

CASE STUDY

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

Developing successful strategies and organizational buy-in with the PSP approach



New Orleans was selected to be part of the US Department of Justice's (DOJ's) National Public Safety Partnership (PSP) in March of 2016. The PSP is a DOJ-wide program that enables cities to consult with and receive coordinated training and technical assistance (and an array of resources) from DOJ to support violence reduction strategies as part of a three-year engagement. The PSP facilitates the development of data-driven, evidence-based strategies tailored to the unique local needs of participating cities to address serious violent crime challenges. New Orleans was part of the PSP initiative through September 2019.



ABOUT NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans is the most populous city in Louisiana with an estimated population of 391,006 as of 2018.¹ New Orleans is a consolidated city-parish, meaning that it functions as both the city of New Orleans and the Orleans Parish. The city of New Orleans is part of the larger New Orleans metropolitan area, which had an estimated population of more than 1.2 million in 2018.² New Orleans is on the banks of the Mississippi River and serves as a major port for the broader Gulf Coast region of the United States. The city encompasses approximately 169 square miles of land and 181 square miles of water. The population of New Orleans as of 2018 was 58.8 percent Black, 30.5 percent White, 5.6 percent Hispanic, and 2.8 percent Asian.³ The remaining percentage represents races and ethnicities not previously mentioned. New Orleans has a rich culture and is known worldwide for its Mardi Gras celebrations. The city of New Orleans was also devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and has been rebuilding and recovering ever since.

The New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) polices New Orleans with a jurisdiction of about 350 square miles, including all of the Orleans Parish and the eight police districts of the city.⁴ The superintendent of the NOPD is Shaun Ferguson. According to the Police Data Initiative, the NOPD force currently has 1,271 sworn officers.⁵ This is significantly fewer than the 1,742 officers that the NOPD had prior to Hurricane Katrina.⁶ In 2012, the NOPD entered into a consent decree with the US Department of Justice after an investigation alleged unconstitutional conduct by the NOPD.



A CQPress ranking of "The 25 Most Dangerous Cities in America" listed New Orleans as the 13th most dangerous city in the US in 2009.⁷ According to Uniform Crime Reporting data,

1 <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=new%20orleans%20population&g=1600000US2255000&lastDisplayedRow=32&table=DP05&tid=ACSDP1Y2018>.
2 <https://www.datacenterresearch.org/data-resources/population-by-parish/>
3 <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=new%20orleans%20population&g=1600000US2255000&lastDisplayedRow=93&table=DP05&tid=ACSDP1Y2018>.
4 <https://nola.gov/nopd/districts/>
5 <https://www.policedatainitiative.org/participating-agencies/new-orleans-louisiana-police/>
6 https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9243-1/index1.html
7 <https://www.businessinsider.com/25-most-dangerous-cities-2009-11#13-new-orleans-la-13>

from 2010 to 2014 the violent crime rate reported by the NOPD increased from 754.2 per 100,000 population to 973.9 per 100,000 population.⁸ In 2016, the city violent crime rate for New Orleans was higher than the national violent crime rate average by 169.4 percent and higher than the violent crime rate in Louisiana by 88.97 percent.⁹ After having decreased significantly from 2012 to 2013, the number of murders increased again from 150 in 2014 to 174 in 2016.¹⁰

PSP PARTICIPATION

Initially, the New Orleans PSP primarily focused its violent crime reduction efforts on addressing armed robberies, building the capacity of its Analytics Unit, and enhancing criminal justice collaboration. Recognizing that a variety of factors contribute to the violent crime landscape, including poverty, group and youth violence, lack of adequate housing opportunities, narcotics abuse, and trafficking, the New Orleans PSP identified and engaged key partners and stakeholders to help address the challenges of combatting violent crime. These partners include:

- New Orleans Police Department
- Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI)
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)
- Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)
- United States Marshals Service (USMS)
- Orleans Parish District Attorney's Office
- US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Louisiana

CRIME ANALYSIS

Despite the challenges it faces in crime, politics, and internal operations, the NOPD had never fielded a fully staffed or fully functional crime analysis capability. Prior to PSP, analysis was performed by a unit that also had general information technology (IT) responsibilities. The officers assigned to the unit were more technicians than analysts, using analytical software to create hot spot maps and generate statistics. During the pre-PSP engagement in 2015, New Orleans Superintendent Michael Harrison noted that NOPD lacked even fundamental criminal analytical capacities and requested that expansion and enhancement be a top PSP priority. NOPD started with one analyst, expanded the unit by three analysts during the second year of the engagement, and added two more in the third year. PSP greatly assisted NOPD in building their analytical capacity by helping to create job descriptions and budget justifications. PSP also connected NOPD Crime Analysis to other sites excelling in this function. As NOPD hired new analysts, PSP provided them with training and technical assistance. The analytical work is helping to

