Chula Vista Police Department

Organized Retail Theft Prevention Grant Program

Funding Source: BSCC

Grantee: The City of Chula Vista

Local Evaluation Plan

Prepared by: SANDAG

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Project Background

Introduction

The City of Chula Vista (CV) is located on the southern end of San Diego County, approximately four miles north of the U.S.-Mexico international border. The city is 52 square miles, ranging from the coast of the San Diego Bay to the inland mountains. According to the latest SANDAG Population and Housing Estimates, Chula Vista has a population of 276,785 (60% of which is Hispanic/Latino, 16% Asian, 15% White, 5% other ethnicities, and 4% Black), [1] is the second largest city in San Diego County, and the fifteenth largest City in the State of California. Chula Vista Police Department (CVPD) currently only has 259 sworn officers, and according to the latest Criminal Justice Research Division (CJRD) Public Safety Allocations in the San Diego Region publication, CVPD had the lowest sworn law enforcement officers to resident ratio per 1,000 population during the 2022-23 Fiscal Year in the San Diego region (1.04 compared to 1.32 regionwide and 2.4 nationally). Just like most police agencies in the state, attaining the amount of police officers needed is getting harder to accomplish.

Motor vehicle theft is a common crime in the San Diego region, affecting victims in many ways. In the first six months (January 1 to June 30) of 2023, there were 5,753 vehicle thefts reported to Law Enforcement agencies regionwide. In the City of CV specifically, high rates of vehicle theft and vehicle accessory theft have been increasing year over year. This has significantly impacted CV residents because most stolen vehicles are not high-end or fully insured. On the contrary, stolen vehicles are often the families' only source of transportation, relied upon for work and family obligations. According to the CVPD's Research, Crime, and Intelligence Analysis Unit (RCIA) crime data, the City of Chula Vista had 4,764 total vehicle thefts during the past five years (2019 to 2023), equating to 953 per year (838 total vehicle thefts in 2019, 823 in 2020, 949 in 2021, 1,006 in 2022, and 1,148 in 2023). Additionally, SANDAG's CJRD latest regional crime statistics report also showed increases in total vehicle thefts for the City of CV at mid-year (January 1- June 30) from 2021 to 2023 (464 during the first six months in 2021, 492 in 2022, and 590 in 2023).[2] Although overall vehicle thefts in the San Diego region decreased 4% from 2022 to 2023, the City of CV saw an alarming increase of 20% over the same period. One of the city's most significant vehicle accessory theft issues is catalytic converter theft, a problem that began in Chula Vista in 2019 and steadily escalated after 2020. More specifically, between 2020 and 2021, there was a 364% increase in catalytic converter thefts (20 total catalytic converter thefts in 2019, 36 in 2020, 167 in 2021, 170 in 2022, and 173 in 2023), adding up to a total of 566 reported catalytic converter thefts between 2019 and 2023. Unfortunately, the clearance rate for arrests of catalytic converter thefts is almost non-existent.

To address this concern, the CVPD's Organized Retail Theft (ORT) Prevention Program will seek to use several forms of available technology to help combat vehicle theft and motor vehicle accessory

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[1] SANDAG Population and Housing Estimates, v2022

[2] SANDAG, 2023. Crime in the San Diego Region Mid-Year Crime Statistics. Available at: https://www.sandag.org/-/media/SANDAG/Documents/PDF/data-and-research/criminal-justice-and-public-safety/criminal-justice-research-clearinghouse/cj-bulletin/cj-bulletin-crime-in-the-san-diego-region-mid-year-2023.pdf

theft. More importantly, it aims to proactively stop crime from occurring and prevent the victimization of CV community members.

SANDAG CJRD will serve as the outside evaluator and conduct both a process and impact evaluation to inform implementation as well as document outcomes and success in achieving the intended goals.

Program Model

The program model will take a three-prong approach to decrease vehicle theft and vehicle accessory theft, specifically catalytic converter theft. This approach will include: 1) the use of technologies such as License Plate Readers (LPR) cameras, 2) a new police officer/police agent position designed to be responsible primarily as the vehicle theft investigator created and maintained under the CVPD Property Crimes Unit (PCU), and 3) public education campaigns and public service announcements.

