

# Proposition 64 Cohort 3 Grant Program

## Local Evaluation Plan

### Submitted By:

Stanislaus County Sheriff's Office Marijuana Enforcement Team (MET)

### Prepared By:

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(External Evaluator)

### Date:

September 28, 2023

### Cohort Number:

Cohort 3

### Project Period:

May 1, 2023 – April 30, 2028

## Project Background

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Stanislaus County is a well-known hub for marijuana and other narcotic drug trafficking operations in the Central Valley of California. As such, the Central Valley qualifies for High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) programs, defined as “a significant center of illegal drug production, manufacturing, importation, or distribution” (HIDTA criteria). Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTO's) have historically dominated the region's marijuana grows; however, there has been a recent increase in sophisticated grow operations by Asian-based DTO's. Both cultures have developed complex structuring for their criminal enterprise operations, including multiple investors, logistical support, and a large number of temporary and/or illegal residents as workers cultivating the marijuana plantations in remote, foothill areas. The plot tenders often have specific instructions to use violence to protect their valuable crops. This poses a significant threat to law enforcement and the public, as Stanislaus County continues to experience home invasion robberies and homicides because of illegal marijuana grow operations.

Additionally, illegal marijuana grows are a great concern for the community. Illegal marijuana grows is the number one complaint received at community meetings, tip lines, Crime Stoppers, and regular calls for services. The Sheriff and the Board of Supervisors made illegal marijuana grow eradication a priority in Stanislaus County. This concern and prioritization appears to be justified, as between October 1, 2021 and September 30, 2022, the Stanislaus County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) successfully seized 176,261 marijuana plants and 19,268 lbs. of processed marijuana, with 112 arrests. During this time, SCSO also seized 61 firearms from illegal marijuana cultivation operations.

As a means to address the numerous illegal cannabis operations in Stanislaus County, in August 2022, SCSO created *the Marijuana Enforcement Team (MET)*, dedicated to a sole purpose and responsibility -- to identify, investigate, and eradicate illegal marijuana grow operations in Stanislaus County. Prior to the grant award, MET was comprised of one (1) investigation sergeant, five (5) deputies, one (1) community service officer and one (1) crime analyst. With the addition of grant funding, MET will hire key personnel to enhance (supplement, not supplant) current MET activities. While MET has been successful on the front-end eradicating grows, the SCSO has not had the capacity to investigate, arrest, and prosecute the owners of the organized illegal grow operations. Prop 64 funds will be used to hire additional staff to expand support for longer-term investigations and seizures post-eradication. This will make MET the only program in the County to identify, investigate, and eradicate illegal marijuana grow operations.

An addition of the project's focus is the development and implementation of strategies/activities designed to prevent youth exposure to marijuana (and other substances). Studies have shown, marijuana use may have permanent effects on the developing brain when use begins in adolescence, especially with regular or heavy use. Marijuana use has been linked to a range of mental health problems, such as

depression and social anxiety. The risk of developing marijuana use disorder is stronger in people who start using marijuana during youth or adolescence and who frequently use marijuana. Some signs and symptoms of marijuana use disorder include trying but failing to quit using marijuana or giving up important activities with friends and family in favor of using marijuana.

During the first trimester of 2019-2020, school administrators and teachers at Modesto City School District schools saw an increase in the number of students utilizing controlled substances on campus. During that period, 200 students were caught with illicit drugs or controlled substances. Of that total, 110 students were suspended, 30 students were referred to the Intervention Center on their campus, 14 students were assigned detention, and the remaining students assigned some other type of discipline and/or counseling. Given the increase of students using illicit drugs or controlled substances in the County, Prop 64 funds will be used to develop and implement strategies/activities (e.g., public service announcements; pro-active recreational, educational, cultural and social programs) that will augment local prevention programs, like the Boys and Girls Club of Stanislaus County (<https://www.bgcstanislaus.org>), designed to minimize the likelihood that County youth will progress from substance use to misuse by understanding the risks and embracing the benefits of living a physically and mentally healthy lifestyle.

