

ORT Prevention Grant Program

Local Evaluation Plan

Organized Retail and Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention
Program

Salinas Police Department

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Date: April 1, 2024

Project Period:

October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2026

Project Background

Salinas, the county seat and largest city of Monterey County, has a growing organized retail theft problem and a high rate of motor vehicle theft that had been on the decline until very recently. Salinas’s population of 163,542 is 79% Hispanic, 12% White, and 15% other races or more than one race. The majority speak a language other than English at home, and nearly 17% of families are below the poverty level.

For the past decade and a half, Salinas’s main crime problem has been violent crime, specifically gun and gang violence. Violence peaked in 2015 when there were 40 homicides, 34 the result of shootings, and an unprecedented Part I violent crime rate of 697.7 per 100,000 residents. Amid many prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies, those very high numbers dropped to eight homicides in 2020 and a violent crime rate of 480.8 per 100,000. In 2023, there were 11 homicides, eight of them the result of shootings, and a continued lower violent crime rate of 468.5 per 100,000 residents.

Over the past several years, Salinas has experienced a substantial rise in organized retail theft (ORT). These thefts include instances of classic “smash-and-grab” thefts committed at our high-end retail stores (e.g., Ulta Beauty, Victoria’s Secret, Macy’s, Sunglass Hut) and obvious thefts for the purposes of resale, committed by a small group, a couple, or seemingly an individual. Our baseline and Quarter 1 ORT statistics show the City experienced an average of 10.7 ORTs per month in the baseline year, increasing to 12.7/month in the first quarter of the grant period:

Organized Retail Thefts	Oct 2022- Sept 2023	Oct -Dec 2023
Number of ORTs	128	38
Average number/month	10.7	12.7
Number of arrests	12	1
Number of DA referrals	10	4

Motor vehicle thefts (MVTs) in Salinas have decreased significantly from the city’s high of 1,932 MV thefts in 2015 yet remain a major problem. As shown below, MV thefts currently number almost 50 per month.

Motor Vehicle Thefts	Oct 2022- Sept 2023	Oct -Dec 2023
Number of MVTs	570	147
Average number/month	47.5	49
Number of arrests	49	12
Number of DA referrals	37	0
Percent recovered	89%	82%

To address the problems of organized retail and motor vehicle theft, the Salinas Police Department will establish an Organized Retail and Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention (ORT) Team tasked with preventing and reducing organized retail and motor vehicle theft through the development of strategic plans with key partners and concerted efforts to increase and improve investigations and apprehend suspects. The ORT Team will be headed by the Investigations Commander and will include civilian Investigative Specialists, detectives, and officers from patrol and investigations.

The ORT Team will work with high-risk and repeat retail targets to develop and implement prevention strategies as needed, such as enhanced video surveillance, radio-frequency identification, access control systems, and loss prevention software. Strategies for MVT will include expanded investigations, even post-recovery to identify suspects. Additional collection of video surveillance and review of LPR systems will be conducted to identify potentially associated vehicles for investigative leads. We believe repeat offenders are responsible for a significant number of MVTs and hope that focusing on this will reduce our MVTs. These prevention plans will be supported by a number of grant-supported technologies, including merchandise tracking devices, fixed and mobile license plate readers, and advanced camera systems capable of producing actionable intelligence.

The ORT Team, and particularly the full-time Investigative Specialists, will thoroughly investigate ORTs and MVTs. Their work will include evidence collection, working with retailers, reviewing video and digital evidence, processing electronic evidence, data analysis, responding to crime and recovery scenes, interviewing those involved, and court preparation. This work is supported by the grant-funded new forensic computer, additional computer equipment, and Cellebrite software which lawfully unlocks, decrypts, and extracts digital evidence from mobile devices.

There are not projects similar to this one underway by other agencies or community-based organizations, although of course the use of LPRs and video surveillance has increased substantially in recent years, including in nearby cities. The use of LPR technology has made it easier to identify and recover stolen vehicles in and near Salinas. This is one reason MVTs have decreased in Salinas in recent years, and declines should continue as we increase the numbers of LPRs in the City. In addition to the use of advanced technology, the decline in MVTs may be attributed in part to changes in vehicles – old Honda Accords and other commonly stolen vehicles are disappearing and newer vehicles are more difficult to steal.

ORT Team members will receive specialized training in the use of the new technology and prevention and reduction strategies related to ORT and MVT. This will include online training, trainers brought to Salinas, and attendance at annual conferences and training workshops.