One of the most significant aspects of the model will be the use of LPR cameras with the goal of reducing crime and promoting community safety. The 150 cameras will cover all the ingress and egress points throughout the entire city, cover all the hot spots where crime occurs within the city, consider all the major roads and intersections, and work with traffic engineering on all traffic patterns on the major roads and thoroughfares. CVPD researched LPR Cameras and determined that the Flock company best fit the needs of the project. Some key advantages of the Flock cameras include being solar and battery-operated, featuring a simple user interface, operating on a subscription-based model, being Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) compliant, having a 97% rate LPR accuracy, providing public-facing information with real time updates for transparency, and being capable of handling PRA requests. Another benefit of the LPR cameras will be the ability to investigate ORT suspects. Frequently, vehicle license plates used during the commission of the crimes are identified and provided during the investigative process. Utilizing the LPR cameras will help locate the ORT suspect vehicles, determine the direction of travel, and if they remain within the city, stop and arrest suspects for their crimes.

Secondly, a new police officer/police agent position will be specifically assigned as the vehicle theft investigator (level of corporal or senior officer). This position will be responsible for all ORT operations under the PCU department, which currently consists of eight full-time detectives and one supervisor. However, since the entire PCU will be leaned on to assist with more vehicle theft and vehicle theft accessory investigations, there will be additional overtime costs. With the addition of the LPR cameras, more stolen vehicles will be located, creating a need for more time on investigations and more operations to curtail thefts and apprehend suspects. Overtime costs will also be utilized to cover specific enforcement operations and public education regarding catalytic converter theft. Also, as part of this goal, CVPD will be to obtain additional detective vehicles. As previously mentioned, CVPD has eight detectives and one supervisor assigned to the PCU, however there are only five vehicles currently available for the detectives in the unit. With the addition of the vehicle theft investigator position, there would be a need for five additional vehicles. To effectively accomplish the goal of apprehending and prosecuting individuals involved in catalytic converter thefts, it is crucial for the department to conduct thorough field surveillance and investigations. Success at this requires more proactive approaches than reactive measures confined to office settings.

Upon identifying a suspect, deploying a significant number of detectives becomes essential for tasks such as surveillance, confirming identities, locating key addresses, and, importantly, apprehending suspects engaged in criminal activities. Repetitive surveillance by a small group of detectives using identical vehicles may increase the risk of detection. Equipping every detective within the PCU with a

dedicated vehicle can enhance the flexibility and agility of surveillance operations, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Another important component of this grant will be public education campaigns/events and public service announcements. Before any enforcement operations are planned, strategies will include educating muffler shops on what to accept and the laws pertaining to them. Also included in the education portion is informing the public about vehicle thefts and vehicle accessory theft. To do this, CVPD will continue the campaign of engraving residents' catalytic converters, using the program called 'Engrave and Save.' Being the first agency in the region and one of the first in the state to start this program, CVPD partners with various businesses and a local community college to assist with engraving the corresponding vehicle identification number (VIN) onto the catalytic converters of resident vehicles. Moreover, catalytic converters are painted a bright color using heat resistant paint to deter thefts and serve as an obvious sign of theft to recyclers if a catalytic converter is turned into them. The goal is to further promote more public education campaigns, which this grant will help facilitate.

To ensure the program is provided with timely information needed to monitor implementation, SANDAG will provide monthly data updates and conduct a process and impact evaluation.

Program Goals and Objectives

The following are the goals and objectives for the Organized Retail Theft Prevention Program.

Goal 1: Decrease the number of vehicles stolen and catalytic converter (accessories) stolen

> **Objective 1a:** Increase the number of stolen vehicles located
> **Objective 1b:** Increase the amount of arrests for vehicle thefts and catalytic converter thefts

Goal 2: Use technology to solve crime by installing and using Automated License Plate Readers (LPR)

> **Objective 2:** Solve more vehicle theft, catalytic converter theft, and ORT crimes by using new technology

Goal 3: Increase public awareness on vehicle and catalytic convertor theft

> **Objectives 3a:** Increase public education on vehicle catalytic converter theft by participating in community forums and posting information on multiple social media platforms

Logic Model

Goal 1: Decrease the number of vehicles stolen and catalytic converter (accessories) stolen
Goal 2: Use technology to solve crime by installing and using Automated License Plate Readers (LPR)
Goal 3: Increase public awareness on vehicle and catalytic convertor theft

