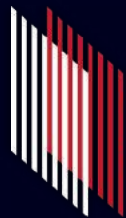


IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT FOR REAL-TIME CRIME CENTERS



PUBLIC SAFETY
PARTNERSHIP
Building Safer Communities



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ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

- This toolkit shares information and resources from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) National Public Safety Partnership (PSP). The PSP provides coordinated training and technical assistance (TTA) upon request from participating state, local or tribal law enforcement and prosecution authorities.
- Real-Time Crime Centers (RTCCs) have emerged as a critical component of modern policing, serving as technology-driven units designed to provide real-time information and analytics to support law enforcement operations and investigations. These centers function as a centralized hub for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating real-time data, enabling police departments to respond more efficiently to crimes and emergencies.
- Although RTCCs are unique to each agency and community, they generally comprise technologies and operations that provide real-time insights to agencies, including live video feeds from a variety of sources and databases that deliver immediate and actionable intelligence about crime, suspects, and locations.
- RTCCs serve several purposes for law enforcement, including strengthening situational awareness, facilitating proactive policing, providing real-time analysis for data-driven decision-making, improving response times to calls for service or active incidents, and enhancing investigations.



Source: Google Gemini

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT



Back buttons allow you to navigate backward to the previous page



Next buttons allow you to navigate forward to the next page



Home buttons bring you to the toolkit home page



Small & Rural buttons take you to a section featuring considerations for small and rural agencies



Checklists take you to a list of topics to consider when implementing your RTCC



Previous View buttons will return you to the last page you viewed.



Topical buttons direct you to a new section



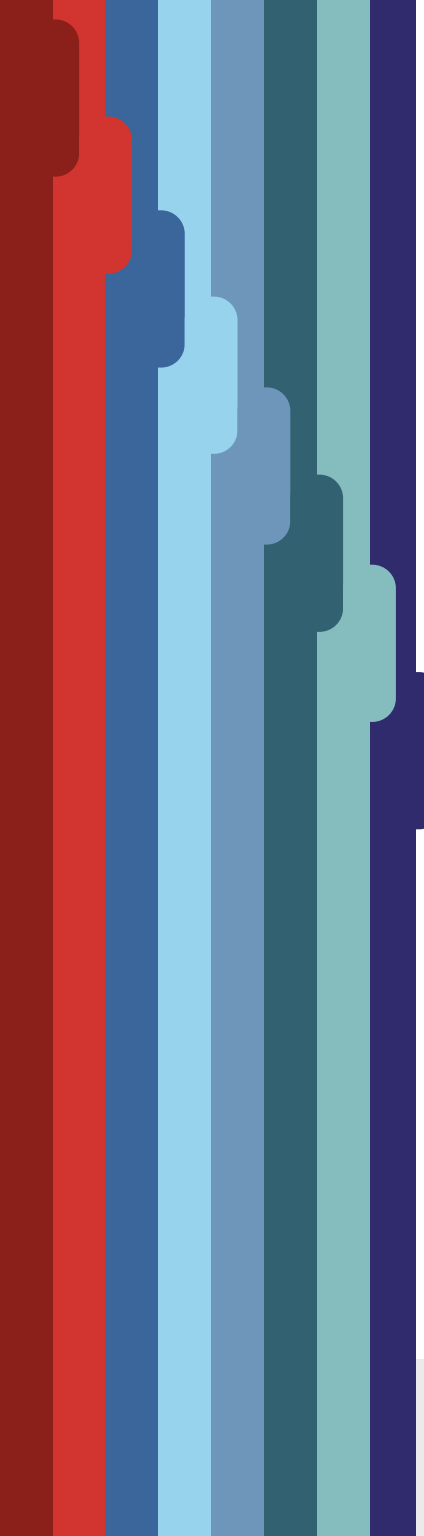
Module icons take you to the home page of that module



Agency badges and/or seals take you to a spotlight featuring the agency's innovative practices



Print Page buttons will allow you to print that specific page.



TOOLKIT MODULE HOMEPAGE

This toolkit provides guidance and considerations for agencies as they begin to develop their RTCC operations.

The toolkit contains seven modules with useful guidance and information to help agencies navigate common challenges associated with RTCC implementation. The first module defines an RTCC and describes its purpose and value to law enforcement. Next are six modules that are necessary to successfully implement an RTCC. Each module contains a description of its value as well as practical examples, considerations, and a checklist for implementation.

The toolkit is interactive, select the buttons to navigate to each section of interest.

MODULE 1: RTCC DEFINED

An RTCC is a centralized technology-driven unit or hub designed to provide real-time information and analytics to support law enforcement operations and investigations.

The National Real Time Crime Center Association (NRTCCA) identifies five levels of RTCCs based on duties, coverage, technology, and staffing. The graphic below highlights these varying levels of RTCCs and can help agencies determine which model fits their unique needs.