#### Scope of Project

As a means to address the numerous illegal cannabis operations in the County, SCSO will hire an additional crime analyst, detective, code enforcement officer, and community service officer to support MET's longer-term investigations and seizures post-eradication. Proposition 64 funding will expand MET's ability to protect the public from illegal cannabis operators threatening the environment, community, public health, and the legal cannabis market, in addition to the continued regulation and code enforcement of permitted commercial marijuana cultivation within the unincorporated areas of Stanislaus County. Enforcement activities are essential in eliminating unfair competition, protecting natural resources, and safeguarding communities from the often-violent crime and toxic chemicals associated with illegal marijuana cultivation operations. Additionally, SCSO will engage a media relations team to expand social media content to notify the public of special operations and large-scale eradication efforts, while also promoting resources available to report illicit cannabis operations.

To support the goal of developing and implementing strategies/activities designed to prevent youth exposure to marijuana (and other substances), SCSO will work with community service officers, school resource officers, and the Police Activities League (PAL) Deputy to develop and implement activities for youth that promote physical fitness and emotional health. These are key factors to minimizing the likelihood of youth engaging in substance use or misuse by understanding the risk and seeing the benefits of living a physically and mentally healthy lifestyle. Additionally, the media relations team also will be tasked with producing and distributing several videos and social media

## Prop 64 Cohort 3 Grant Program

content focusing on substance use education and promoting healthy behaviors for the youth in the County.

### Targeted Area/Population

Stanislaus County is 1,494 square miles in size and is in the Central Valley near the Highway 99 and I-5 corridors. The population of Stanislaus County, including its nine (9) incorporated cities and 14 unincorporated communities, for which the Sheriff's Office serves as the primary law enforcement agency, is 550,660. This is the target area for this initiative in that it is inclusive of the Stanislaus County Sheriff's Office jurisdiction.

In addition, to serving the general population of Stanislaus County, initiative activities also target youth of Stanislaus County through existing partnerships with Stanislaus County Office of Education (SCOE) and PAL. SCSO' school resource officers (SRO) are currently assigned to the Stanislaus Military Academy in Empire, Peterson Alternative Center for Education in Modesto, and John B. Allard in Ceres, each with an average of 140 students. Many students attending these schools are economically disadvantaged. PAL serves an average of 500 to 6,000 young people each month through its 46 program sites in Salida, Grayson, Keyes, Empire, Waterford, and Modesto.

### Goals and Objectives

The project has three (3) goals that relate to the need and intent of the Prop 64 grant. They are:

1. Enhance illegal cannabis enforcement activities to improve public safety and reduce cannabis-related crimes.
2. Increase compliance with existing County ordinances to improve public safety and environmental impacts.
3. Prevent youth exposure and substance use and addiction through cannabis substance use education and promotion of healthy behaviors.

The objectives for each of the three (3) goals are reported below:

**Goal 1:** Enhance illegal cannabis enforcement activities to improve public safety and reduce cannabis-related crimes.

- Objective 1: Improve identification of illegal cannabis operators and their organizations in Stanislaus County.
- Objective 2: Eradicate and suppress illegal cannabis cultivation in Stanislaus County.
- Objective 3: Maximize arrests and prosecutions of perpetrators.

## Prop 64 Cohort 3 Grant Program

- Objective 4: Reduce the utilization of harmful chemicals and fertilizers.
- Objective 5: Increase community outreach through social media.

**Goal 2:** To increase compliance with existing County ordinances to improve public safety and environmental impacts.

- Objective 1: Proactively investigate for obvious ordinance violations.
- Objective 2: Gain compliance when ordinance violations exist.
- Objective 3: Increase public awareness about the availability of resources to report violations.

