

ORT Prevention Grant Program



Local Evaluation Plan

Palo Alto Organized Retail Theft and Motor Vehicle Recovery
Project

Submitted by:

Palo Alto Police Department

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Date:

04/01/2024

Project Period:

October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2026

Project Background

The City of Palo Alto is located on the Peninsula in Santa Clara County and is between Highway 101, Interstate 280. With its proximity to multiple major highways and abundance of retail opportunities, the City of Palo Alto has been a prime target for organized retail crime and theft of vehicles and vehicle parts.

The average yearly total of organized retail theft is \$1,143,827 dollars, which has a massive impact on a city with a population of roughly 67,000. The data shows that organized retail theft continues to rise year after year, except 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Stolen property loss reached an all-time high last year of over \$1.5M. This data only represents reported losses to the police department. Many retailers are beginning to stop reporting all losses due to the cost of reporting and filing paperwork, and the numbers continue to climb.

In a 4-year review of stolen vehicle investigations by PAPD, less than 50% of vehicles were recovered by PAPD. Factors that contribute to the low recovery rate include PAPD pursuit policies, that forbid the vehicular pursuit of stolen vehicles. In addition to the lack of early detection devices that can identify stolen/wanted vehicles (e.g. Automated License Plate Readers). In the last year, the Palo Alto Police Department acquired a patrol vehicle equipped with automated license plate reader cameras and the City of Palo Alto installed license plate recognition cameras (ALPRs) at various locations throughout the city. This technology has allowed PAPD officers to quickly detect stolen vehicles, but there are few tools in place to recover the stolen vehicle while still in the City of Palo Alto's jurisdiction.

The project "Palo Alto Organized Retail Theft and Motor Vehicle Recovery Project" will utilize data-driven and field-tested strategies to deter organized retail and vehicle theft, and also arrest those responsible. The project focuses on two primary components, targeted ORT operations, and technology modernization through the installation of StarChase on patrol vehicles.

In a local review of neighboring agencies, there are no other police departments that are deploying StarChase technology or have officers dedicated to organized retail theft.

This project will be deployed in two different components.

Deterrence of Organized Retail Theft:

