Objective Nos. 4 (Text Calls Answered by Area Front Desk Personnel) and 5 (Text Calls Answered by Communications Division Personnel), which indicated that NexTalk TTY calls not answered by front desk personnel at a geographic Area, were automatically transferred and answered by Communications Division. In regard to the audit results directly related to handling NexTalk

¹This audit will refer to the NexTalk SimpliciTTY computer application as the NexTalk TTY computer application.

TTY calls by front desk personnel at geographic Areas, there was an apparent disconnect in understanding the procedures pertaining to the NexTalk TTY computer application.

Performance results in the other objectives pointed to a lack in documentation of NexTalk TTY computer application training for personnel not logging onto the NexTalk TTY computer application, and not printing out the NexTalk TTY test call and attaching it to the Watch Commander Daily Reports (WCDRs).

Communication with geographic Areas and the Office of Operations indicated there may have been confusion that led to the lack of understanding in handling NexTalk TTY calls by front desk personnel. Special Order No. 31, November 22, 2010, Telephone Calls Placed to Geographic Areas and Divisions Via Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf, transferred the responsibility of answering hearing-impaired calls from the geographic Areas to Communications Division. This change was due to the obsolete hearing-impaired technology that was at the geographic Areas at that time. Special Order No. 3, February 20, 2013, revised certain policies and procedures pertaining to the hearing-impaired, and established the NexTalk TTY computer application.

Specifically, in section II of Special Order No. 3, February 20, 2013, "DEPARTMENT MANUAL SECTION 4/190.15, TELEPHONE CALLS PLACED TO GEOGRAPHIC AREAS AND DIVISIONS VIA TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICES FOR THE DEAF – RENAMED AND REVISED," officers' duties in handling NexTalk TTY calls is addressed; however, the last line within this particular section, states, "*The existing procedures remain unchanged.*" It is conceivable that this led to geographic Areas interpreting that the responsibility rested with Communications Division in answering the NexTalk TTY calls, as indicated in Special Order No. 31, November 22, 2010.

In addition to the aforementioned, front desks at geographic Areas have a constant turnover in personnel, given the fact that the assignment of officers to the front desk are temporary in nature; light duty status, probationary officers (P-Is), and inherent Area Deployment rotations. It is plausible that this lack of permanency also contributed to the loss in procedural understanding of the NexTalk TTY computer application.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In considering the information within the Summary of Findings, Detailed Findings, and Other Related Matter, the recommendations below should be considered.

1. It is recommended that the OO and Office of Administrative Services consider the feasibility of assigning the duties for answering initial incoming NexTalk TTY calls from desk personnel at the geographic Areas, to Communications Division. Although Communications Division already handles a significant amount of the NexTalk TTY calls that are transferred from the geographic Areas and ensure the proper handling of these calls, further research may be needed to determine whether this would actually be a more streamlined and consistent procedure for these calls.

2. Irrespective of where the NexTalk TTY calls are initially handled, it does not absolve front desk personnel from knowing how to handle NexTalk TTY calls. It is recommended that OO consult with ITB and Personnel and Training Bureau, to consider a recurring (annual basis) e-learning module for handling NexTalk TTY calls.
3. It is recommended that Planning and Research Division (PRD) consider incorporating the requirement, "Document the training in each of the officer's TEAMS report," into the Department Manual, as it is stated in Operations Order No. 3, April 11, 2008, Procedures for Answering Foreign Language and Telecommunications Device for the Deaf Calls.
4. It is recommended that PRD consider the requirement in Special Order No. 3, February 20, 2013, that a printout of the successful "test" attached to the WCDR, is required for each watch, to be incorporated into the Department Manual.

ACTIONS TAKEN/MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE

The audit report was presented to the Commanding Officer, Communications Division, Assistant to the Director, Office of Operations, and the Director, Office of Administrative Services; each expressed general agreement with the audit findings and the recommendations.

NEXTALK TEXT-TELEPHONE FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED AUDIT

**Conducted by
Internal Audits and Inspections Division
Third Quarter, FY 2013/14**

PURPOSE

In accordance with the Los Angeles Police Department (Department) Audit and Inspection Plan for fiscal year (FY) 2013/14, Internal Audits and Inspections Division (IAID) conducted the NexTalk Text-Telephone for the Hearing Impaired Audit to evaluate compliance with Department policies and procedures. The audit included a review of the policies and procedures regarding personnel assigned to Area front desks when providing service to the hearing-impaired members of the public, implementation of the TTY application, as well as subsequent training as it pertains to the use of the TTY.