PSP PARTNERS



EXAMPLES OF TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO THE NEW ORLEANS PSP SITE

International Homicides Investigators Association Basic Homicide Course and Advanced Homicide Training

FBI Digital Imaging Video Recovery Team (DIVRT) Training

FBI Cellular Analysis Survey Team (CAST) Basic Training

Crime Analysis Webinar: Analytical Capacity of OIS Incidents

Homicide Investigations Training and Technical Assistance

Innovations Suite Researcher Practitioner Fellows Academy

Oakland Peer Exchange on Shooting Review Best Practices

Grant Assistance with Joan Brody

Social Network Analysis Training

Victim Services Technical Assistance

Los Angeles Police Department Crime Fighters Conference (2019)

Public Safety Summit: Sustaining Transformation (2019)

8 <https://www.ucrdatatool.gov/Search/Crime/Local/JurisbyJurisLarge.cfm?NoJuris=Yes&CFID=346896760&CFTOKEN=fa3e697463d85447-0CBA975A-C5C2-3313-44DF5364D9E4A6B2>

9 <https://www.cityrating.com/crime-statistics/louisiana/new-orleans.html>

10 <https://nolacrime.com/news/statistics/historical-statistics/>

drive the Tactical Intelligence Gathering and Enforcement Response (TIGER) team and the federal partnership work (discussed below). NOPD intends to keep building this capacity and ultimately place a crime analyst in each of the police districts over the next few years. They will also continue to participate, as much as possible, in PSP's Community of Practice of Crime Analysts.

ARMED ROBBERY STRATEGY

NOPD created a TIGER Team to address armed robberies. This small group of district detectives investigates armed robbery patterns, especially those crossing police district lines. The group meets every other week to discuss cases, coordinate actions, and track outcomes. NOPD attributes the reduction in armed robberies over the past three years and the fact that reported clearance rates are at their highest since 2011 to the efforts of the TIGER Team. In 2018, they expanded the TIGER Team concept to nonfatal shootings. In 2019, NOPD began to utilize National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) data in their bimonthly violent crime meeting, which focuses on armed robberies and nonfatal shootings. The PSP Strategic Site Liaison (SSL) supported this effort by providing information and advice on how to coordinate efforts across decentralized detective



units and centralized units, such as the Homicide Unit and the Gang Unit. PSP provided a subject matter expert (SME) to examine NOPD's district detective functions and gun case prosecutions. The recommendations focused on technology, case management improvements, and improved communications. New Orleans established a goal to embed Assistant District Attorneys with NOPD detectives to help build better cases as part of the NOPD's strategic plan to help sustain these efforts.

TECHNOLOGY

PSP subject matter experts assisted NOPD with improving its technological capabilities and processes, resulting in the addition of an IT manager to the organization. NOPD has been working towards improved officer efficiency through technical innovation. The consent decree has required the agency to reexamine policies, operations, procedures, compliance, auditing, and reporting. A primary component of NOPD's innovation and self-reflection is the integration of various data sources, which will result in a data warehouse that overlays analytics and reporting to provide near-real-time information that identifies risks associated with reported actions. The agency will review these indicators to ensure compliance with policy. The program, called Insight, is now in the development process supported by multiple contractors. An added benefit of this solution is advanced data dissemination to other systems and personnel as a tool for managing the delivery of policy and procedures.