The ORT/MVT prevention and reduction strategies may be conducted city-wide, but we expect to concentrate in the areas with the highest rates of ORT and MVT. In the case of ORT, these strategies will be concentrated on the north side of the city, primarily in Northridge Mall, home to Salinas's higher-end retail stores and the primary targets to date of major ORTs. We hope the retailers themselves will evolve into primary partners in the development and implementation of prevention and reduction strategies. With the addition of Investigative Specialists, we intend to dive deeper into the data of current and historical MVTs to see if there are areas with higher geographic concentrations, or increased frequency during specific days or times. Additional investigations will also allow us to work toward associated vehicles or patterns of organization.

We have established the following goals and objectives for the project:

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Establish an Organized Retail and Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention (ORT) Program within the Investigations Unit to prevent and reduce organized retail theft and motor vehicle theft.

- a. Establish an ORT Team composed of detectives, sworn officers, and civilian investigators.
- b. Develop and implement plans and systems for the prevention and reduction of organized retail theft and motor vehicle theft.
- c. Acquire the technology and establish sustainable systems to support the use of merchandise tracking devices, fixed LPR cameras, and forensic software.

Goal 2: Prevent and reduce organized retail theft.

- a. Understand better the scope and dynamics of ORT.
- b. Increase the apprehension of offenders.
- c. Reduce the number of ORTs by 10% per year.

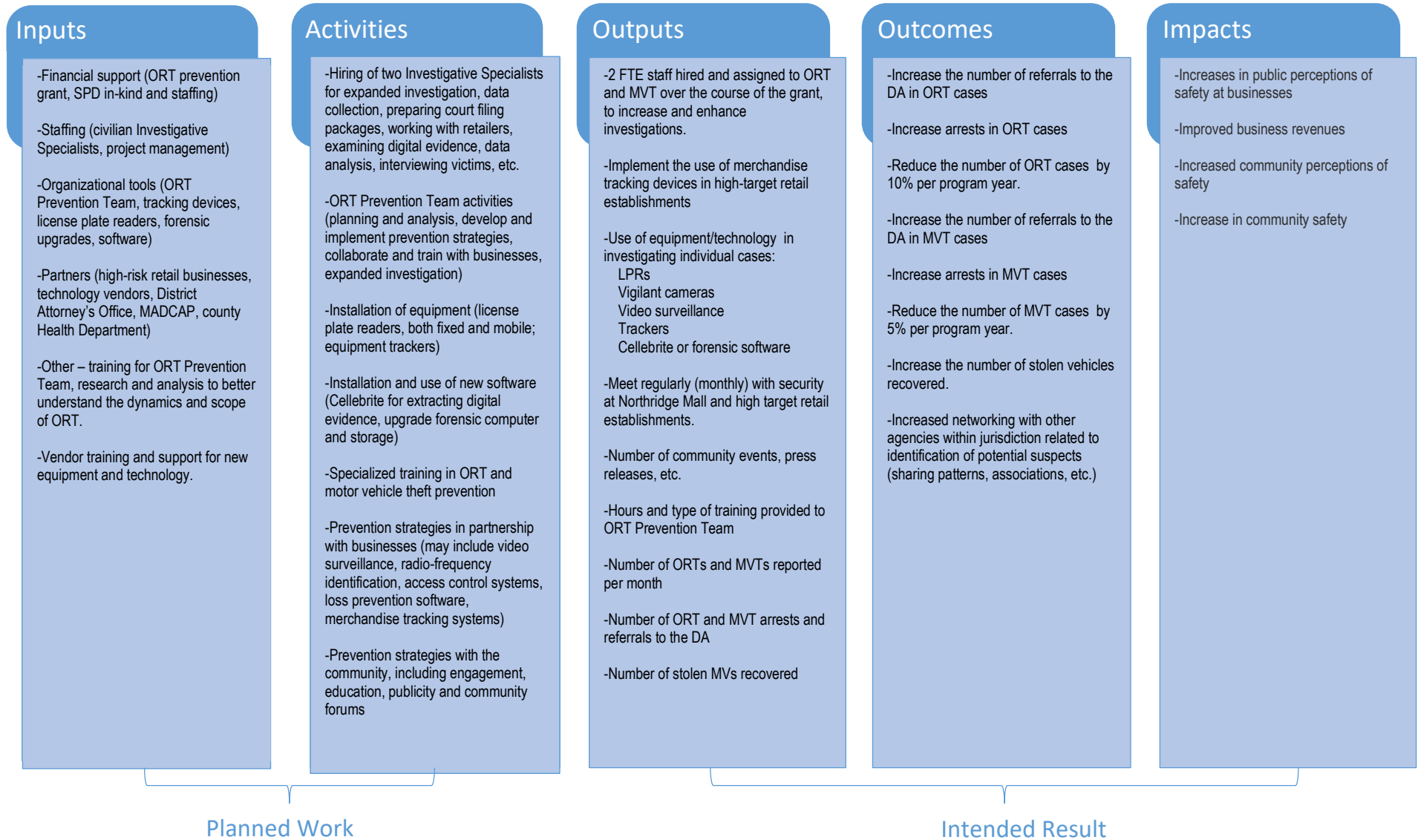
Goal 3: Prevent and reduce motor vehicle theft.

