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BSCC ORT Prevention Grant Project Local Evaluation Plan

Project Period: October 1, 2023 - December 31, 2026

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Project Background

Project Need

During the past three years, the City of Bakersfield has experienced a troubling surge in organized retail theft (ORT), motor vehicle theft (MVT), and motor vehicle accessory thefts (MVAT; i.e., catalytic converter thefts). According to internal data collected from retail partners, the nature and scale of these thefts are significant. One retail chain reported losses of approximately \$150,000 across their Bakersfield locations, with 2,844 theft events occurring in the past year. The 2019 Crime in the United States data reports Bakersfield as being among the top five cities in California for MVT, with 2,909 known thefts. MVT and MVAT cases have been increasing, and about 42% of catalytic converter thefts occur in retail parking lots, often in the same locations as ORT incidents.

Located on Highway 99 between Los Angeles and Sacramento, the City of Bakersfield serves as a convenient transit point for criminals who can easily travel between major cities. This geographical fact facilitates swift thefts by offenders from neighboring areas and allows them to evade capture by quickly returning to their homes or to where they plan to sell the stolen goods. This ease of movement poses a significant challenge to law enforcement in terms of timely response, effective surveillance, and successful apprehension of offenders.

Recognizing the increasing trends in ORT, the Bakersfield Police Department (BPD) established an ORT Unit consisting of eight staff; however, limited resources and service gaps were hindering its efficacy in combatting ORT, MVT, and MVAT. Additional support was needed to bolster the efforts of the BPD ORT Unit to effectively address the rising incidence of ORT, MVT, and MVAT offenses. Grant funds provided to BPD from the BSCC allow greater concentration on ORT crimes and, ultimately, provide ways to prevent and reduce ORT citywide.

Project Overview

The BPD ORT project employs a comprehensive approach to fighting ORT, MVT, and MVAT, encompassing a range of activities and services to actively enforce the law, conduct operations and investigations, and foster collaborative partnerships with various entities, including the District Attorney's Office, local retail stores, and Youth Diversion Program partners. Project activities include:

1. Increased Support for the ORT Unit

Grant funds are being used to increase resources for the ORT Unit through a mixture of full-time staff and overtime. Full-time staff includes the addition of one performance analyst to help build evidence and apprehend suspects and one administrative analyst to assist with clerical and accounting duties. Overtime is being allotted to ensure adequate law enforcement presence, investigative resources, technical support, and guidance during ORT blitz operations. Increasing support for the ORT Unit will enhance BPD's capacity to build strong evidence-based cases, recover stolen property, and successfully apprehend suspects.

2. Training and Education

The BPD ORT Unit is receiving specialized training to develop their expertise and understanding of ORT, MVT, and MVAT. One aspect of the training involves learning about interrogation tactics and forensic software, providing officers with valuable tools and techniques to investigate theft cases. The ORT Unit will also attend annual conferences to enhance the team's knowledge of strategies and best practices in combatting retail and vehicle theft and participate in networking opportunities with other professionals in the field. Additionally, the unit will undergo Bias-Free Policing training to ensure their enforcement efforts are carried out fairly, respectfully, and without prejudice based on race, ethnicity, or other identifying factors.

3. Operations and Enforcement

BPD is partnering with local retailers to identify and arrest ORT, MVT, and MVAT suspects during the commission of these crimes. Operations vary in length, ranging from 5 to 12 hours, and are being conducted with additional officers and undercover detectives outside of the ORT Unit. Using the equipment and technology described below, detectives are employing investigative techniques to connect groups identified as suspects during operations to reported offenses.

Equipment

- *Vehicles:* Unmarked undercover vehicles are used to conduct covert operations and ensure officers' safety. These vehicles are equipped to facilitate undercover investigations, enabling law enforcement to gather evidence and discreetly apprehend ORT suspects.
- *Flock Cameras:* The installation of 35 additional Flock cameras significantly enhances surveillance capabilities in retail areas with high rates of ORT, MVT, and MVAT incidents. These cameras offer advanced features and high-quality video recording to support monitoring and evidence gathering. In addition, the cameras help to deter potential offenders.
- *Stationary and Pole Cameras:* Stationary and pole cameras have been strategically deployed in areas with high ORT, MVT, and MVAT activity to provide continuous surveillance and evidence collection.
- *Vehicle and Retail Theft Trackers:* These trackers are being placed in vehicles and merchandise to assist in locating and recovering stolen property and identifying suspects.
- *Tactical Vests and Entry Tools:* This gear ensures the safety and protection of law enforcement personnel during operations and when conducting search warrants.

