

CASE STUDY

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Attacking violent crime at the grass roots level through collective efficacy



The National Public Safety Partnership provides an innovative framework for the US Department of Justice (DOJ) to enhance its support of state, local, and tribal law enforcement and prosecution authorities in aggressively investigating and prosecuting violent criminals, especially those involved in gun crime, drug trafficking, and gang violence. PSP enables cities to consult with and receive coordinated training and technical assistance (TTA) and an array of resources from DOJ to support violence reduction strategies as part of a three-year engagement. Nashville, Tennessee, participated in the DOJ National Public Safety Partnership (PSP) from September 2016 to September 2019.



ABOUT NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

The City of Nashville, the largest city in Tennessee, is the county seat of Davidson County and is home to the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department (MNPD). The city population ranks 24th in the US according to estimates from the US Census Bureau, with a combined city-county resident population of 692,587. The metropolitan area (city and county) encompasses approximately 526 square miles. MNPD is responsible for law enforcement within the City of Nashville and Davidson County. MNPD is the 36th largest police agency in the US and is authorized 1,511 sworn officers; however, due to attrition and other factors, MNPD currently has about 1,384 officers. The agency runs about 1,361 patrol vehicles with mobile data terminals (MDTs), eight helicopters, and 13 police boats working out of eight precincts in support of operations. The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA) certifies the agency.

While participating in the PSP initiative, the city experienced an increase in violent crime in 2017 followed by a steady decrease in all violence in 2018 and 2019. The decrease in violent crime corresponded directly with the MNPD's expansion of analytical intelligence capabilities and the development of social network analysis (SNA). Year to date in 2019, the city has experienced a 4.2 percent decrease in all violent crime. Additionally, several violent crime categories are showing significant reductions in 2019.

Notable 2019 crime reduction trends include:

- A 21.1 percent reduction in homicides. This represents a three-year low in the city's annual homicide rate
- A 4.2 percent reduction in all aggravated assaults
- A 4.0 percent reduction in street robberies

Incidents of Crime in Nashville, TN, 2016-2019

	Category	2016	2017	2018	2019 YTD
Violent Crime	Aggravated assaults	4,934	5,072	5,022	3,266
	Forcible rapes	566	568	576	350
	Homicides	83	111	89	45
	Robberies	2,009	2,062	2,129	1,278
	Total violent crime	7,592	7,813	7,716	4,939
Property Crime	Burglaries	4,590	4,217	3,637	2,319
	Larceny-thefts	18,769	19,214	21,017	14,291
	Motor vehicle thefts	1,747	2,604	3,144	1,883
Total Crime	UCR Part 1	32,698	33,848	35,614	23,432

*2019 Represents reported crime through September 1, 2019.

PSP PARTICIPATION

Upon joining the initiative, Nashville identified four primary focus areas for the PSP engagement: reducing gang violence, building investigative capacities, increasing intelligence and analytical capabilities, and improving community engagement.

- Improve resources and capacity to advance technology-driven justice initiatives
- Better examine the trends, scope, and nature of violence within the Nashville Metropolitan Area

- Identify challenges within the homicide investigative process in relationship to national best practices
- Enhance crime analysis capacities and capabilities

The following local and federal partners participated in the Nashville PSP.

- Metropolitan Nashville Police Department
- District Attorney General of Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County
- US Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Tennessee (USAO-MDTN)
- US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)
- US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- US Marshals Service (USMS)

BUILDING INVESTIGATIVE CAPACITIES

The MNPD has traditionally followed a decentralized investigations model. Within this model, the primary investigative units are located in the patrol precincts and fall under the direct command of precinct commanders. Within Nashville, this decentralized approach has empowered precinct commanders and helped detectives better understand crime trends and patterns. Despite these advantages, the department leadership team was concerned that the precinct investigative units lacked the expertise and structure to investigate homicides. In response to these concerns, PSP subject experts provide TTA on homicide investigatory and prosecution functions in August 2017. As a result, the MNPD developed a cross-precinct hybrid homicide team in the Hermitage and South precincts. The team consists of a small group of detectives who work across the two district boundaries. They share resources and draw from the collective expertise within each precinct. This cross-precinct hybrid team has strengthened homicide investigations while allowing the agency to maintain its decentralized investigative model.