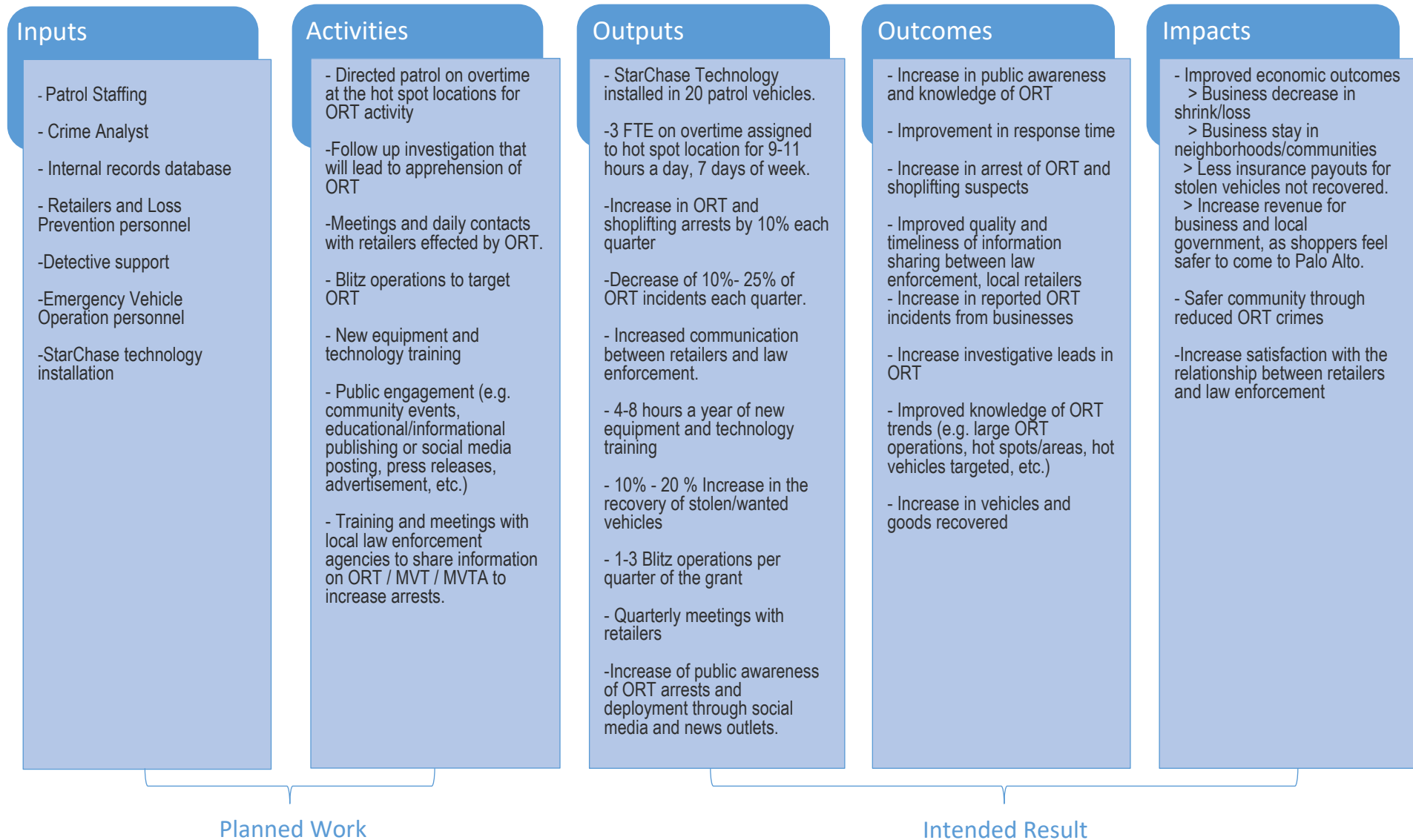
- Three officers a day for 9-11 hours will deploy to “hot spot” locations of ORT. These “hot spot” locations are determined based on crime trends, and information sharing between law enforcement and retailers. While at these locations, officers will conduct both uniformed and plainclothes patrols of these areas. They will meet with retailers to alert them to their presence and share information on ORT activities. Operating on overtime, officers will conduct additional follow-up investigations to arrest ORT suspects. In addition, there will be Blitz operations approximately 2-3 times a quarter.
- Officers will have quarterly meetings with local retailers on crime trends, feedback on increased officers’ presence, and other non-ORT related training, (e.g. Active Shooter response)
- Social media and local news engagement on ORT activity and officer’s response to it.

Reduce stolen vehicles and increase stolen vehicle recovery:

- Using STARCHASE technology, will allow officers to identify the location of the stolen vehicle in real time. With the ability to monitor the stolen vehicle, officers have higher a likelihood of recovering the vehicle for the victim and making an arrest.
 - **Goal:** Increase Apprehension of Organized Retail or Vehicle Theft Suspects and Vehicles.
 - **Objectives:** 1) Enhance the police department's ability to identify suspects and vehicles through the use of StarChase technology. 2) Utilize targeted organized retail theft and vehicle theft operations at hot-spot locations to deter theft or increase the likelihood of immediate apprehension of suspects engaged in organized retail theft or vehicle theft.
 - **Goal:** Reduce Instances of Calls for Service and Reported Organized Retail Theft and Vehicle Theft in the City of Palo Alto.
 - **Objectives:** 1) Utilize targeted organized retail theft and vehicle theft operations at hot-spot locations to deter theft or increase the likelihood of immediate apprehension of suspects engaged in organized retail theft or vehicle theft; 2) Work with the City of Palo Alto and other potential partners to engage in a public information campaign to publicize the grant award and subsequent law enforcement activities aimed at reducing instances of reported organized retail theft and vehicle theft in Palo Alto.

