

CASE STUDY

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA



In 2019, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) invited Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to participate in the National Public Safety Partnership (PSP). PSP is a DOJ-wide program that helps participating cities address serious violent crime challenges through coordinated training and technical assistance (TTA) over a three-year engagement. PSP facilitates the development of data-driven, evidence-based strategies tailored to each city's unique needs. In 2022, the Baton Rouge PSP expanded its focus to include the entire East Baton Rouge Parish. Baton Rouge and East Baton Rouge Parish participated in the PSP initiative through September 2023.

ABOUT BATON ROUGE

Per the 2020 Census, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, has a population of 225,128 and encompasses 88.52 square miles. Baton Rouge is the second most populous city in the State of Louisiana behind New Orleans. The East Baton Rouge Parish (which includes the City of Baton Rouge) has a population of 456,781 and encompasses 470 square miles.

The primary local law enforcement agency in the Baton Rouge PSP was the Baton Rouge Police Department (BRPD). As of January 2022, BRPD was allotted 696 sworn and 102 nonsworn employees and employed 588 sworn and 74 nonsworn employees. Upon joining the PSP, Baton Rouge faced a high level of violent crime, with 936.33 per 100,000 residents reported in 2019.



NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PARTICIPATION

In early 2020, the Baton Rouge partners developed a charter to outline their roles and responsibilities in the program and to set expectations for each other's involvement. This collaboration continued throughout the engagement and into their strategic planning. In March 2022, the Baton Rouge PSP convened a strategic planning group that developed a comprehensive plan to reduce gun violence.¹ The long-term strategic outcome of the plan is as follows:

The East Baton Rouge Gun Violence Collaborative—which consists of local, state, and federal law enforcement, other municipal and Parish agencies, and business and community partners—will reduce gun violence over the next three years using strategic collaborations and resource sharing focusing on community-based approaches, individuals and groups engaged in violence, and locations where violence is occurring.

As leaders, I believe we all see value in bringing in outside subject matter experts to assist in strategic planning. The reality of local politics can sometimes interfere in collaborative efforts. The value of having PSP leadership facilitate the strategic planning process not only minimized local political influence, PSP presented a safe space for all stakeholders to feel comfortable and engaged in the process."

— Chief Murphy Paul, Jr.

At this time, the Baton Rouge PSP expanded its collaboration to encompass the East Baton Rouge Parish, by inviting its regional partners, including the surrounding departments in Baker, Central, and Zachary; the city constable; college police departments; and probation and parole. They retitled its efforts The East Baton Rouge Gun Violence Collaborative (herein the "Collaborative").

¹ Learn more about the plan and Baton Rouge PSP's progress here: <https://www.brla.gov/2921/East-Baton-Rouge-Public-Safety-Plan>.

Participating agencies included:

- Baker Police Department
- Baton Rouge Mayor-President's Office
- Baton Rouge City Constable
- Baton Rouge Community College Police Department
- BRPD
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF)
- Central Police Department
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)
- East Baton Rouge District Attorney's Office (EBRDA)
- East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Louisiana State Police
- Louisiana State University Police Department
- Probation and Parole, State of Louisiana–Baton Rouge
- Southern University Police Department
- TRUCE
- US Attorney's Office (USAO)—Middle District of Louisiana
- United States Marshals Service (USMS)
- Zachary Police Department

Through the course of its PSP engagement, Baton Rouge centered its efforts on four focus areas to reduce violent crime: community engagement, criminal justice collaboration, environmental factors facilitating and contributing to crime, and enforcement efforts. These areas are also outlined in the Collaborative's strategic plan as shown in the table below.

Baton Rouge PSP Strategic Plan Focus Areas	Corresponding Goal in Strategic Plan
Community engagement	The Collaborative is increasing investments in community outreach, community engagement, and partnerships focusing on reducing gun violence.
Criminal justice collaboration	The Collaborative is coordinating and enhancing law enforcement partnerships to investigate, prosecute, and reduce gun violence.
Environmental factors	The parish is leveraging municipal services to address the conditions that contribute to gun violence.
Enforcement efforts	The Collaborative is employing sound means and methods to identify and concentrate efforts on violent persons, groups, and places to reduce gun violence.

As part of their strategic planning efforts, partners identified actions they could take to support the goals and long-term strategic outcome identified in the plan. Below are examples of the activity's partners undertook in support of the plan, which demonstrates how the Collaborative worked throughout the PSP to build its capacity to combat violent crime. The Baton Rouge PSP received a variety of training and technical assistance to support their violent crime reduction activities, some of which are noted in the call out box to the right.