INCREASING INTELLIGENCE AND ANALYTICAL CAPABILITIES

Nashville leveraged a wide range of PSP expertise and resources to enhance its capacity to conduct intelligence and crime analysis. In October 2017, PSP subject experts provide technical assistance to enhance the crime analysis capabilities of the department. This resulted in a set of recommendations to maximize the utility of in-house administrative and contextual data maintained by county GIS. Other recommendations included a structural reorganization of the crime analysis staff, a civilization strategy for crime analysis positions, and the identification of training and partnership opportunities. Concurrently, members of MNPD's crime analysis team attended SNA training at the Naval Post Graduate School, and they received intensive on-site training on implementing a SNA platform. Because of these

NASHVILLE PSP PARTNERS



EXAMPLES OF TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO THE NASHVILLE PSP SITE

DEA El Paso Intelligence Center Peer Exchange (April 2017)

Naval Postgraduate School Symposium for Social Network Analysis Training (May 2017)

Homicide Investigations Training and Technical Assistance (August 2017)

Community Capacity Technical Assistance (August 2017)

Crime Analysis Capacity Technical Assistance (October 2017)

International Association of Crime Analysts Annual Training Symposium (October 2017, October 2018)

Collective Efficacy Training (February 2018)

Crime Analysis Community of Practice Meeting (April 2018)

Homicide Investigations Hybrid Team Training (April–May 2018)

FBI Digital Imaging and Video Recovery Team Training (May 2018)

Social Network Analysis Technical Assistance (2018)

Crime Analysis Trainings (for executives training and analysts) (2018)

FBI Advanced Homicide Investigations Courses (2019)

combined efforts, the department's analysts have significantly advanced their crime analysis capacity, particularly with respect to leveraging SNA as an investigatory intelligence tool. The MNPDP has developed a cutting-edge, user-friendly SNA application that allows department users to access incident and arrest data to visualize and assess social networks defined by co-arrest or victim-perpetrator association. While building this application, MNPDP personnel developed more extensive and dynamic SNA capacities using multiple sources of data and intelligence. The department is using these tools to identify violent offender networks, assess gang associations, and foster investigative leads. The use of SNA has also fostered closer collaboration and problem solving across the department. The crime analysis unit, the gang unit, and precinct personnel now collaborate regularly on SNA projects. SNA implementation has begun to foster similar synergies between MNPDP, the ATF local field office, the District Attorney's Office of Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, and the USAO-MDTN.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

At the start of its participation in PSP, Nashville identified community engagement as a primary focus area. In August 2017, subject experts provide technical assistance related to community capacity aiming to outline strategy to identify systemic community problems in the West and North precincts, which have been disproportionately impacted by crime and have little or no social cohesion. Teams of officers within both precincts were trained on core principles of community efficacy. These teams are currently working on proactive initiatives to stabilize neighborhoods and build trust and partnerships with community residents. Pilot neighborhoods of this initiative are experiencing significant reductions in violent crime, including a 42 percent reduction in serious violent crime from 2017 to 2018. As a result, MNPDP has expanded into a third district and is currently developing plans to expand this program into its most crime-ridden neighborhoods.

CONCLUSION

The City of Nashville made considerable progress in its capacity to address and prevent violence through the PSP. The PSP focused on helping the city establish strategic and effective partnerships to respond to violent crime. The most successful PSP initiatives in Nashville were the enhancement of the MNPDP's crime analysis capacity, the creation of a cross-precinct hybrid homicide investigation team, and the development of a community efficacy program in the West and North precincts. Additionally the city is now leveraging resources and sharing information at levels not previously possible. Nashville's leadership has expressed that the greatest asset of the PSP initiative is the professional community of support. They found the knowledgeable subject experts, peer visits, annual PSP Symposiums, and inter-city exchanges invaluable for sharing ideas and learning best practices. Nashville used these interactions to develop new strategies and enhance existing programs to address challenges confronting the city. Although many challenges still exist, PSP has helped Nashville establish a strong foundation for future growth. This foundation has allowed Nashville to become stronger and more effective in confronting violent crime in the city.