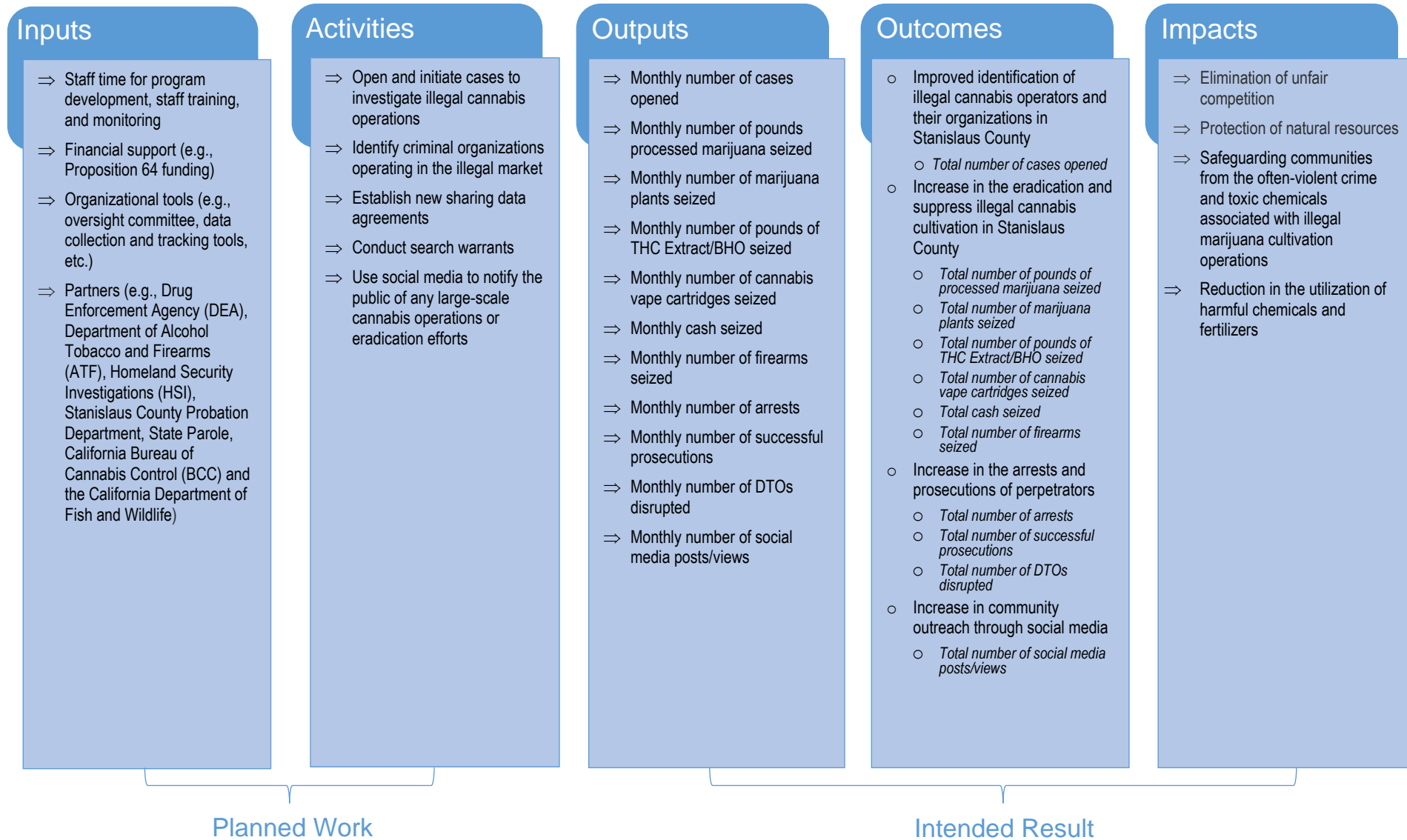
**Goal 3:** To prevent youth exposure and substance use and addiction through cannabis substance use education and promotion of healthy behaviors.