These collaborative activities and capacity building were reflected in crime reductions the site experienced during its PSP engagement. In 2022, there were 115 homicides in Baton Rouge, a decrease of 21 percent compared to 2021, when there were 150 homicides. By May 2023, the East Baton Rouge Parish experienced a 35 percent reduction in homicides (compared to January through May 2022), the lowest the parish had experienced since 2019.² The Collaborative has actively demonstrated a commitment to transparency and accountability sharing their strategic plan and quarterly progress with violence reduction on a public-facing website.³

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Through the Baton Rouge PSP, the Mayor-President's Office and the East Baton Rouge law enforcement partners collaborated with the community to reduce violent crime, which was goal number 1 of the Collaborative's strategic plan. In support of these efforts, the Collaborative implemented community outreach and intervention initiatives (including to area schools) and established a criminal justice foundation.

Creation of foundation. In 2020, the Baton Rouge PSP underwent a grants landscape review and subsequently created the Baton Rouge Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Foundation. The creation of the foundation assisted efforts to enhance public safety in Baton Rouge, specifically concerning technology and community engagement. On August 16, 2021, the Baton Rouge Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Foundation announced that it was well on its way to raising \$150,000 to fund, upgrade, and replace security cameras in downtown Baton Rouge. The project included replacing 19 antiquated cameras and adding 10 more cameras; the footage from these cameras will be streamed into BRPD's real-time crime center. The Foundation also developed a program that teaches young drivers what to expect during a traffic stop, and later received funding to work with the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, the Office of Motor Vehicles, and the Louisiana State Police on this initiative.

Federal partner engagement. Through PSP, DEA increased its engagement with community members in the East Baton Rouge Parish. DEA hosted several events, such as a Virtual Summer Academy and Virtual Community Conversations around drug prevention and education, throughout the PSP engagement as part of their Operation Engage to increase opioid awareness. BRPD also partnered with DEA in early 2022 to provide a six-week Citizen's Academy consisting of a series of classes to raise awareness of operations and foster relationships with the community.

Community outreach and intervention. In 2020, the City of Baton Rouge announced the **Baton Rouge Community Street Team (BRCST)** using Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act funding.⁴ BRCST is a community-based violence reduction strategy that hires, trains, and deploys outreach workers and high-risk interventionists in zip codes experiencing high rates of

EXAMPLES OF TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO THE BATON ROUGE PSP SITE

PEER EXCHANGES

Baltimore Police Department, MD

Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, NV

Chicago Police Department, IL

TRAINING

Harvard Public Safety 2022 & 2023

ESRI ArcGIS for analysts and command staff



2 Katie Easter, "Data shows homicide rate is down 35%, lowest since 2017," WBRZ, May 4, 2023, <https://www.wbrz.com/news/data-shows-homicide-rate-is-down-35-lowest-since-2017>.

3 Parish of East Baton Rouge, "East Baton Rouge Public Safety Plan," <https://www.brla.gov/2921/East-Baton-Rouge-Public-Safety-Plan>. Accessed February 2, 2024.

4 Baton Rouge Community Street Team, 2021, www.brcst.org.

violence. They also provide case management services to those at greatest risk of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence. In October 2022, the City of Baton Rouge received an FY 2022 Office of Justice Programs Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative grant for \$2 million to build capacity and sustain community violence intervention programs. The funds will support many of the initiatives Baton Rouge is engaged with through PSP, including BRCST, TRUCE (the focused deterrence initiative run through EBRDA) and 100 Black Men. In 2023, the prosecutor-led program received additional federal funding.⁵

School-based outreach and intervention. The Mayor-President's Office also worked directly with six local schools to strengthen conditions for student learning and healthy development. Educators, community members, families, and students worked together to transform environments to facilitate student learning and healthy development. School-based outreach and intervention includes case management, freshman seminar sessions, partnering with nonprofit organizations to share career paths and life skills, intervening in, and mediating conflicts, holding space for crisis responses to violence, and forming individual connections with students to encourage a safe, hopeful, and healthy environment.