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Process and Impact Outcomes
• BSCC ORT grant to support CVPD program and services and conduct a process and impact evaluation • Enter into contract with FLOCK company to provide LPR cameras • Hire/assign CVPD officer to oversee grant and enforcement operations • Obtain additional detective vehicles • Enter into contract with SANDAG to conduct evaluation of program process and outcomes	• Hiring one full-time officer/agent to manage ORT grant programs • Installation of 150 LPR cameras throughout the city • Task enforcement operations at least one per month • Catalytic convertor etching and engraving operations, at least four per year • New equipment and technology training • Public engagement (community events and/or setting up a booth in a local festival, educational/informational publishing on social media posting, press releases, advertisements, etc.) • Utilize social media to post educational information and events, regarding motor vehicle thefts, and motor accessories vehicle thefts • Agreements with local shops and other partners, such as a community college	• LPR surveillance cameras added to all major intersections/main roads • One full time staff assigned to ORT over the course of the grant • More overtime ability for other investigators in the PCU unit to help with ORT incidents • Five more vehicles available for all investigators in the PCU • Decrease the number of vehicles and accessories stolen by conducting at least one surveillance operation per month. • Increase the number of identified stolen vehicles with the use of LPR cameras • Solve more vehicle and accessories theft by using LPR technology. Increase recoveries by 10% by utilizing the LPR system to locate stolen vehicles • Conduct 3 to 4 catalytic converters Engrave and Save events per year (150-200 cars per event) • Conduct at least 2 educational events per year to increase public awareness on vehicle and accessories theft. • Hand out a total of 500 steering wheel clubs to help prevent motor vehicle thefts during the educational events • At least one social media post per month educating the public on motor vehicle and motor vehicle accessory theft	**Process Outcomes:** • Increased public awareness and knowledge of ORT • Increase ORT cases filed to District Attorney • Increase investigations lead to ORT • Increased vehicles recovered • Improve knowledge of ORT trends (i.e., operations, hot spot areas, hot vehicles targeted, etc.) **Impact Outcomes** • Safer community through reduced ORT crimes

Evaluation Methodology

Research Design

SANDAG will conduct both a process and outcome evaluation. SANDAG staff will be actively engaged from the beginning of program development to ensure accurate measurement and evaluation of program goals and objectives , including the development of necessary data collection tools, and the establishment of research timelines and protocols. SANDAG will be included in all team meetings and will create easy-to-read data dashboards documenting up-to-date information on the impact of LPR cameras, education initiatives, and changes and trends in ORT crimes and arrests. These updates will be shared at partner meetings to inform program implementation and identify any needs for midcourse adjustments.

Process Measures

The process evaluation will document what program components were employed and if program goals were implemented as designed. Data will be gathered from multiple sources to describe and focus on answering how effective technology/programs are being conducted, type and number of law enforcement operations conducted, satisfaction with services and implementation, and lessons learned. The process evaluation will address the following questions:

1. How many LPR cameras were installed and operating efficiently for policing practices?
2. How many and which type of law enforcement actions were conducted with the aid of LPR cameras? How many stolen vehicles were identified? How many stolen vehicles were recovered? How many individuals were arrested?
3. What was the community impact of the "Engrave and Save" program?
4. How many educational social media campaigns were launched?
5. How many educational sessions/events were provided and to whom?
6. Were the characteristics of the educational session's attendees reflective of Chula Vista residents?
7. Was the program implemented as designed? What lessons were learned?
8. What was the level of satisfaction of services for participants in programs and events?

To address these process research questions, data will be gathered from multiple sources. Table 1 summarizes the data sources that will address each process question.