- Objective 1: By the end of the grant, youth in Stanislaus County will recognize the potential effects of short-term and long-term substance use and misuse.
- Objective 2: Youth in Stanislaus County will be made aware of the alternatives to drugs and other harmful activities through the promotion of physical and mental wellness.

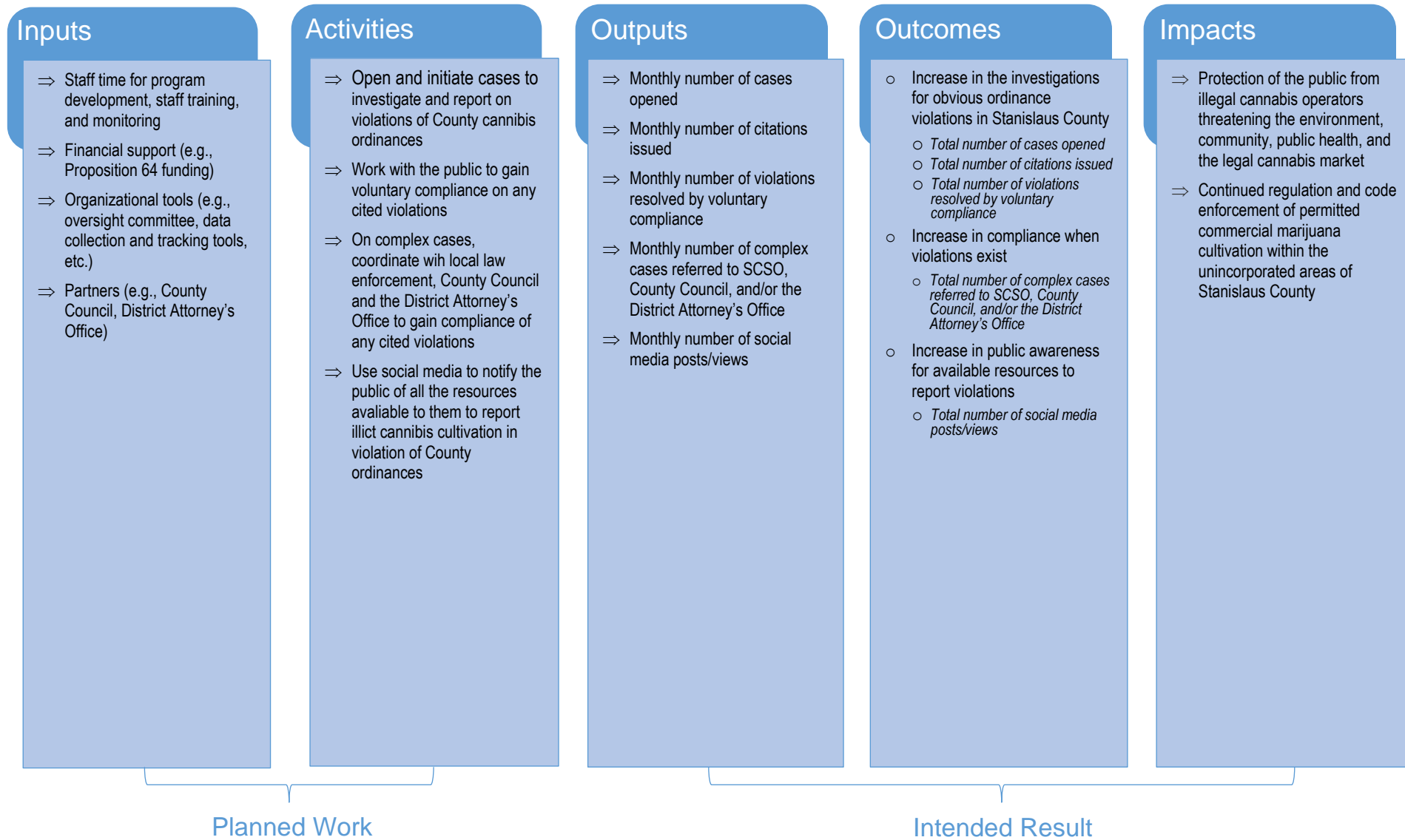
## Project Logic Models

Three (3) logic models have been developed as a visual representation of the goals for each part of the initiative. They are presented below.