Internal Audits and Inspections Division conducted this audit under the guidance of generally accepted government auditing standards, specifically pertaining to performing the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for the findings and conclusions based on the audit objectives. Internal Audits and Inspections Division has determined that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for the findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

BACKGROUND

The Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) Audit for FY 2012/13 was postponed, due to the installation and implementation that was in progress of the NexTalk SimpliciTTY (NexTalk TTY) computer application for the hearing-impaired at all geographical Area front desk computers.¹

The NexTalk TTY computer application replaced the Department's obsolete TDD equipment. The more widely accepted term used for TDD is TTY, which is the acronym used for teletype, teletypewriter or text-telephone. The NexTalk TTY is a computer application that allows the use of a Local Area Network computer to place and receive calls from people who use TTYs for telephone communications by typing back and forth with text displayed on a screen. The telephone on the designated TTY computer at an Area front desk will sound a "ring" and a NexTalk pop up window will appear when there is an incoming TTY call.

The NexTalk TTY computer application became operational on October 9, 2012, and the related Special Order No. 3, February 20, 2013, Answering Department Telephones – Revised; Telephone Calls Placed to Geographic Areas and Divisions via Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf – Renamed and Revised; Business Cards – Formatting and Language Guidelines – Revised; and Watch Commander's Daily Report, Form 15.80.00 – Revised and the NexTalk Teletype (TTY) User Quick Reference Guide, were both published.

Although IAID has conducted Department-wide TDD audits in the past, this is the first audit that assesses of the NexTalk TTY computer application.

¹This audit will refer to the NexTalk SimpliciTTY computer application as the NexTalk TTY computer application.

METHODOLOGY

Internal Audits and Inspections Division conducted site visits to each of the 21 geographic Areas to determine if the NexTalk TTY computer application was installed on at least one front desk computer. The site visits were also conducted to determine if Area front desk personnel were trained in procedures for handling TTY calls, by a demonstration of the procedures, and if the training was documented.

Internal Audits and Inspections Division placed two TTY calls to each of the 21 geographical Areas for a total of 42 calls. Each of the two calls were made during the two primary watch hours; Watch 2 (0600-1800 hours) and Watch 3 (1800-0600 hours).² The audit used a scenario that was designed to allow responding desk personnel to provide the address to the nearest police station without having to take a report over the telephone. The NexTalk TTY computer application has been set up so that calls not answered by Area desk personnel within five rings, are automatically forwarded to Communications Division. These “rollover” calls were also assessed to determine if Communications Division answered them accordingly. Watch Commander Daily Reports (WCDRs) were reviewed to determine if printouts of required test calls were attached. A predetermined seven days that encompassed each day of the week throughout January 2014, was reviewed to obtain a population sample for the WCDRs.

Internal Audits and Inspections Division also conducted a remote audit (Logins Live Monitor) for each of the 21 geographical Areas for the two primary watches for ten days, spanning two deployment periods, (January 26 to March 22, 2014), to determine if the computers installed with the NexTalk TTY computer application were logged on and active.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Table No. 1 – Summary of Findings

OBJECTIVE No.	DESCRIPTION/OBJECTIVES	RESULTS
1	NexTalk TTY Computer Application Implemented at Areas	21/21 (100%)
2	NexTalk TTY Computer Application Training of Front Desk Personnel	31/36 (86%)
2a	NexTalk TTY Computer Application Training Documented in TEAMS II	0/31 (0%)
3	Test Call Printouts Attached to Watch Commander Daily Report	65/293 (22%)
4	Text Calls Answered by Area Front Desk Personnel	20/42 (48%)
5	Text Calls Answered by Communications Division Personnel	22/22 (100%)
6	NextTalk TTY Computer Application Logged On and Active	268/420 (64%)

²The two primary watch hours, Watch 2 and Watch 3, are normally 0600-1800 hours and 1800-0600 hours, respectively.