Table 1

Process Outcomes and Measurements

Process Questions	Variables of Interest	Data Sources
How many LPR cameras were installed and operating efficiently for policing practices? How many stolen vehicles were identified? Number of stolen vehicles recovered? Number of arrests made?	Number, cost, location (i.e., latitude and longitude), activity record (e.g., number of license plates read, amount of futile footage), total number of hits (notifications if vehicle passes the LPR) leading to an arrest or recovery of stolen vehicles. Data will be collected on a quarterly basis for internal reports and dashboard. Annual aggregate data will be ed	Excel tracking form compiled by CVPD; data compiled from the LPR camera company Flock
How many and which type of law enforcement actions were conducted with the use of LPR cameras?	Number of investigations launched, number of operations/inspections conducted, number of vehicles identified, number of cases cleared with an arrest. Data will be collected on a quarterly basis for internal reports and dashboard. Annual aggregate data will be presented in the final evaluation report.	Excel tracking form compiled by CVPD; data compiled from the LPR camera company, Flock
What was the community impact of the 'Engrave and Save' program?	Number of catalytic converters engraved/painted. Number of residents reached, satisfaction of the program. Data will be collected during each Engrave and Save event. Annual aggregate data will be presented in the final evaluation report.	Excel tracking form compiled by CVPD; post satisfaction survey.
How many educational social media campaigns were launched?	Number of posts per platform, themes, and topics of campaigns. Metrics will be provided by the social media manager via social media analytics downloadable reports to include number of accounts reached, number of shares, and number of reactions (likes).	Excel tracking compiled by CVPD
How many educational session events were provided and to whom?	Attendance and topics of community educational events, number, and general demographics of participants. Data will be collected during each educational session event. Annual aggregate data will be presented in the final evaluation report.	Attendance sheets compiled by CVPD; Participant pre and post surveys
Were the characteristics of community educational events attendees reflective of Chula Vista residents?	Participant demographic information, Chula Vista resident demographics. Data will be collected during each community event. Annual aggregate data will be presented in the final evaluation report.	Participant surveys; population data from SANDAG estimates and forecasting products
What was the level of satisfaction with the educational sessions?	Attendee level of satisfaction, sentiments toward LPR program. Data will be collected during each educational event. Annual aggregate data will be presented in the final evaluation report.	Participant surveys
Were the programs implemented as designed, what lessons were learned?	Fidelity to model and program design. Observation and fidelity monitoring to be collected twice a year.	Participant surveys; stakeholder meetings; fidelity monitoring tools

Outcome Measures

The outcome measures are individual in nature and will focus on how effective the project was and for whom. The outcome evaluation will address the following questions:

1. Did the efforts of the Organized Retail Theft (ORT) Prevention program reduce vehicle and vehicle accessory theft?
2. Did the efforts of the ORT Prevention program reduce catalytic convert theft?
3. Did the efforts of the ORT Prevention program help to reduce other crimes?
4. Did educational session events help educate the community? Did the social media campaigns reach and inform the community?

To address these outcome research questions, data will be gathered from multiple sources. Table 2 summarizes the data sources that will address each process question.

Table 2

Outcomes and Measurements

Impact Questions	Variables of Interest	Data Sources
Did the efforts of the Organized Retail Theft (ORT) Prevention program reduce vehicle and vehicle accessory theft?	Number of vehicles stolen and recovered, number of suspects identified, number of arrests, historical data of all aforementioned variables. Data will be collected on a quarterly basis for internal reports and dashboard. Annual aggregate data to be included in the final evaluation report.	Excel tracking form compiled by CVPD; annual crime reports compiled by SANDAG's CJRD; annual arrest rates compiled by ARJIS
Did the efforts of the ORT Prevention program reduce catalytic converter theft?	Number catalytic converter thefts, recoveries (if applicable), historical data of all aforementioned data. Data will be collected on a quarterly basis for internal reports and dashboard. Annual aggregated data to be included in the final evaluation report.	Crime reports/tracking compiled by CVPD
Did the efforts of the ORT Prevention program help to reduce other ORT related crimes?	Number of crimes, arrests, citations, and field interviews per penal code section. Data will be collected on a quarterly basis for internal reports and dashboard. Annual aggregated data to be included in the final evaluation report.	Crime data compiled by ARJIS; annual crime reports compiled by SANDAG's CJRD; crime reports/tracking compiled by CVPD
Did the in-person educational sessions help educate the community? Did the social media campaigns reach and inform the community?	Reach of social media campaigns, knowledge gained about theft prevention. Data will be collected on a quarterly basis for the social media campaigns via analytic downloadable reports. Community educational session knowledge will be collected after each session via satisfaction surveys.	Participant surveys; social media insights from CVPD

Data Collection Sources and Process

Below is a more detailed description of each of the data sources and how data will be collected to address all the research goals. During the startup process, great effort will be made to use existing databases whenever possible. All service data will be maintained in CVPD's databases and securely transferred to SANDAG on a quarterly basis from this system.

Program minutes: All project partners, including SANDAG, will meet monthly to discuss project implementation, prior month activities, staff changes, challenges, and successes. These meetings will be documented through minutes completed by SANDAG staff and will be used to inform the process evaluation.

Exit surveys of participants: To learn from participants, each will be asked to complete an anonymous survey upon exit to gather information on program knowledge, positive impact in the community, and areas of program improvement. The survey (administered on paper and electronically) will be provided in both English and Spanish.