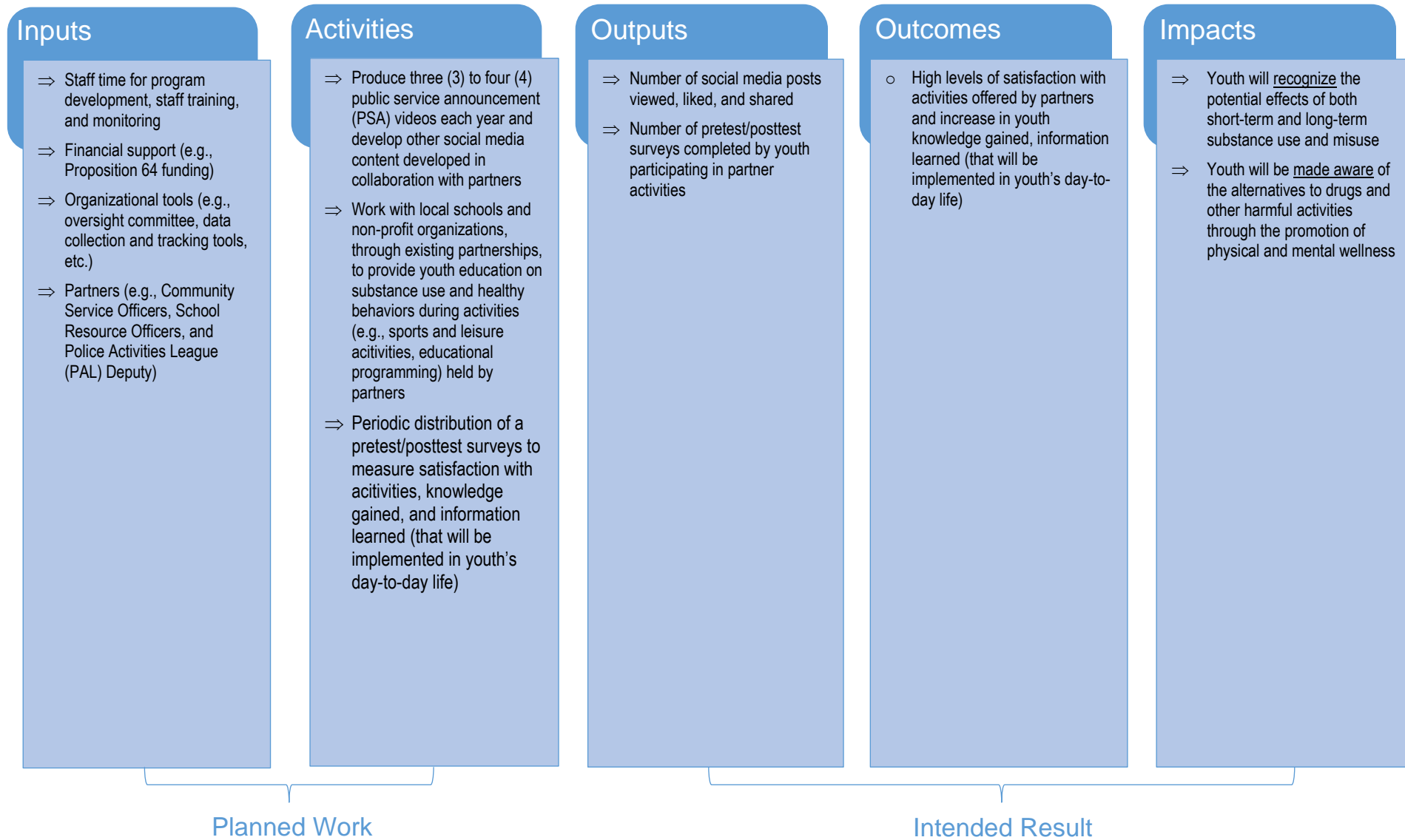
## Project Logic Model: Goal 1 - Enhance illegal cannabis enforcement activities to improve public safety and reduce cannabis-related crimes