Technology and Software

- *LeadsOnline:* This comprehensive web-based investigative tool provides access to a unique dataset containing information on pawn, second-hand, and scrap transactions across the country. This tool will allow BPD to track stolen items beyond Bakersfield and compare these items to known associates' activities, ultimately expediting the investigation and resolution of theft cases.
- *Cellebrite:* This forensic software provides BPD with powerful tools to analyze digital evidence from various devices, including cell phones and computers. Utilization of this software enhances BPD's investigative capabilities, including suspect identification and digital evidence analysis, to build strong cases against ORT, MVT, and MVAT offenders.

4. Youth Diversion Program

The BPD is leveraging established relationships with Kern County Behavioral Health, Kern County M Street Navigation Center (homeless resource center), and the youth offender unit at the Kern County District Attorney's Office to integrate a diversion program for first-time, non-violent, misdemeanor juvenile offenders. Through operations conducted by the ORT Unit, offenders who commit these crimes are being identified as candidates for the city's Youth Diversion Program. The program is designed to hold these offenders accountable for their offenses and provide educational services to promote behavioral change, enhance public safety, and reduce recidivism while placing no additional burden on officers.

Target Area and/or Population

BPD's program activities will impact the City of Bakersfield as a whole. The primary target areas for implementation are retail centers identified as hotspots for ORT, MVT, and MVAT cases based on locally reported data.

Project Goals and Objectives

BPD has established three goals and three objectives to achieve over the three-year grant period:

Goal 1: Identify and apprehend ORT suspects in Bakersfield, CA.

- **Objective 1:** Reduce the incidence of ORT by 10%, as demonstrated by decreased reported ORT incidents.

Goal 2: Identify and apprehend Motor Vehicle and MVA theft suspects in Bakersfield, CA.

- **Objective 2:** Increase the apprehension of MVT and MVAT suspects by 10%, as demonstrated by increased MVT and MVAT suspect arrests.

Goal 3: Promote behavioral change interventions to Bakersfield, CA, juvenile first-time offenders of ORT crimes.

- **Objective 3:** Increase the number of juvenile first-time offenders referred to the Youth Diversion Program by 14, as demonstrated by increased youth participation in the program.

Project Logic Model

Inputs

Funding

BSCC ORT Prevention Grant Award

People

Staffing:

Law Enforcement Personnel:

ORT Unit, 1 performance analyst, 1 administrative analyst, overtime pay for ORT blitz operations staff, on-call staff

Partners: Local Sheriff's Department, District Attorney's Office, Local retail stores, Youth Diversion Program Partner (Kern County), California Highway Patrol ORC task force, KernCatt, EVALCORP

Tools

Law Enforcement Technology:

Unmarked vehicles, rental vehicles, flock cameras, trailer cameras, pole cameras, unmanned aerial vehicles, vehicle trackers, retail trackers, tactical vests, entry tools, computer

Activities

Enhanced support for ORT Unit:

Increase the number of personnel combatting ORT, MVT, and MVAT theft

Staff Training: Training encompasses best practices related to preventing and investigating ORT, MVT, and MVAT

Support Targeted Enforcement Operations:

Increase the number of ORT, MVT, and MVAT operations executed in Bakersfield retail parking lots

Adopt Advanced Investigative Technologies:

Procure and implement video surveillance, trackers, and forensic software

Youth Diversion Program: Refer juvenile, first-time offender candidates to educational services promoting long-term behavioral change

Outputs

Number of grant-funded trainings completed by officers, detectives, analysts, and other staff

Improved understanding and expertise related to ORT activities

Number of operations related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT completed

Number of ORT, MVT, and MVAT investigations in which stolen merchandise was recovered

Number of ORT, MVT, and MVAT-related referrals to the DA's office

Number of youths referred to the Youth Diversion Program

Number of youths enrolled in the Youth Diversion Program

Number of youths who complete the Youth Diversion Program

Number of youths who complete the Youth Diversion Program and are not re-arrested within 6 months

Outcomes

Reduction in reported MVT, MVAT, and ORT theft incidents in Bakersfield

Improved investigative success and increased arrest rates for MVT, MVAT, and ORT crimes

Enhanced knowledge and skills for officers in preventing and responding to MVT, MVAT, and ORT theft

Reduced recidivism among youth diversion program participants

Impacts

Safer Community

Environment: Reduced MVT, MVAT, and ORT contribute to safer environments for the Bakersfield community.

Strengthened Law

Enforcement Capabilities:

Enhanced investigative tools and strategies improve long-term crime prevention, deterrence, and enforcement.