Knowledge surveys: A post-survey (paper and electronic) covering the ORT grant program overview, , concerns residents have on Flock cameras, privacy matters, and a question/answers session about auto theft, and catalytic converter theft will be provided to participants at the end of community educational sessions to measure any increase in knowledge on the effectiveness of ORT programs, and available resources in the community for those seeking more information.

Crime data: To measure any changes in ORT-related crime in the City of CV, aggregate level crime data will be compiled from ARJIS, CJRD's crime reports, and CVPD crime tracking sheets.

Law enforcement operations tracking log: To document all law enforcement operations including the type, location, and response (i.e., citations, arrests, education), data will be tracked using an Excel form created by SANDAG and completed by CVPD. These data will be downloaded and cleaned quarterly to be included on the data dashboard.

Participant tracking logs: Session and event participation will be tracked in Excel forms provided by CVPD.

Stakeholder survey: To solicit information about program implementation, what worked, and what could be improved, a survey of key program staff will be administered. The survey will be administered electronically using Survey Monkey or Qualtrics twice over the course of the project to inform mid-course program adjustments and program maturation.

Data Analysis

Analysis will be both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The project involves both individual and population level data. A mixed method design using single-group, pre-test/post-test design (i.e., comparison of measures before and after program participation and intervention) will be employed to measure impact of program and changes over time in crime and law enforcement program actions by tracking the number and location of cameras installed, and specific outcomes such as number of license plates read, number of vehicles identified, investigations launched, arrests, etc. Similar methods will be used to gauge the impact of the "Engrave and Save" program (i.e., catalytic converter paintings and engravings). The impact of educational campaigns will be measured based on the reach of content, knowledge gained, and participant satisfaction. Descriptive, bi-variate and multivariate statistical analyses will be conducted to describe the location (and whenever available victim's demographics) and model/year of vehicle

impacted by vehicle thefts and vehicle accessory thefts, demonstrate trends in related crime/arrests rates (i.e., motor vehicle theft, and property crime rates overall), identify factors predictive of lowering vehicle and vehicle accessory theft rates and determine the efficacy of educational initiatives. As noted earlier, data results will be shared throughout the grant period with program stakeholders to inform program implementation management.

In addition, informing the BSCC quarterly reports, the research partner will develop a data dashboard presenting current data and meet regularly with program staff to help inform the process and allow for any mid-course adjustments. In addition, a final Local Evaluation Report, including recommendations and lessons learned, will be completed at the end of the grant period.

Timeline and Reporting

As noted earlier, the evaluation will start from the inception of the project and research staff will be an integral member of the project team throughout the grant period. In addition, SANDAG will provide quarterly data dashboards to ensure timely sharing of data to inform the implementation process, SANDAG staff will participate in project meetings to understand the successes, challenges, and gain a greater understanding of the overall project. The general project duties will be managed by a CVPD officer. Duties related to specific grant activities will be performed by the Officer, who is supervised by a Sergeant. Activities not specified in the grant will be approved by the Sergeant, who will also review monthly activities. SANDAG as an outside evaluation partner will meet with all stakeholders quarterly/monthly to review grant activities, outcomes, and decisions. Table 3 provides a timeline of evaluation milestones.

Table 3
Impact Outcomes and Measurement Reporting

Activities	Start Date	End Date
Program partners begin meeting	March 2024	On-going
Finalize Local Evaluation Plan	March 2024	April 01, 2024
Updated Local Evaluation Plan		August 01, 2024
Program and grant begin	October 1 2023	On-going
Create data dashboard	June 2024	On-going
Quarterly reports to BSCC	March 2024	March 11, 2024; May 15, 2024; August 15, 2024; November 15, 2024; February 15, 2025; May 15, 2025; August 15, 2025; November 15, 2025; February 15, 2026; May 15, 2026; August 15, 2026; November 15, 2026; and February 15, 2027.
Transfer CVPD program data to SANDAG	March 2024	Quarterly
Quarterly data dashboard	June 2024	Quarterly
Collect crime/arrest data	June 2023	On-going
Complete evaluation report	May 2027	June 1, 2027

Summary

The Organized Retail Theft Prevention Program is aimed at decreasing organized motor vehicle and motor vehicle accessory theft and increasing proactive policing efforts throughout the use of new technology. The target population includes all Chula Vista residents. The main components that will be measured and evaluated include the effectiveness of the License Plates Readers (LPR) camera/system, impact of the community educational efforts, and the 'Engrave and Save' program. SANDAG will conduct a process and impact evaluation. SANDAG will be an active partner throughout the project, providing timely results to allow partners to make informed decisions.