**Project Logic Model: Goal 2 - To increase compliance with existing County ordinances to improve public safety and environmental impacts.**



**Project Logic Model: Goal 3 - To prevent youth exposure and substance use and addiction through cannabis substance use education and promotion of healthy behaviors.**



## Process Evaluation Method and Design

To document progress in the project and to provide a blueprint for other programs wishing to replicate/adopt elements of the program, data will be collected through existing resources (see matrix below) to highlight significant decisions-made, bell-weather incidents/moments occurring, and working closely with project staff and the local evaluator, Gary Bess Associates, interpretate findings to date and in summative reporting.

Key questions to be addressed in the process evaluation are:

1. What is the SCSO personnel's views regarding implementation of the project; i.e., how is the project progressing, what are critical choice points in its implementation?
2. Are data collection methods and procedures yielding timely and reliable data?
3. How are data used to inform the program?
4. Do any new partnerships develop from the project?
5. Do any new policies and procedures develop from the project?
6. What is the impact of social media in the community?
7. Are there trends in output data (e.g., number of total pounds of process marijuana seized, total cash seized), and how is it used to improve the program?

A process evaluation matrix that reports the inputs/resources/activities/outputs, data indicators, data sources, and data collection methods and frequency of data collection is presented below as a means to highlight the process evaluation approach.

<b>Process Evaluation</b>			
<b>Input/Resource/Activity/Output</b>	<b>Data Indicators</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Data Collection Methods/Frequency</b>
Extent to which the project was successfully implemented (i.e., how is the project progressing; what are critical choice points in its implementation?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Facilitators to implementation</li> <li>○ Barriers to implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SWOT output</li> <li>○ Discussions during staff meetings</li> <li>○ Meeting minutes</li> </ul>	Quarterly throughout the grant
Extent to which data collection methods and procedures yielding timely and reliable data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Facilitators to data collection</li> <li>○ Barriers to data collection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SWOT output</li> <li>○ Discussions during staff meetings</li> <li>○ Surveys distributed during PAL activities</li> </ul>	Monthly transfers of data from SCSO to Gary Bess Associates; monthly data dashboards to assess progress for the 1 <sup>st</sup> fiscal year; quarterly from 2 <sup>nd</sup> year to end of grant

Prop 64 Cohort 3 Grant Program

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Meeting minutes</li> <li>○ SCSO tracking systems</li> </ul>	
Partnerships developed during the grant period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Number of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) developed</li> <li>○ Documentation of the relationship building efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SWOT output</li> <li>○ Discussions during staff meetings</li> <li>○ Meeting minutes</li> </ul>	Bi-annual checking-ins with SCSO regarding MOUs throughout the grant
Policies and procedures developed during the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Number of policies and procedures developed</li> <li>○ Documentation regarding the development of policies and procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SWOT output</li> <li>○ Discussions during staff meetings</li> <li>○ Draft and final versions of policies and procedures</li> </ul>	Bi-annual checking-ins with SCSO regarding policies and procedures throughout the grant
Extent of the impact of social media in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Social media analytics</li> <li>○ Perceived impact of social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Social media posts viewed, liked, and shared</li> <li>○ Source materials distributed in the community (e.g., brochures, flyers, billboards)</li> <li>○ Polling/surveying results on social media sites</li> </ul>	Quarterly checks regarding social media impact throughout the grant
Hire and train one (1) crime analyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Crime analyst hired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Employment records</li> </ul>	Annually throughout the grant
Hire and train one (1) detective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Detective hired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Employment records</li> </ul>	Annually throughout the grant
Hire and train one (1) code enforcement officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Code enforcement hired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Employment records</li> </ul>	Annually throughout the grant
Hire and train one (1) community service officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Community service officer hired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Employment records</li> </ul>	Annually throughout the grant
Contract one (1) media relations team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Media relations team contracted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Contract signed</li> </ul>	Annually throughout the grant
Provide PAL participants with youth education on substance use and healthy behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ # of youth participants served</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SCSO tracking systems</li> </ul>	Each time youth participate in PAL activities
Increase in number of cases opened annually (baseline; 93 cases opened in FY 22-23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ # of cases opened</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SCSO tracking systems</li> </ul>	Each time a case is opened
Increase in number of pounds of processed marijuana seized annually (baseline; 2,136 pounds seized in FY 22-23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ # of pounds of processed marijuana seized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SCSO tracking systems</li> </ul>	Each time processed marijuana is seized