Project Logic Model

Palo Alto Organized Retail Theft and Motor Vehicle Recovery Project Logic Model:



Process Evaluation Method and Design

Input/Resource/Activity/Output	Data Element(s)	Data Source(s)	Frequency of Data Collection
Increase in ORT and shoplifting arrests by 10% each quarter	# of arrests	Case management system	Quarterly
Meetings and retailer contacts	# contacts and meetings	Internal log (see Appendix A)	Daily
3 FTE staff assigned to ORT on overtime throughout the grant	# of staff assigned to ORT	Timecards, Case management system, and Daily internal log	Annually throughout the grant
Installation of StarChase and department training	# of equipment installed/deployed and # of students trained	Internal database, invoicing, Case Management system, class rosters	Monthly/quarterly/annually
Public engagement (e.g. community events, educational/informational publishing or social media posting, press releases, advertisement, etc.)	# of events attended, # of social media posts, # of paid advertisements, # of press releases	Internal database, investigative software, invoicing, records	Each time a case or event occurs throughout the grant. Monthly/quarterly
Decrease of 10%- 25% of ORT incidents each quarter.	# of ORT incidents	Case management system	Quarterly
1-3 Blitz operations per quarter of the grant	# of ORT/shoplifting arrests, # of ORT investigative leads	Case management system / Internal log	Quarterly
10% - 20 % Increase in the recovery of stolen/wanted vehicles	# of Stolen / Wanted vehicles recovered	Case management system	Quarterly

Palo Alto Organized Retail Theft and Motor Vehicle Recovery Project

The Palo Alto Police Department will track specific crime rates for the target project areas and compare those to crime rates before the implementation of the project. These crime rates will focus on reports of shoplifting, vehicle theft, theft of motor vehicle parts, and specific robberies with ORT components (Estes types).

The project will utilize data over the performance period of the grant including total stolen property loss and calls for service/reports in the targeted “hot-spot” areas. This data will be compared to the performance period of previous years and quarters to measure the program’s effectiveness. It is the intention that with the increased presence of PAPD officers, calls for service/reports relating to shoplifting or ORT will decrease over the grant period. Likewise, PAPD will also track how many motor vehicle theft investigations are closed during the grant period, and how many of those involved the StarChase systems. Evaluations will also track the number and type of enforcement and “sting” operations in comparison to the number of reports of retail and vehicle thefts. It is the expectation that an increase in operations or other law enforcement presence in certain locations will correlate to a reduction in reported instances of retail theft or motor vehicle in those same areas.

Project monitoring and evaluation will also include conversations with retail managers and property owners to ensure that police operations are not negatively impacting retail operations. This communication will provide feedback to the police department on how efforts can be improved and will keep retailers apprised of the department’s efforts to deter retail theft.

Personnel working on this assignment will be managed by an Investigative Lieutenant or his/her designee who has experience with surveillance tactics and theft investigations. The Palo Alto Police Department’s Crime Analyst or equivalent will work in conjunction with this team to provide current statistics and data on retail theft, vehicle theft, and vehicle part thefts occurring within the City of Palo Alto. The Crime Analyst or equivalent will provide timely and accurate data to help direct resources and identify areas in ORT officers should be deployed.

The day-to-day operation will be overseen by the Investigative Supervisor in conjunction with the on-duty Patrol Supervisor. The Investigative Supervisor or designee will disseminate updates on trends, identified suspects/vehicles, and special requests from retailers that are organized retail theft related. The Investigative Supervisor or designee will handle the intake of information from retailers and disseminate it accordingly. Every quarter, the Investigative Supervisor or designee will review the data and ensure the coverage is meeting the needs to be successful.

Palo Alto Organized Retail Theft and Motor Vehicle Recovery Project

The Grant Manager will ensure the project is being implemented to fidelity. This will be done by reviewing the data logs, reviewing ORT / MVT / MVTA incidents. Ensuring all incidents because of the grant are reported properly. In addition to verifying that all invoicing of grant funds is done by agreed-upon acts in the approved work plan. The data collected will be a mix of both qualitative and quantitative data.

The Quantitative Data will be based on the following:

- The dollar loss due to ORT theft and comparing it to prior quarters. The ideal outcome is a decrease in dollar loss.
- Increase in arrests of ORT and theft suspects.
- Decrease in ORT incidents.
- Increase in the recovery of stolen/wanted vehicles.

The Qualitative Data will be based on the following:

- A quarterly survey both formal and informal with retailers impacted by ORT, and the feedback from the increase in officers' presence.

With the data exported from the case management system, the process used to analyze and collect the data will be descriptive statistics. This data will be analyzed based on comparison of incidents over time during the periods of the grant. Personnel assigned to the department with expertise in auditing will used to make this analysis of the data.