In viewing the overall goal of the Department's NexTalk TTY computer application, there was indication the Department served the hearing-impaired community through the implementation of the NexTalk TTY computer application. This was evidenced by Objective Nos. 4 and 5, which indicated that NexTalk TTY calls not answered by front desk personnel at a geographic Area, were automatically transferred and answered by Communications Division.

In regard to the audit results directly related to handling NexTalk TTY calls by front desk personnel at geographic Areas, there was an apparent disconnect in understanding the procedures pertaining to the NexTalk TTY computer application. Performance results in the other objectives pointed to a lack in documentation of NexTalk TTY computer application training for personnel, not logging onto the NexTalk TTY computer application, and not printing out the NexTalk TTY test call and attaching it to the WCDR.

Communication with geographic Areas and the Office of Operations (OO) indicated there may have been confusion that led to the lack of understanding in handling NexTalk TTY calls by front desk personnel. Special Order No. 31, November 22, 2010, Telephone Calls Placed to Geographic Areas and Divisions Via Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf, transferred the responsibility of answering hearing-impaired calls from the geographic Areas to Communications Division. This change was due to the obsolete hearing-impaired technology that was at the geographic Areas at that time. Special Order No. 3, February 20, 2013, revised certain policies and procedures pertaining to the hearing-impaired, and established the NexTalk TTY computer application.

Specifically, in section II of Special Order No. 3, February 20, 2013, "DEPARTMENT MANUAL SECTION 4/190.15, TELEPHONE CALLS PLACED TO GEOGRAPHIC AREAS AND DIVISIONS VIA TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICES FOR THE DEAF – RENAMED AND REVISED," the officers' duties in handling NexTalk TTY calls is addressed; however, the last line within this particular section, states, "*The existing procedures remain unchanged.*" It is conceivable that this led to geographic Areas interpreting that the responsibility rested with Communications Division in answering the NexTalk TTY calls, as indicated in Special Order No. 31, November 22, 2010.

In addition to the aforementioned, front desks at geographic Areas have a constant turnover in personnel, given the fact that the assignment of officers to the front desk are temporary in nature; light duty status, probationary officers, and inherent Area Deployment rotations. It is plausible that this lack of permanency also contributed to the loss in procedural understanding of the NexTalk TTY computer application.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Objective No. 1 – NexTalk TTY Computer Application Implemented at Areas

Criteria

Department Manual section 4/190.15, Telephone Calls Placed to Geographic Areas/Divisions via TTY Application for the Hearing Impaired, states, "*The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in all programs, activities and services of public entities. Thus, individuals with disabilities must be afforded telephonic access to all Area/division stations as is the hearing community. The Department utilizes the*

NexTalk TTY application at Area/division front desks, to receive calls from the hearing-impaired community."

Audit Procedures

Site visits were conducted at each of the 21 geographic Areas to determine if the TTY computer application was installed on at least one front desk computer.

Findings

Each (100%) of the 21 geographical Areas met the standard for this objective.

Objective No. 2 – NexTalk TTY Computer Application Training of Front Desk Personnel

Criteria

Department Manual section 4/190.10, Answering Department Telephones, states, *"To ensure continuous and quality service to the hearing-impaired community, Area commanding officers will:"*

- *"Ensure that sufficient personnel at each Area station are trained in the proper use of the NexTalk TTY application; and,*
- *Cause Area training coordinators to assume responsibility for training of personnel in the use of the NexTalk TTY application."*

Audit Procedures

Site visits were conducted at each of the 21 geographical Area front desks to interview the front desk personnel. The Areas were visited during several days resulting in contacts with 36 front desk officers. The front desk officers were asked if they received NexTalk TTY computer application training and to demonstrate the procedures for handling a TTY call.

The Department met the standard for this objective if the desk officer had received training and was able to demonstrate the procedures for handling a TTY call.

Findings

Thirty-one (86%) of the 36 front desk officers met the standards for this objective. The remaining five, Newton Area (1), Northeast Area, (2) North Hollywood Area (2), did not meet the standard. Each officer indicated that he/she had not received NexTalk TTY training.