## Prop 64 Cohort 3 Grant Program

Increase in the number of marijuana plants seized annually (baseline; 64,813 seized in FY 22-23)	○ # of marijuana plants seized	○ SCSO tracking systems	Each time marijuana plants are seized
Document the number pounds of THC Extract/BHO seized annually (No baseline data)	○ # of pounds of THC Extract/BHO seized	○ SCSO tracking systems	Each time THC Extract/BHO is seized
Document the number of cannabis vape cartridges seized annually (No baseline data)	○ # of cannabis vape cartridges seized	○ SCSO tracking systems	Each time cannabis vape cartridges are seized
Increase the amount of cash seized annually (baseline; \$2,455,533 seized in FY 22-23)	○ # of dollars seized	○ SCSO tracking systems	Each time cash is seized
Increase in the number of firearms seized annually (baseline; 68 seized in FY 22-23)	○ # of firearms seized	○ SCSO tracking systems	Each time a fire arm is seized
Increase in the number of arrests performed annually (baseline; 70 arrests in FY 22-23)	○ # of arrested	○ SCSO tracking systems	Each time an arrest is made
Document the number of successful prosecutions annually (No baseline data)	○ # of successful prosecutions	○ SCSO tracking systems	Each time a successful prosecution is made
Document the number of DTOs disrupted annually (No baseline data)	○ # of DTOs disrupted	○ SCSO tracking systems	Each time a successful DTO disruption is made

## Outcome Evaluation Method and Design

An overview of the outcome evaluation method and design is presented in this section of the report. Key questions to be addressed in the outcome evaluation are:

1. Were there statistically significant increases in the output data (e.g., pounds or marijuana seized, number of firearms seized) from similar periods from baseline to follow-up (e.g., one (1) year pre-grant to one (1) year post-grant)?
2. Is there a pattern over the life of the grant where output data level off and/or decrease?
3. Did the level of satisfaction, knowledge gained and information obtained (that will be implemented in youths' day-to-day life) result in an increase in healthy behaviors, based on self-reports from pretest to posttest?

An outcome evaluation matrix that reports the desired project outcomes, definitions, data sources, and frequency of data collection is presented below as a means to highlight the outcome evaluation approach.

<b>Outcome Evaluation</b>			
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Frequency of Data</b>
Improved identification of illegal cannabis operators and their organizations in Stanislaus County	Increase in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cases opened</li> <li>○ Firearms seized</li> </ul>	○ SCSO tracking systems	Before hiring an additional staff, quarterly-throughout duration of grant