A CUSTOMIZED VIOLENT CRIME STRATEGY AND PLAN

After conducting a peer exchange with the Milwaukee Police Department, Paul Noel, with assistance from the PSP SSL and Analyst, helped NOPD develop a federal partnership model by first identifying three small areas in New Orleans. These areas accounted for a high proportion of violence. Deputy Superintendent Noel asked representatives from the area federal law enforcement agencies to participate with NOPD in identifying the most prolific violent offenders in those areas. The group of offenders was kept small. The next step was to sit with all the partners to review each offender and determine which agency would accept responsibility for investigating and building intelligence on the offender. A monthly meeting, with a conference call between meetings, focused on the progress, status, and challenges of the cases. New Orleans called this meeting their PSP Federal CompStat Meeting. The following federal partners collaborate with NOPD on this "New Orleans PSP approach":

- **Federal Bureau of Investigations:** The FBI utilizes their Gang Task Force to actively conduct investigations that target the top offenders in these areas and works with the NOPD Analytics Unit to identify perpetrators of violence, determine their criminal justice status, identify associates, and actively prioritize offenders who live or offend in these areas. The FBI is committed to collecting and sharing data and intelligence efforts with the PSP partners.
- **Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives:** ATF is the lead on providing NIBIN and E-Trace support to NOPD. ATF prioritizes analysis of evidence coming from the focus areas and targeted offenders. It also prioritizes felons with a firearm investigation and traces the firearm back to the purchase to identify whether the firearm was obtained from a straw purchase. ATF also participates in teaching officers and detectives in the targeted districts how to collect and document evidence and use the analysis.
- **Drug Enforcement Agency:** The DEA actively conducts narcotic investigations focusing on known violent offenders in these areas and assists with identifying offenders who are violent and are involved in the drug trade. The DEA also agrees to collect and share data and effort successes with PSP partners.
- **United States Marshall Service:** The USMS prioritizes locating and apprehending violent fugitives in these areas. They collect and share data and communicate effort successes with partners.
- **US Attorney's Office and District Attorney's Office:** The US Attorney's Office has assigned an Assistant US Attorney as a dedicated liaison for the PSP collaboration. This effort has helped coordinate communications among the federal agents, NOPD, and the state prosecutor's office. The US Attorney's Office has also agreed to prioritize violent crime prosecutions and flag gun cases that occur in these areas. Offenders will be scrutinized and treated as a priority. This includes reviewing previous cases, asking for high bail, and seeking maximum prison sentences. The prosecutor's office also collects and shares data and effort successes with partners, including tracking case outcomes for state charges.



"PSP focuses our efforts on the most violent offenders in our worst areas... We must use a scalpel, not a hammer."

– Deputy Chief Paul Noel

NOPD established their customized PSP approach and formalized the engagement with their federal partners to establish specific responsibilities and goals through the creation of a strategic plan in June 2019. NOPD's strategic plan includes a goal to operationalize strategic collaborations. Strategies under this goal range from revamping the PSP Federal CompStat Meeting, improving the

sharing of information with partners, and establishing a Human Trafficking Task Force. NOPD's success in implementing their strategic plan will help ensure the sustainability of the efforts started under PSP.

CONCLUSION

New Orleans readily acknowledges that upon the initial launch of their PSP engagement, they faced many challenges, including a lack of clear understanding and buy-in from leadership, an unclear vision on what PSP actually was, and lack of clarity on how to leverage the opportunity to combat violent crime with their partners using agreed upon strategies and operations. The New Orleans PSP learned from other PSP sites and developed their approach by focusing on the most violent areas and offenders in the city, knowing that any success would likely have a positive impact on the entire city. Today, the New Orleans PSP can

be viewed as a model other sites can learn from by examining how they built their violent crime approaches around evidence, analysis, and reasonable allocation of resources in order to not exceed their capacities.

Homicides and nonfatal shootings are at record lows. Citywide homicides in 2018 were the lowest since 1971. In the first nine months of 2019, homicides were down 30 percent from 2018. The targeted districts have also reported reductions in crime. The 6th District year-to-date is experiencing a 50 percent reduction in armed robberies, a 41 percent reduction in homicides, and a 22 percent drop in shootings over this time last year. So far in 2019, the 5th District is experiencing a 53 percent drop in armed robberies and a 14 percent reduction in shootings. Two years ago, the 5th District had 50 homicides. Last year, this district carried the greatest reduction in homicides for the city. In the first nine months of 2019, they have experienced 11 homicides compared to 35 last year. The 1st District has seen a 31 percent reduction in armed robbery and a 38 percent drop in shootings—and remarkably, they have had only one homicide this year. These efforts took violent people off the streets and calmed the most violent areas. District commanders note that the community has recognized the impacts on violent crime and taken back public spaces in these areas. There is clearly a recognized change with more people active in the neighborhoods and children playing without fear of being victims of violent crime.

New Orleans PSP approach exemplifies how a focused and collaborative strategy can have wide-ranging impacts on overall violence.