Objective No. 2a – NexTalk TTY Computer Application Training Documented in TEAMS II

Criteria

Operations Order No. 3, April 11, 2008, Procedures for Answering Foreign Language and Telecommunications Device for the Deaf Calls, states, *"II. Area Training Coordinator's Responsibilities.*

- *Document the training in each officer's TEAMS report."*

Audit Procedures

The 36 desk officers from Objective No. 2 were also used for this objective. Of the 36 desk officers, 31 indicated that they received NexTalk TTY computer application training in various forms. The 31 front desk officer's TEAMS II reports were reviewed to determine if their NexTalk TTY computer application training was documented. The Department met the standard if the training was documented in the respective TEAMS II reports.³

Findings

None (0%) of the 31 TEAMS II reports reviewed reflected documented TTY training.⁴

Although NexTalk TTY computer application training was provided on September 18, 2012, and September 20, 2012, to Training Coordinators and/or a designated representative from each geographic Area and each of the four Traffic divisions, there does not seem to be any ongoing training throughout the geographic Areas.

The lack of training documentation within TEAMS II does not provide for a method to track the personnel who have been trained, and identify personnel in need of the training. Moreover, the implications of not having the training documented may lead to the inability to hold personnel accountable, as well as, a lack of service to the public. Currently, Department Manual section 4/190.10 does not contain language that requires the documentation of the NexTalk TTY computer application training provided.

Objective No. 3 – Test Call Printouts Attached to Watch Commander's Daily Reports

Criteria

Special Order No. 3, February 20, 2013 - Watch Commander's Daily Report, Form 15.80.00- Revised, states, "*A printout of the successful "test" attached to the Form 15.80.00 is required for each watch.*"⁵

Audit Procedures

Watch Commander Daily Reports were reviewed to determine if a NextTalk TTY printout of the successful TTY test was attached for each watch. The WCDRs for the primary watches, Watch 2 (0600 -1800 hours) and Watch 3 (1800-0600 hours), were obtained from each of the 21 geographic Areas. A total of seven predetermined days were selected during January 2014. Each day of the week was selected throughout the month encompassing each week in January. A total of 293 WCDRs were reviewed for this objective.⁶

³Five officers indicated that he/she had not received NexTalk TTY computer application training. Each officer's TEAMS II report was reviewed to determine if TTY training was documented in their TEAMS II reports. None of the TEAMS II reports reflected TTY training.

⁴See Recommendation No. 3

⁵See Recommendation No. 4.

⁶The 294 WCDRs are a result of 21 Areas with two WCDRs for seven days. One WCDR was missing from Southwest Area, Watch 3, for a total of 293.

Findings

Sixty-five (22%) of the 293 WCDRs met the standard for this objective.

Communication with geographic Areas, OO, and Information Technology Bureau (ITB) all indicated that during the initial implementation of the NexTalk TTY computer application, geographic Areas were advised there was *no* need to attach the NexTalk TTY printout to the WCDR. However, the subsequent Special Order section listed in the criteria above delineated the requirement.

Objective No. 4 – Text Calls Answered by Area Front Desk Personnel

Criteria

Department Manual section 4/190.15, Officer's Responsibilities, states, "*Officers at each Area/division are responsible for answering, handling and completing calls for service from the hearing-impaired community. Calls for service received at Areas/divisions via the NexTalk TTY application, which is not answered within the first five rings, will be forwarded to the Communications Division (CD) non-emergency line. Area/division front desk officers or the Emergency Board Operator (EBO) answering the call will determine whether the call is of an emergency nature, and if so, will dispatch a unit to the scene. All other telephone calls will be screened by personnel, who must determine the appropriate routing.*"

Audit Procedures

Two TTY calls were placed to each of the 21 geographic Areas for a total of 42 calls. Each of the calls was made to the Areas during the two primary watches; one call during Watch 2 (0600-1800 hours), and one call during Watch 3 (1800-0600 hours). The audit used a scenario that was designed to allow the responding desk personnel to provide an address to the nearest police station without having to take a report over the telephone. There was consideration as to the various reasons why officers may be unable to answer a call, such as attending to other calls and servicing members of the public who were at the front desk. This objective was assessed as performance information only, and was not intended as a compliance rate.

Findings

Twenty (48%) of the 42 TTY calls placed to the geographic Areas were answered by front desk personnel via the NexTalk TTY computer application. The remaining 22 TTY calls placed were subsequently forwarded to, and answered by Communications Division.

Based on communication with geographic Areas and Communication Division, there may be various reasons why front desk personnel were unable to answer calls within the allotted five rings, which included, but was not limited to bathroom breaks, being on another call, or providing service to community members at the front desk.

