Organized Retail Theft Prevention Grant Program

Local Evaluation Plan

Submitted By:
City of Delano

Prepared By:
Transforming Local Communities, Inc.
(External Evaluator)

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City of Delano ORT

Local Evaluation Plan

Project Background

Organized retail and auto theft pose significant challenges to the roughly 51,000 residents and business in Delano (U.S. Census, 2022). Such crimes threaten public safety, economic stability, and community well-being, through financial losses, increased insurance rates, and potential safety risk. Organized theft threatens public safety because it is perpetrated by sophisticated networks of individuals willing to use violence. These networks may engage in other criminal activities, such as drug trafficking and human exploitation.

Delano's geographic location contributes to the high rate of organized retail and auto theft crimes, including Delano's proximity to major freeways and transportation routes. Easy access to State Route Highway 99, which runs north/south through the city, makes it an attractive target for organized theft groups because the highway provides a quick getaway route and facilitates the expedient relocation of stolen goods and vehicles to other areas of the state.

In addition, Delano is situated on Kern County's northern border, adjacent to Tulare County, and the county line is considered the boundary between northern and southern Hispanic gangs. With a high unemployment rate of nearly 29% (Employment Development Department, May 2023), high poverty (median household income of $53,639, Census 2022), low educational attainment (8.3% college graduates, Census 2022), and few employment prospects that pay a living wage, the community experiences high levels of gang activity and results in violence (including gun and gang violence), drugs, mental health needs, domestic violence, and homelessness. The costs incurred by businesses to combat organized theft, such as increasing security measures and replacing stolen goods, are often passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices, placing an additional burden on residents who may already be facing economic challenges.

Delano's vibrant retail sector, including new retail superstores like Walmart, Home Depot, and ALDI, provide lucrative opportunities for organized theft. The presence of valuable merchandise and high customer traffic make these businesses attractive targets. Limited surveillance systems, lack of retail-trained security personnel, and inadequate anti-theft devices create vulnerabilities that organized theft networks exploit. Larceny is the most common type of theft in Delano, including shoplifting, theft from buildings, theft from vehicles, and theft of vehicle parts and accessories. According to Crimegrade.org, Delano's crime rate is in the 3rd percentile for safety, meaning that 97% of U.S. cities are safer than Delano. The same report gave Delano an overall crime grade of "F" with a property crime grade of "D-," indicating that the city's property crime rate is higher than the U.S. average.

Since 2020, a total of 3,163 citywide thefts have occurred, including stolen vehicles, with an approximate total value of $4.2 million in losses. Most of these thefts are in retail areas,

particularly the Delano Marketplace—a 47-acre development near Highway 99. In the past four years, more than 11% of citywide thefts have taken place at the Marketplace.

Delano plans to address the issue of organized retail and vehicle theft through a number of avenues, including the installation of 25 additional Flock/LPR (license plate reader) cameras. These cameras will enable comprehensive coverage of retail premises, minimize blind spots and offer a detailed view of activities. The cameras will be connected to DPD's centralized monitoring system, providing live video feed and receiving real-time alerts for suspicious activities. These instant alerts will allow the DPD to respond promptly.

The DPD will also purchase two patrol vehicles equipped with LPRs, enabling them to cross-reference license plate numbers with the city's database of stolen vehicles. Patrol vehicles equipped with LPRs will actively patrol retail areas like the Marketplace, known for high rates of organized retail theft, to help identify suspicious vehicles involved in theft or criminal activity. LPR systems also help to identify trends and patterns, anticipate organized theft operations, provide evidence, and aid investigations by providing timelines, connections, and associations.

Additionally, the city will purchase one drone and certify an officer to operate it. The drone will be equipped with a high-resolution camera providing a bird's-eye view of the retail premises and surrounding areas. The operator will patrol large retail areas quickly and effectively, monitoring parking lots, loading docks, and other vulnerable areas where theft incidents often take place. Adding aerial surveillance capability will enable early detection of organized theft operations. In the event of a theft, the drone can quickly provide real-time information and track fleeing suspects, increasing the likelihood of apprehending suspects and recovering merchandise or vehicles. Recorded aerial footage also provides critical details, such as license plate numbers, suspect descriptions, and sequence of events during a theft. This evidence will support the DPD in identifying culprits, linking them to specific incidents, and facilitating successful prosecutions.

The target population/area is the Marketplace and other large retail areas within a 2-mile radius of the Marketplace that also attract a large number of consumers. These stores are more susceptible to organized retail and vehicle theft due to the high concentration of stores with valuable merchandise. The DPD will focus on parking lots at retail establishments and known vehicle theft hotspots. Thieves often target parked vehicles to steal valuables in the vehicle or the vehicles themselves.

Evaluation activities are geared to 1) provide relevant information to decision-makers about whether and how to make program changes in order to improve program efficacy (formative evaluation); 2) measure the impact of services on program participants and local communities (summative evaluation); 3) examine how programs and services help to inform systems change (impact evaluation); and 4) provide decision-relevant information for the purpose of sustainability planning.