Increased Public Confidence:

Activities increase the public's trust in BPD's ability to protect the community and deter ORT, MVT, and MVAT..

Evaluation Method and Design

The City of Bakersfield has contracted with EVALCORP to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the project, including both process and outcome components, described together in this section.

Evaluation Framework

Goals

The goals for the proposed evaluation are to (1) document the implementation of the project and the extent to which proposed activities were completed as intended (i.e., process evaluation); (2) measure the degree to which the goals or objectives were achieved (i.e., outcome evaluation); and (3) identify successes, implementation challenges, and lessons learned. The third goal of the evaluation will ensure lessons from the project can be utilized to inform future initiatives.

Approach

A mixed-methods evaluation approach consisting of qualitative and quantitative data collection activities will be implemented to assess the process and outcome measures established for the BPD ORT, MVT, and MVAT prevention program.

The planned robust evaluation will assess the impact of the work carried out as part of this grant including:

- A baseline comparison methodology (pre-grant period vs. post-grant- implementation) to determine the prevention program's overall impact on the project outcomes.
- Cumulative change (counts, increases, decreases) of identified process and outcome metrics will be assessed regularly to (1) track ongoing project implementation and outcomes, and (2) allow for any necessary changes to strategies as the grant-funded activities are executed. This approach is key to a formative evaluation and involves compiling and reviewing evaluation metrics consistently.
- Qualitative data—including stakeholder interviews with key personnel participating in the project, observations, and success stories—will provide context, lessons learned, and any unanticipated challenges along with how they were overcome.

Coordination and Oversight

The BPD Project Director is Assistant Chief Jeremy Blakemore who provides strategic guidance and oversight for the project. Lieutenant Alex Menendez, the Project Coordinator, manages project implementation. Sergeant Keegan Gavin oversees the day-to-day operations. Elizabeth White (in collaboration with other BPD staff) manages data collection and monitoring activities. Stacey Andrews, the Administrative Analyst, provides clerical and accounting support.

Project-related decisions will be made collaboratively by the BPD team, with consultation by EVALCORP when appropriate. Any changes requiring BSCC approval will be forwarded to the appropriate party before implementation.

EVALCORP will work collaboratively with BPD personnel to ensure the appropriate data collection methodologies, tools, and protocols are developed and implemented. The evaluation team will foster open communication to ensure evaluation findings are communicated periodically and that high-quality and consistent data collection practices are employed. Throughout the term of the project, meetings between BPD and EVALCORP will occur quarterly and as needed to ensure opportunities to discuss successes and address issues as they arise. Any data collection concerns will be coordinated between the EVALCORP team and BPD personnel.

Evaluation Tools

Primary (original data) and secondary (i.e., data collected for another use) data collection tools will be used to track process and outcome metrics specific to grant activities.

Primary Data Collection Tools

- **Operations Tracking Log** will be used to track incidents, arrests, operations, diversion program referrals, and stolen property recovered related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT.
- **Evaluative Observations:** The evaluators will record learnings from project meetings as part of the qualitative data collection to increase understanding and documentation of project accomplishments and identify areas for enhancement as the project is implemented.
- **Key Stakeholder Interviews:** Primary project staff will participate in structured interviews with the evaluation team to delve deeper into implementation activities at the end of the grant period. These interviews will shed light on the extent to which the project was carried out as intended and identify successes, challenges, and insights gained.

Secondary Data Sources

- **Law Enforcement Data** (i.e., BPD's Record Management System (RMS)) will be used to track ORT, MVT, and MVAT arrests and referrals to the District Attorney's Office.
- **Payroll Records** will be used to determine the number of FTE staff assigned to various grant activities.
- **Administrative Records** will be used to document the equipment purchased and tools implemented (e.g., vehicle tracker, FLOCK cameras), partnerships established, training attended by staff, and other metrics required to inform the ongoing evaluation.
- **Youth Diversion Program Records** will track the number of youth who are referred, enrolled, and who have completed the Youth Diversion Program.

The evaluation team will collaborate with BPD staff to ensure all requisite data are obtained, maintained, and reviewed for accuracy/validity on a consistent basis.

Data Analysis

Project data will be obtained and reviewed monthly, quarterly, and annually, depending on the metric, to ensure accurate and consistent data collection and entry. Data will be aggregated and validated before conducting all required quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data will be analyzed using Excel, R, and/or SPSS analytic software. Descriptive statistics will characterize incidents, arrests, operations, Youth Diversion Program referrals, and other relevant indicators. Crosstabs and inferential analyses (e.g., chi-square, t-tests) will be implemented to support descriptive findings and ensure data are interpreted appropriately.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data analysis will be conducted on the evaluation observations and key stakeholder interviews. Data will be coded, categorized, and interpreted to identify key themes. Information may be quantified as a part of this process. The overarching goal of these analyses is to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the grant activities and perspectives on how closely the project adhered to its initial plans, including what obstacles, if any, were experienced and the strategies used to overcome them.