- a. Increase the apprehension of offenders.
- b. Increase the number of stolen vehicles recovered.
- c. Decrease the number of motor vehicle thefts by 5% per year.

Project Logic Model

The logic model below represents how our project is expected to function, starting with the resources needed and the activities proposed. The specific prevention strategies will be developed in concert with our partners as the project proceeds, so the numbers of specific types of strategies are unknown at this time. The activities are expected to lead to the Outputs, where the use of new equipment/technology, meetings with key partners, training, and the immediate outcomes of the number of arrests and DA referrals will be tracked. The major outcomes are the reduction in the number of ORT and MVT incidents over time. Impacts are expected long-term outcomes that will occur after the grant period ends.

Salinas ORT and MVT Prevention Program



Process Evaluation Method and Design

A comprehensive evaluation of the Salinas ORT and MVT Prevention Program will be conducted. The process evaluation will document how the program is implemented and whether it is implemented as intended. It will document the composition and activities of the ORT Team, track the installation and use of new equipment and technology, document the prevention strategies and business/community engagement activities, and collect and report statistics needed for quarterly reports and the outcome evaluation.

The evaluation uses a mixed-methods non-experimental design, relying primarily on description and pre/post comparisons of quantitative data to analyze changes over time. An evaluation matrix below outlines the program inputs, data to be collected, source of data, and frequency of data collection. Process information to be collected includes:

1. Composition (number of civilian staff, sworn officers, and detectives) and activities of the ORT Team.
2. Installation and use of new equipment (LPRs, equipment trackers, etc.) and technology (Cellebrite and forensic software).
3. Number and nature of meetings with businesses and the community.
4. Description of prevention strategies.
5. Description of community engagement and education.
6. Amount and type of training received by the ORT Team.
7. Number of ORT and MVT incidents.

The local evaluator will visit the ORT Team at least monthly to collect process data and will meet periodically with major business partners as they emerge (e.g., Northridge Mall, Macy's, etc.) to document prevention strategies and collaboration with the ORT Team. The major sources of process information will be SPD's records management system (RMS), interviews with ORT Team members, program documents, and specialized tracking databases developed for the ORT and MVT Prevention Program. These specialized databases will include (a) simple tracking forms/spreadsheets (internal databases) to track the installation of equipment, meetings, training hours, etc., to be developed by the ORT Team and evaluator; and (b) a detailed spreadsheet for tracking ORT incidents and their key elements, developed by the ORT Team. A detailed ORT spreadsheet was created to meet the data requirements of the Baseline and first Quarterly Progress Reports and will be maintained and expanded over time; it is referred to as the ORT Database in the Evaluation Matrix. It tracks key data for each ORT incident (e.g., business, location, total value of stolen property, offense code, arrest, DA referral, time of day, day of week, suspect count, use of LPRs, classification, longitude and latitude (for mapping), use of trackers, items stolen, etc.). The specialized databases will be maintained by the ORT Team's Investigative Specialists and reviewed for accuracy and used for data collection by the evaluation

team. The Investigative Division's Crime Analysts will provide data extracted from SPD's records management system and Peregrine, as needed.

The evaluation team will interview different ORT Team members and collect the ORT Database and RMS figures monthly. They will make visits to randomly selected locations to confirm the installation of LPRs and Vigilant cameras and review a bit of the images captured.