Specific data collection includes tracking data collected through the camera system and the drone, suspects' affiliation with organized crime, and the prosecution rate for those taken to trial.

It will also include changes in the fiscal impact on retailers, as well as consumers' perceived safety. Data collected as part of the formative evaluation will be incorporated into fine tuning deployment and tactics.

Members of DPD will work with the McFarland Police Department and the Kern County Sheriff's Office to gather intelligence, share information, and develop targeted enforcement strategies. The DPD will also share information with retailers regularly.

Goal 1: To achieve a measurable decrease in the number of reported incidents of organized retail and auto theft crimes at targeted retail store locations.
Objective 1a: Decrease the number of reported organized retail theft incidents by 15% within the program's first year.
Objective 1b: Reduce motor vehicle thefts by 10% within the program's first year.

Goal 2: Disrupt and dismantle organized theft networks operating in Delano.
Objective 2a: Identify and investigate key individuals involved in organized retail and auto theft activities.
Objective 2b: Gather intelligence and evidence to support the prosecution of organized theft perpetrators.
Objective 2c: Collaborate with relevant law enforcement agencies and prosecutors to dismantle criminal networks through information sharing and coordinated efforts to address multi-jurisdictional organized theft operations.

Goal 3: Evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the organized retail and auto theft prevention program.
Objective 3a: Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of organized theft prevention strategies.
Objective 3b: Analyze data on theft incidents, arrests, and community feedback to assess the program's outcomes.
Objective 3c: Regularly review and update prevention strategies based on the evaluation results and emerging trends in organized theft.

Inputs

-Certify a drone operator

-Financial support matching

-Partners (retailers, partner law enforcement agencies, prosecutor's office)

-ORT funds

Activities

-Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of organized theft prevention strategies

-Draft and finalize MOUs and obtain signatures from participating retailers

-Install 25 additional Flock/LPR cameras at retail locations

-Conduct joint training with retail store staff and law enforcement personnel on the use of Flock cameras and parking lot safety protocols

-Coordinate regular information sharing with retailers

-Purchase 2 patrol vehicles equipped with Flock/LPR cameras

-Determine the frequency and timing of increased parking lot patrols

-Gather intelligence and evidence to support the prosecution of organized theft perpetrators

-Regularly review and update prevention strategies based on the evaluation results and emerging trends in organized theft

-Conduct surveys to gauge the perception of the deterrence effect of surveillance technology

-Measure efficient collection, organization, and utilization of data for investigative purposes and program evaluation

Outputs

-Measure the extent to which Flock camera placement effectively covers vulnerable areas (e.g., entrances and parking lots)

-Measure the impact of two additional patrol vehicles and the extent to which the LPRs help identify suspicious vehicles

-Assess deployment of drone operations, including hiring and certifying a drone operator, adherence to FAA regulations, and use of drone footage for investigations

-Measure training provided to police officers and relevant personnel on the effective use of Flock cameras, LPRs, and drone operations

-Assess the level of coordination and collaboration between stakeholders involved in the project

-Measure the quality and quality of intelligence gathered through surveillance technology and the recovery rate of stolen merchandise or vehicles

-Gather feedback from law enforcement on the use of technology in investigations and prosecutions related to organized theft

Outcomes

-Track the number of reported organized theft incidents after installation of Flock cameras at retail locations

-Decrease the number of reported organized retail theft incidents by 15% in the first year

-Reduce motor vehicle thefts by 10% in the first year

-Assess the rate of apprehension of suspects involve in organized theft incidents captured by surveillance

-Improve coordination and intelligence sharing among law enforcement agencies, leading to successful prosecutions and convictions

-Enhance accountability and transparency in addressing organized retail and auto theft

Impacts

-Increased public safety and reduced fear of organized theft crimes

-Reduced financial loss for retailers due to stolen merchandise

-Enhanced economic stability and job security by minimizing the impact of theft-related costs on local businesses

-Strengthened trust and collaboration between the DPD, retailers and the community

-Disruption of organized theft networks and reduction in their ability to operate within Delano and Kern County