Reporting

The following is a list of anticipated reports that will be used to track grant progress:

- **Quarterly Progress Reports:** EVALCORP will support the BPD in developing the BSCC Quarterly Progress Reports.
- **Annual Brief:** EVALCORP will develop a summary outlining progress toward the grant's goals and objectives at the end of each calendar year during the grant term.
- **Final Local Evaluation Report:** EVALCORP will develop the Final Local Evaluation Report summarizing the three-year grant activities and the extent to which the goals were achieved. The report will be submitted to the BSCC by June 1, 2027.

In addition to ongoing grant meetings, these periodic reporting events provide a formal process for monitoring progress toward objectives and adjusting activities as needed.

Evaluation Metrics

A series of process and outcome metrics (described below) will be monitored for the evaluation of project activities.

Process Evaluation

The process evaluation will document and measure the degree to which grant activities were implemented as intended. The planned process metrics to be tracked for the evaluation of project activities include:

- Number of FTE staff assigned to ORT, MVT, and MVAT activities
- Number of formal partnerships established
- Number of operations related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT completed
- Number and type of equipment procured and deployed
- Number of grant-funded trainings completed by officers, detectives, analysts, and other staff
- Number of ORT, MVT, and MVAT investigations in which stolen merchandise was recovered

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- Number of youths referred to the Youth Diversion Program
- Number of youths enrolled in the Youth Diversion Program
- Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

Outcome Evaluation

The outcome evaluation will assess the extent to which the project successfully met each of the goals identified. Metrics that will be tracked include:

- Number of ORT, MVT, and MVAT incidents reported, including change over time
- Number of arrests related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT
- Number of ORT, MVT, and MVAT-related referrals to the DA's office
- Improved understanding and expertise related to ORT activities
- Number of referred youths who complete the Youth Diversion Program
- Number of youths who complete the Youth Diversion Program and are not re-arrested within 6 months

Data Collection Matrix

A BPD ORT Data Collection Matrix was developed (see Appendix A) to ensure accurate, valid, and consistent tracking of evaluation metrics throughout the grant period. Metrics have been defined for the planned project activities, including identification of data sources, classification of metrics (process versus outcome), and alignment with the overarching project objectives. The Data Collection Matrix was designed to ensure that evaluation planning, coordination, and implementation fulfill both the funding requirements and information needs of the BSCC and BPD.

Appendix A. Evaluation Data Matrix

Metric	Data Source	Collection Frequency	Type	Related Goal(s)
Number of FTE staff assigned to ORT, MVT, and MVAT activities	Payroll Records	Quarterly	Process	1, 2
Number and type of equipment deployed	Administrative Records	Ongoing	Process	1, 2
Number of formal partnerships established	Administrative Records	Quarterly	Process	1, 2
Number of operations related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT completed	Administrative Records	Ongoing	Process	1, 2
Number of ORT, MVT, and MVAT incidents reported	Operations Tracking Log	Ongoing	Outcome	1, 2
Number of arrests related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT	Operations Tracking Log; RMS	Ongoing	Outcome	1, 2
Number of ORT, MVT, and MVAT-related referrals to the DA's office	Operations Tracking Log	Ongoing	Outcome	1, 2
Number of grant-funded trainings completed by officers, detectives, analysts, and other staff	Administrative Records	Quarterly	Process	1, 2
Improved understanding and expertise related to ORT activities	Evaluative Observations	Quarterly	Outcome	1, 2
Number of ORT, MVT, and MVAT investigations in which stolen merchandise was recovered	Operations Tracking Log	Ongoing	Process	1, 2
Number of youths referred to the Youth Diversion Program	Youth Diversion Program Records	Ongoing	Process	3
Number of youths enrolled in the Youth Diversion Program	Youth Diversion Program Records	Quarterly	Process	3
Number of youths who complete the Youth Diversion Program	Youth Diversion Program Records	Quarterly	Outcome	3

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Number of youths who complete the Youth Diversion Program and are not re-arrested within 6 months	Youth Diversion Program Records	Annually	Outcome	3
Successes, challenges, and lessons learned	Quarterly Progress Reports; Key Stakeholder Interviews	Once – Year 3	-	1, 2, 3