Prop 64 Cohort 3 Grant Program

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Number of arrests</li> <li>○ Number of successful prosecutions</li> <li>○ DTOs disrupted</li> </ul>		
Increase in the eradication and suppress illegal cannabis cultivation in Stanislaus County	<p>Increase in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pounds of processed marijuana seized</li> <li>○ Marijuana plants seized</li> <li>○ Pounds of THC Extract/BHO seized</li> <li>○ Number of cannabis vape cartridges seized</li> <li>○ Increase in cash seized</li> </ul>	SCSO tracking systems	Before hiring an additional staff, quarterly-throughout duration of grant
Increase in the arrests and prosecutions of perpetrators	<p>Increase in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Total number of arrests</li> <li>○ Total number of successful prosecutions</li> <li>○ Total number of DTOs disrupted</li> </ul>	SCSO tracking systems	Before hiring an additional staff, quarterly-throughout duration of grant
Increase in community outreach through social media	<p>Increase in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Total number of social media posts/views</li> </ul>	Polling/surveying results on social media sites	Before hiring media relations team quarterly-throughout duration of grant
Increase in the investigations for obvious ordinance violations in Stanislaus County	<p>Increase in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Total number of cases opened</li> <li>○ Total number of citations issued</li> <li>○ Total number of violations resolved by voluntary compliance</li> </ul>	SCSO tracking systems	Before hiring an additional staff, quarterly-throughout duration of grant
Increase in compliance when violations exist	<p>Increase in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Total number of complex cases referred to SCSO, County Council, and/or the District Attorney's Office</li> </ul>	SCSO tracking systems	Before hiring an additional staff, quarterly-throughout duration of grant
Increase in public awareness for available resources to report violations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Total number of social media posts/views</li> </ul>	Polling/surveying results on social media sites	Before hiring media relations team quarterly-throughout duration of grant
High levels of satisfaction with activities offered by partners and an increase in youth knowledge gained and information learned (that will be implemented in youth's day-to-day life)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ High levels of satisfaction with activities and increase in youths' level of knowledge and information learned of cannabis, pretest to posttest.</li> </ul>	Pretest/posttest surveys	Before and after programmatic activities

## Data Analysis Approach

An overview of the data analysis approach driving the process evaluation and outcome evaluation are presented below. To document the impact of initiative outcomes, quantitative data (e.g., number of arrests) will be analyzed and periodically reported across the life of the initiative. Using the statistical database IBM SPSS, Version 27, outcomes will be assessed with testing for statistical significance, which will include the following tests: t-tests, McNemar tests, ANOVA tests, and effect size measures, such as Cohen's *d*, for the pretest/posttest survey data.

Written materials will be analyzed vis-à-vis a content analysis (likely manually and using qualitative software, depending on the number of written materials) to identify manifest and latent content from SWOT sessions, written comments, and social media content. Manifest content is the evidence that is directly seen, such as frequency of certain words or concepts, that enable evaluators to count the number of references. Latent content refers to the underlying meaning of content, such as the interpretation of the underlying themes.

## Data Reporting Approach

An overview of the data reporting approach is presented below. Gary Bess Associates will work with SCSO project staff to complete mandated reporting to the State, and as needed, to improve project processes. As noted in the Local Evaluation Plan, a formative evaluation approach will be used for the life of the grant. Formative evaluation is a quality improvement process of "obtaining information that is helpful in planning [a] program and improving its implementation and performance".<sup>1</sup> Quarterly PowerPoint presentations with dashboards will be presented to showcase the progressively more robust data that will be used to confirm a priori assumptions about the initiative's impact. At these meetings, team members will review and interpret the data in consultation with the external evaluator and program modifications resulting from the review will be documented.

Additionally, during the meetings, tracking of potential extraneous variables will be discussed (e.g., a larger than normal marijuana seizure, a high-profile youth incident in the community) that may impact the data. Changes to the project approach will be tracked and assessed for impact of the modification. Additionally, periodic reports, dashboards, and infographics will be produced to provide a "snapshot" of grant progress/evaluation and a final summative report will be developed that meets program reporting guidelines and the needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2008). *Research Methods for Social Work* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thomas Learning, Inc.