Peer learning. The Baton Rouge PSP has been a model for other PSP sites looking to enhance their community engagement. In early 2022, the Chief and Public Information Officer of the Shreveport Police Department (SPD) visited Baton Rouge. While visiting, the SPD team discussed community violence initiatives and the use of technology to reduce violent crime. They also attended a BRPD Advisory Council meeting. Following the peer learning opportunity, SPD adopted the Baton Rouge advisory council model and began meetings in late 2022. In addition, after learning about the benefits of and process for launching the Baton Rouge Law and Criminal Justice Foundation, SPD worked to launch a police foundation.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COLLABORATION

Through PSP, local, state, and federal law enforcement partners worked together to prevent, intervene, and prosecute violent crime. This supported goal number 2 of the Collaborative's strategic plan, *to coordinate and enhance law enforcement partnerships to investigate, prosecute, and reduce gun violence.*

The Baton Rouge PSP partners collaborated to prevent and reduce domestic violence in the parish, particularly as it spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic. In October 2020, the Capital Area Family Justice Center opened in Baton Rouge. The center co-locates services for victims of domestic violence in East Baton Rouge. In 2020, law enforcement officials in Baton Rouge also launched the "Stop the Loss" initiative to detain domestic violence suspects still at large. The initiative was a joint effort between BRPD, the East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office, USMS, and EBRDA. As of October 2020, BRPD had arrested 18 individuals with domestic violence-related warrants as part of the initiative.⁶

The multistakeholder collaboration also led to the arrests of individuals contributing to gun crime in the parish. On April 6, 2022, after a month-long investigation into a violent group operating in Baton Rouge, PSP partners executed nine search warrants in East Baton Rouge and one in Livingston Parish, resulting in eight arrests.⁷ The investigation was led by the East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office, Livingston Parish Sheriff's Office, DEA, and the Louisiana State Police. The Zachary Police Department, BRPD, ATF, Homeland Security Investigations, and National Guard also participated in the operation. Those arrested had warrants for various crimes, including felon in possession of a firearm (four individuals), possession of a stolen firearm (two individuals), possession with intent to distribute (five individuals), and attempted murder of a police officer (one individual), among other charges. In addition, through the investigation, local and federal partners identified numerous locations used by the group to distribute and store narcotics, illicit proceeds, and illegal firearms. Partners also seized 20 firearms, a Glock switch, various narcotics, and approximately \$55,000.

5 Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, "High-Risk Youth Crime and Violence Diversion Program," August 10, 2023, <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/funding/awards/15pjdp-23-gg-00354-brnd>.

6 Domestic violence task force arrests more than a dozen fugitives in Baton Rouge area (wbrz.com), October 6, 2020.

7 Perry Robinson, "Sheriff: 8 'Banks Town Mafia' members arrested; large amount of drugs, guns seized," WAFB, Apr. 6, 2022, <https://www.wafb.com/2022/04/06/sheriff-discuss-multiple-seizures-drugs-guns-ubr-parish/>.

Other examples of criminal justice collaboration include the following:

- USAO established a Violent Crime Strikeforce to assess which cases should be referred for federal prosecution.
- ATF supported local agencies through the Crime Gun Intelligence Center and contributed a K-9 to BRPD to assist with canvassing gun violence scenes.
- The FBI was a critical partner in several high-profile investigations focused on groups and individuals known for their contributions to violent crime in the area.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Following goal number 3 of its strategic plan, since the onset of PSP, the Collaborative focused its efforts on leveraging municipal services to improve the environmental conditions that facilitate violent crime. Two major areas of effort involved nuisance properties and addressing blight.



Repeat locations. In 2020, EBRDA and BRPD coordinated to issue an injunction against a local apartment complex (a nuisance property) consistently plagued with violence. BRPD worked with the local judge to issue an injunction, prompting the complex owner to take remedial steps to decrease crime (e.g., install lighting, cameras, and security).

Blight abatement. The Mayor-President's Office and BRPD also collaborated to address environmental conditions. The Mayor-President's Office developed a **Blight Boot Camp** where they engage residents in neighborhoods to take ownership of their areas and work together to beautify Baton Rouge. Through this effort, they've also taught residents to use the 311 portal to notify the city of areas for improvement. In October 2022, BRPD created a blight initiative form for use by officers when they encounter blight in the city or when it is reported by a citizen. The form is then emailed to the city and the 311 system where it is prioritized for response by the impound and auto theft division. PSP suggested the police department develop such a prioritization process for blight remediation to build legitimacy between the police and community.

ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS

The East Baton Rouge public safety partners identified the use of crime analysis, data, and intelligence to drive enforcement efforts as goal number 4 in their strategic plan. The Collaborative employed sound means and methods to identify and concentrate efforts on violent persons, groups, and places to reduce gun violence. Specifically, it used data to inform the deployment of personnel and resources, focusing on those areas with the most violent crime; improved the provision of crime analysis information through CompStat and dashboards; and worked to establish and build a real-time crime center.

Hot-spot policing. Since the onset of the Baton Rouge PSP, partners were dedicated to using evidence-based decision making in the deployment of their personnel and resources. Prior to their focus on reducing violent crime at the parish level, the Baton Rouge PSP partners focused their efforts on individual geographic areas to determine if their efforts were successful. The first Baton Rouge PSP hot spot was located within the city limits, and BRPD saw a 25 percent reduction in violent crime after the department focused on that area (for the period of January–April 2020, compared to the same period in 2019). Citywide violent crime rates remained approximately the same when comparing 2019 to 2020. The PSP partners later added two additional hot spots after witnessing initial success with the strategy before expanding their focus for PSP to the entire parish.

In October 2022, BRPD launched an interdepartmental task force (periodically supplemented by the Louisiana State Police) focused on four subzones in the city. Using personnel from all divisions and bureaus within the department to supplement uniform patrol, the task force provided extra patrols and engaged community members in specific areas identified through crime data analysis. The overarching goal was to reduce gun violence in the identified areas. The previously identified

geographic areas inside the city limits were included or adjacent to the areas selected by the task force. These efforts contributed to the reduction of homicides and nonfatal shootings in the identified areas.

Data-driven decision making. Following TTA from PSP on nonfatal shootings, BRPD developed a nonfatal shooting database, which compiles all data, records, and correspondence related to each nonfatal shooting incident. Information is added to the database through the stages of the investigation. Database records can be shared via email, link, text notification, or custom phone application. The database is intended to keep command staff and others abreast of incidents as they happen and the magnitude of follow-up that comes with case investigation, along with quick access to statistics.

BRPD also received TTA through PSP to train its personnel on ArcGIS dashboards and [released a video](#) in 2021 describing how the technology is used to improve police operations. In February 2023, BRPD launched a crime trend dashboard to share information with the public about crime in Baton Rouge. This was enabled by the training PSP provided to analysts and command staff on ESRI dashboards at the beginning of their PSP engagement.

In October 2022, after attending a peer exchange at the Baltimore Police Department in Maryland, BRPD piloted a CompStat initiative in its agency. The department is working with the CompStat360 program to validate its model and assess areas for improvement.

Real-time crime center (RTCC). After participating in peer exchanges in 2020 to observe successful RTCCs in other PSP sites, BRPD established a RTCC to build upon their data-driven decision making and enhance investigations. The FBI also supported the RTCC by integrating FBI analysts into the RTCC for training and resources. As part of the build-out of their RTCC, BRPD [received approval](#) from the Metro Council to gain access to cameras in the Sherwood Forest area. The Broadmoor Crime District also installed security cameras and license-plate readers at the neighborhood entrances and [provided access](#) to BRPD for intelligence purposes. In 2020, the Connect Blue Baton Rouge Directory also [availed its resources](#) to BRPD for crime-fighting purposes. In 2021, the Baton Rouge Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Foundation [raised \\$150,000](#) to support the upgrades and replacements for security cameras in downtown Baton Rouge. The city also refreshed the downtown cameras that integrated with the RTCC and continues to work with businesses to develop public-private partnerships and utilize business camera feeds.



KEY LESSONS FOR SUCCESS

A primary success of the PSP initiative in Baton Rouge was their commitment to implementing their strategic plan. They moved words on a page to action, resulting in desired outcomes. This is not easy work, and all the partners made it happen. They also had the courage and political will to announce their intentions and then report to the public on progress and outcomes. The partners had hard conversations and held each other accountable for doing the work. These actions, among others, offer lessons to other jurisdictions in their collective efforts to reduce violence. Their efforts demonstrate that success depends on:

- Ensuring that all key and necessary partners are brought into the partnership
- Developing and using a plan to focus on priority issues and direct efforts and resources
- Respecting everyone's participation and positions and willingness to compromise
- Ensuring the roles and responsibilities of partners are clear and doable
- Establishing a leadership team that has the authority to make decisions and direct the work of others
- Being willing to hold all partners accountable for doing the work
- Developing meaningful metrics that measure progress and impact
- Being transparent with the community on efforts and outcomes