Objective No. 5 – Text Calls Answered by Communications Division Personnel

Criteria

Department Manual section 4/190.5, Communications Division's Responsibilities, states, *"Personnel assigned to CD will adhere to the following procedure when receiving a call for service from a member of the hearing-impaired community. Upon receipt of a call, CD personnel will determine the nature of the call. The majority of calls will fall within the following categories:*

- *Emergency call for service;*
- *Non-emergency call for service;*
- *General information;*
- *Telephonic report; or,*
- *Attempt to contact Department personnel at the Area/divisional level (e.g., detective, watch commander, Area commanding officer, etc.).*

Audit Procedures

Internal Audits and Inspections Division assessed the 22 TTY calls that were not answered at the Area front desks from Objective No. 4. The TTY calls were automatically forwarded to Communications Division after the call had not been answered within the allotted five rings, or if the TTY application was not logged on and active.⁷ The Department met the standard if Communications Division answered the forwarded TTY calls.

Findings

Each (100%) of the 22 TTY calls were answered by Communications Division and met the standard for this objective.

Objective No. 6 – NexTalk TTY Computer Application Logged On and Active

Criteria

Department Manual section 4/190.10, Answering Department Telephones, states, *"To ensure continuous and quality service to the hearing-impaired community, Area commanding officers will:*

- *Ensure that the Area/division NexTalk Text-Telephone (TTY) application is launched and active on at least one front desk computer;"*

Audit Procedures

The NexTalk TTY computer application was installed onto one computer within IAID in order to assess Objective Nos. 4 and 5. The application was utilized to determine whether or not the

⁷The NexTalk TTY computer application does not differentiate between the call not being answered within the allotted five rings or the application not being logged on and active, when forwarding calls to Communications Division.

computers installed with the NexTalk TTY computer application at the individual Areas/divisions, were logged on and active. The login checks were conducted for each of the 21 Areas at various times, once during Watch 2 (0600-1800 hours) and once during Watch 3 (1800-0600 hours), for ten days spanning two deployment periods. The total number of login checks conducted for this objective was 420. The Department met the standard if the Areas' NexTalk TTY computer applications were logged on and active.

Findings

Two hundred and sixty-eight (64%) of the 420 login checks met the standard for this objective. The remaining 152 login checks indicated that the NexTalk TTY computer application was not logged on and active. Table No. 2 details the breakdown between Watch 2 (0600-1800 hours) and Watch 3 (1800-0600 hours).

Table No. 2 – Breakdown of Logins by Watch

Objective No. 6	Watch 2 (0600-0800 hours)	Watch 3 (1800-0600 hours)	Totals
Logins Live Monitor	163/210 (78%)	105/210 (50%)	268/420 (64%)

RECOMMENDATIONS

In considering the information within the Summary of Findings, Detailed Findings, and Other Related Matter, the recommendations below should be considered.

1. It is recommended that the OO and Office of Administrative Services consider the feasibility of assigning the duties for answering initial incoming NexTalk TTY calls from desk personnel at the geographic Areas, to Communications Division. Although Communications Division already handles a significant amount of the NexTalk TTY calls that are transferred from the geographic Areas and ensure the proper handling of these calls, further research may be needed to determine whether this would actually be a more streamlined and consistent procedure for these calls.
2. Irrespective of where the NexTalk TTY calls are initially handled, it does not absolve front desk personnel from knowing how to handle NexTalk TTY calls. It is recommended that OO consult with ITB and Personnel and Training Bureau, to consider a recurring (annual basis) e-learning module for handling NexTalk TTY calls.
3. It is recommended that Planning and Research Division (PRD) consider incorporating the requirement, "Document the training in each of the officer's TEAMS report," into the Department Manual, as it is stated in Operations Order No. 3, April 11, 2008, Procedures for Answering Foreign Language and Telecommunications Device for the Deaf Calls.
4. It is recommended that PRD consider the requirement in Special Order No. 3, February 20, 2013, that a printout of the successful "test" attached to the WCDR, is required for each watch, to be incorporated into the Department Manual.

ACTIONS TAKEN/MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE

The audit report was presented to the Commanding Officer, Communications Division, Assistant to the Director, Office of Operations, and the Director, Office of Administrative Services; each expressed general agreement with the audit findings and the recommendations.