The process data will be reported on a quarterly basis, primarily through the Quarterly Progress Reports. Quarterly monitoring will identify trends and challenges and enable program modifications to be made as needed. Investigations Commander Jim Arensdorf, Detective Sergeant Kendall Gray, and Police Services Administrator Tonya Erickson comprise the leadership of the ORT prevention program, responsible for monitoring activities and making any program decisions regarding changes. The evaluation team will work in partnership with them, providing feedback and resources to strengthen program operations. Their quarterly compilations will be shared with the entire ORT Team.

The Local Evaluation Report will contain a descriptive account of the ORT Team's activities, the prevention activities implemented, and the use of new equipment and technology, based on the information gathered via the process evaluation. The narrative will be accompanied by tables and graphs as needed to report activities and immediate outcomes. It will be completed three months after the end of the program grant period.

Evaluation Matrix for the Process Evaluation			
Input/Resource/Activity/Output	Data Element(s)	Data Source(s)	Frequency of Data Collection by the Evaluation
Two civilian Investigative Specialists, detectives, and officers to be assigned to ORT/MVT	# and type of staff assigned to ORT, # of staff hours	Internal database, employee records	Quarterly
Install 72 fixed LPRs and 10 Vigilant camera systems	# of fixed LPRs and Vigilant cameras installed	Internal database	Quarterly
Number of ORT incidents	# of ORT incidents	ORT Database, records management system (RMS)	Monthly
Number of MVT incidents	# of MVT incidents	ORT Database, RMS	Monthly
Use of LPR and Vigilant images and Cellebrite software in ORT/MVT investigations	# of cases in which LPR and Vigilant images were used in investigations, investigator reports re. images and Cellebrite use	ORT Database, interviews with ORT Team	Monthly
Prevention strategies in partnership with businesses	# and type of strategies launched, # of merchandise trackers used, results of tracker use	Internal databases, interviews with ORT Team and business representatives	Quarterly
Business and community engagement/education activities	# and type of events, # of social media posts, # of educational materials distributed, # of press releases	Internal databases, interviews with ORT Team	Quarterly
Training for ORT Team members	# of hours, type, and delivery method of training received	Internal database	Quarterly

Outcome Evaluation Method and Design

The outcome evaluation will look at key indicators over time using a pre-post design, comparing the level of the indicators in the baseline period, one year prior to the funding of the program, to each of the three year annual totals during the grant-funded program. The outcome indicators are the number of ORTs, number of MVTs, number of arrests in ORT and MVT cases, number of ORT and MVT cases referred to the district attorney, and number of stolen motor vehicles recovered. The comparison periods are:

Baseline year: October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023

Year 1: October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024

Year 2: October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025

Year 3: October 1, 2025 to September 30, 2026

These figures will be collected monthly from the ORT Team by the evaluation team, and reported in the Quarterly Progress Reports. The data will be captured in the ORT Database and RMS for ORT cases and in the records management system for MVT cases.

The data will be managed and analyzed with Microsoft Excel and SAS Enterprise Guide 7.1. The outcomes will be presented in the final Local Evaluation Report in graphic and tabular formats with simple descriptive statistics (percentages, averages) used to examine differences from year to year. Through their partnerships with other agencies and businesses and their training, the ORT Team will stay abreast of local and regional programs, policies, and system changes that may affect the outcomes of the program. This information will be shared with the evaluation team and included in the Local Evaluation Report.

We hope the ORT Prevention Program will have the long-term impacts listed in the logic model, that businesses will increasingly be seen as safe places to shop, their revenues will improve, and community perceptions of safety and actual safety will increase. As those impacts are in the long term, they will not be measured during the grant period.

Evaluation Matrix for the Outcome Evaluation			
Outcome	Definition	Data Source(s)	Frequency of Data Collection by the Evaluation
Reduce the number of ORTs over time	Decrease the number of ORTs by 10% each program year	ORT Database, RMS	Monthly
Increase arrests in ORT cases	Increase in the number of arrests in ORT cases over the months of the grant period	ORT Database, RMS	Monthly
Increase referrals to the DA in ORT cases	Increase in the number of referrals to the DA in ORT cases over the months of the grant period	ORT Database, RMS	Monthly
Reduce the number of MVTs over time	Decrease the number of MVTs by 5% each program year	RMS	Monthly
Increase arrests in MVT cases	Increase in the number of arrests in MVT cases over the months of the grant period	RMS	Monthly
Increase referrals to the DA in MVT cases	Increase in the number of referrals to the DA in MVT cases over the months of the grant period	RMS	Monthly
Increase stolen vehicle recoveries	Increase in the number of stolen vehicles recovered over the months of the grant period	RMS	Monthly