Planned Work

Intended Result

Process Evaluation

Key Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods/Frequency
Have mechanisms been established to monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of organized theft prevention strategies?	Established mechanisms for monitoring Flock cameras, LPR cameras, drone use, retailer training, parking lot patrols, etc.	DPD tracking	DPD will be interviewed periodically regarding mechanisms used to track implementation
Are retail thefts analyzed to determine whether they were part of an organized effort?	# of reported organized retail thefts	DPD records	DPD will share data with the evaluator on a monthly basis
Are motor vehicle thefts analyzed to determine whether they were part of an organized effort?	# of motor vehicle thefts	DPD records	DPD will share data with the evaluator on a monthly basis
To what extent has the DPD and retailers established an effective collaborative partnership?	# of MOUs with retailers # of joint trainings between DPD & retailers	DPD records	DPD will share data with the evaluator as MOUs are signed and training takes place
Are prevention strategies reviewed regularly and updated based on evaluation results and emerging trends in organized theft?	frequency of reviews changes made in prevention strategies to increase effectiveness	DPD records Interviews	Evaluator will conduct interviews to document changes
To what extent has the gathering of intelligence and evidence supported the prosecution of organized theft perpetrators?	# of total prosecutions using Flock cameras # of successful prosecutions using Flock cameras	DPD records	DPD will share data with the evaluator on a quarterly basis or as available
How effectively has Flock camera placement covered vulnerable areas?	# of crimes committed where Flock cameras are placed	DPD records	DPD will share data with the evaluator on a quarterly basis
How has the deployment of drone technology improved the DPD's capacity to investigate and prosecute perpetrators?	# of identifications made through use of drone technology # of successful prosecutions aided by drone technology	DPD records	DPD will share data with the evaluator on a quarterly basis or as available

Outcome Evaluation

Key Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods/Frequency
To what degree has the use of additional patrol vehicles and LPRs helped identify suspicious vehicles?	annual % change in the identification of vehicles involved in theft and other crimes	DPD records	DPD will share data with the evaluator on a quarterly basis
To what extent has the use of technology in investigations increased prosecutions related to organized theft?	# of prosecutions for organized theft crimes	DPD records	DPD will share data with the evaluator on a quarterly basis or as available
To what extent has the recovery rate of stolen merchandise or vehicles increased?	Comparison of pre/post data	DPD records	DPD will share data with the evaluator on a quarterly basis or as available

Impact Evaluation

Key Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods/Frequency
Are retailers experiencing less financial loss after equipment implementation and training?	Average economic loss for retailers as the result of organized retail theft	Retailers	Collected from retailers by the evaluator at baseline and at the end of the grant
Do consumers feel safer shopping in the target areas than they did before?	Percentage of consumers who feel safer shopping in target areas	Intercept survey	Collected by the evaluator at baseline and at the end of the grant
Do retailers and consumers have higher levels of trust in DPD?	Percentage of retailers and consumers who indicate trust in DPD	Intercept survey	Collected by the evaluator at baseline and at the end of the grant
To what extent has organized crime been reduced in Delano and Kern County as a result of this grant?	Number of organized crime networks disrupted Number of organized crime participants arrested and successfully prosecuted	DPD records	Collected by DPD and reported to the evaluator on an annual basis

Evaluation Matrix Narrative:

Process Evaluation

Part of the DPD's process evaluation includes ensuing that the cameras' placement cover the most vulnerable areas, and adjusting, as needed, the most effective way to deploy the two patrol vehicles that are equipped with the LPR cameras. Supporting these efforts, the department will certify one officer as a drone operator, training them not only for the technical operation of the drone, but also in the governing FAA regulations, legal limitations of drone footage in investigations and privacy restrictions.

Outcome Evaluation

Because this is an evaluation rather than a research project with an experimental design, causality between grant activities and changes in community safety cannot be determined. That said, it is expected that enhanced resources provided by the grant will position the DPD to positively impact the quality of life in Delano. Specifically, a successful program will be determined at the community level for both retailers and consumers. For businesses, the reduction of organized retail theft would be the result of a successful program. For consumers, increased perception of safety while in retail areas, including fewer vehicle thefts, would be considered successful. Although it should be noted that other types of theft occur, the department has determined that organized theft is responsible for a large percentage of retail theft and that these perpetrators are more likely to use violence. Surveys will be conducted with retailers and consumers at the beginning and end of the grant to gauge change. In addition, interviews may be conducted with retailers to learn in more detail how organized theft impacts their business. In addition, law enforcement administrators and line staff will be interviewed to glean their experience with the new technology and their insight as to how it altered identifying and apprehending suspects, as well as gathering evidence for prosecution.

For quantitative analysis, SPSS will be used to provide descriptive statistics. Analyses beyond that cannot be established at this time since appropriate statistical tests cannot be determined until the final sample size, distribution, and format are known. For example, it is not known how many retailers will be cooperative with the evaluation, nor is it known how many consumers will agree to participate in the survey.

In order for the program to be successful, the department will need to have a strong working relationship with the two partnering law enforcement agencies and have some degree of data sharing privileges. The Delano Police Department utilizes RIMS (Records Management System) Collaborate to facilitate data sharing; however, the McFarland Police Department does not currently have this feature. Consequently, data sharing between the departments is managed through direct records requests, allowing each agency to securely share specific data as needed. The program had a memorandum of understanding in place with the other two law enforcement partners prior to this grant. The program ultimately seeks to reduce organized retail and vehicle theft. Over the course of the grant cycle, the department will need to constantly monitor the

placement and use of the cameras, in combination with ongoing training of retail security personnel.

Changes in organized retail and vehicle theft will be measured through records kept by the Delano Police Department. The program already has a memorandum of understanding with the other two law enforcement partners.