Outcome Evaluation Method and Design

The targeted outcome of this project is generally based on increasing arrests of ORT suspects, improved relationships with retailers, and increased recovery of stolen/wanted vehicles.

The research design will be mixed methods depending on each outcome this grant is targeting.

- Increase arrests of ORT Suspects
 - o Quantitative data will be used to conduct this evaluation. Exporting data from the report management system to track the number of arrests over time and compare it to previous quarters.

- Improved relationships with retailers
 - o Qualitative data will be used to conduct this evaluation. Soliciting feedback during quarterly meetings with retailers and tracking retail contacts on the ORT daily log will describe the quality relationship between PD and retailers.

- Increase recovery of stolen vehicles.
 - o Quantitative data will be used to conduct this evaluation. Exporting data from the report management system to track the number of recovered vehicles over time and compare it to the previous quarters.

As the project gets evaluated the questions that need to be answered are the following:

- Was there an increase in apprehensions of ORT or vehicle theft suspects?
Was there an increase in the recovery of stolen vehicles?
- Was there a reduction in calls for service/reports in ORT and vehicle theft?
- How many recovered stolen vehicles were reported each quarter? Is this an increase from previous quarters?
- Do the retailers affected by ORT feel an improvement in the relationship between them and law enforcement?
- Were there officers deployed at “hot spot” locations where ORT incidents occurred? If so, how many times?
- How many blitz operations were utilized for this grant?
- How many press releases and social media interaction were done during each quarter?

Palo Alto Organized Retail Theft and Motor Vehicle Recovery Project

- Was StarChase installed on at least 20 patrol vehicles? Were all active members and likely users of StarChase properly trained in the use and documentation?
- How many StarChase deployments were done each quarter? If deployed, did it result in an arrest and/or stolen vehicle recovery?

To determine if other factors contributed to the success or failure of the project, the following strategy will be implemented:

- Determine if officers were deployed for the entirety of their shift or only partly.
- Determine specific locations where officers were when the ORT incident occurred.
- Identify any counter strategies by suspects involved in ORT and vehicle theft, then note if any adjustments were made.
- Determine if inflation causes an increase in loss but is comparable to statistics in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022.
- Compare successes and failures with other agencies that have grant projects deployed similarly.

Palo Alto Organized Retail Theft and Motor Vehicle Recovery Project

Outcome	Definition	Data Source(s)	Frequency of Data Collection
Increase in Retailer awareness and knowledge of ORT	Retailers will have the ability to spot, deter, and contact Police sooner when incidents of ORT are visible.	Internal ORT Daily Log, Quarterly meeting with retailers where feedback is solicited.	Quarterly/Daily
Increase investigative leads in ORT cases	Conducting additional follow-up investigations to include search warrants, surveillance, and apprehensions.	Report Management system, documenting arrests and cases sent to the DA.	Quarterly
Increase in arrests of ORT and shoplifting suspects.	Increase the number of arrests of ORT and shoplifting suspects, compared to baseline year, and previous quarters.	Report Management system.	Each time an action is taken on an ORT case, monthly/quarterly
Increase in the recovery of stolen vehicles and goods using StarChase.	Increase in the number of stolen vehicles and the number of goods recovered, based on a comparison to baseline year and previous quarter.	Internal database, report management system, StarChase reports	Each time a recovery is completed, monthly/quarterly
Improved knowledge of ORT trends	Increase in dialogue between retailers and officers. Increase information sharing amongst retailers and law enforcement agencies.	Notes and minutes in ORT Daily Log, Crime bulletins	Quarterly
Improve response times to	Decrease time from dispatch to arrival for ORT / Shoplift cases	Computer Aid Dispatch System. Feedback from retailers	Quarterly
Increase of reported ORT incidents from businesses	Improved communications between retailers and law enforcement. Reporting of incidents on different messaging platforms to share information.	Notes and minutes in ORT Daily Log.	Quarterly

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Appendix A: ORT Daily Log

Organized Retail Theft Log

Date:

Officer/Location:

Officer/Location:

Officer/Location:

ORC Cases	INCIDENTS	RETAIL CONTACTS	STAFFING/EQUIPMENT ISSUES