Five Levels of RTCCs

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
• 1-2 dedicated staff • 8-15 hours of coverage on specific days each week • Supervised by existing supervisory staff within agency • Proactive participation with in-progress calls for service • Accesses government entity-owned cameras • Responsibilities may include monitoring radio traffic, creating crime bulletins, supporting patrol response to incidents	• Builds upon level 1 in terms of additional staffing, technology, and duties • 8-15 hours of coverage 7 days a week • Full-time dedicated supervisor overseeing up to 8 employees • Government-owned cameras and LPRs, drones, or other specialty equipment • Responsibilities include level 1 duties and proactively researching calls for service and developing leads for patrol	• Robust staffing model based on needs assessment • May be staffed with 12 line-level employees, 4 specialty positions, and 2 supervisors • Dedicated shifts, 7-days per week covering 15-20 hours per day • Level 1 and 2 duties as well as real time camera monitoring of high crime locations • Staff in RTCC generate calls for service based on real time intelligence	• Additional staff to allow for dedicated shifts from 20-24 hours per day, 7 days per week • May be staffed with 16 line-level employees, 8 specialty positions, 3 supervisors, and 1 manager • Supervisory coverage is split by daytime, swing, and nighttime shifts • Responsibilities include level 1-3 duties and monitoring live streaming video, drone video, and other video feeds to field personnel and command	• 24 hour, seven day per week coverage • Operates in support of regional agency's needs periodically • May be staffed with 24 line-level employees, 16 specialty positions, 6 supervisors, 2 managers and 1 director • Access to regional cameras from participating agencies • Staffed with personnel from participating agencies

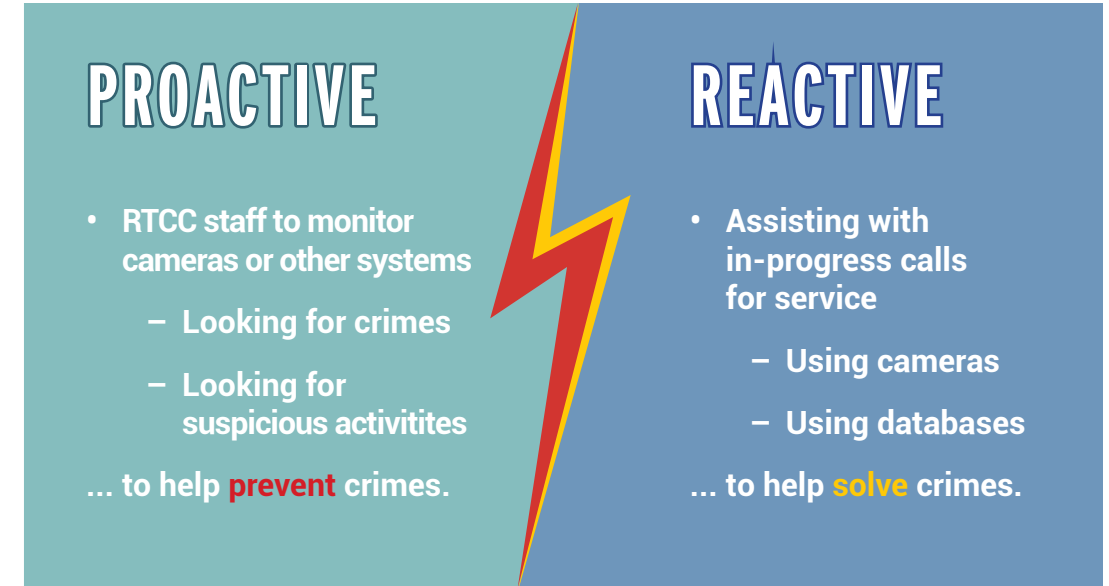
Source: NRTCCA, "Real Time Crime Center (RTCC) Best Practices White Paper," accessed May 2025, <https://nrtcca.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/NRTCCA-RTCC-White-Paper-Nov-2022.pdf>. The link is inactive as of July 21, 2025.

RTCCs are typically reactive, proactive, or a combination of the two approaches.

A reactive approach involves assisting with in-progress calls for service using available resources such as cameras and databases to help law enforcement solve crimes.

A proactive approach involves RTCC staff monitoring cameras and other systems for crimes or suspicious activities to prevent crimes from occurring.

Many agencies strive for a combination of both, but reactive approaches are typically easier to implement at the outset.



RTCCS VS. OTHER INFORMATION CENTERS

RTCC are one type of law enforcement intelligence center (LEIC). Other LEICs include fusion divisions, crime gun intelligence centers (CGICs), and crime information centers (CICs). Other real-time information centers (RTICs) also exist outside of law enforcement. Although some commonalities exist across these centers, their focus, mission, and vision differ.

Fusion centers are state-operated entities created after 9/11 to collect, analyze, and share intelligence on terrorism and other major threats in collaboration with local, federal, and private partners.

CGICs, launched by ATF in 2016, focus on the rapid collection and analysis of crime gun evidence using tools like NIBIN and eTrace to link shootings, identify offenders, and prevent violence.

CICs, first developed in Chicago in 2017, are decentralized units located at the district or precinct level that produce localized intelligence to support both real-time responses and proactive policing strategies. Unlike RTCCs, they emphasize ongoing analysis to guide patrols and crime prevention efforts.

RTICs have a broad, multi-sector scope that extends beyond law enforcement and criminal activity. RTICs may also focus on traffic conditions, natural disasters, and other public safety issues.



Source: Constant Technologies

BENEFITS AND VALUE OF RTCCS

First, RTCCs improve public safety by allowing officers to deploy to locations where crime may occur, is actively occurring, or has just occurred. RTCCs increase efficiency and improve officers' ability to respond to incidents by analyzing data in real time.

RTCCs also improve active investigations by continuously ingesting critical data for real-time analysis, allowing RTCC personnel to communicate updates about incidents to officers and detectives as they unfold.

Finally, RTCCs improve officer safety by obtaining pertinent information about suspects as officers deploy to a scene, including prior arrests, warrants, and computer-aided dispatch (CAD) information. RTCCs improve situational awareness and tactical response.



Source: Google Gemini

MODULE 2: RTCC PLANNING

This module covers several initial steps for planning the creation of your RTCC. Thoughtful planning and preparation are essential to ensure that your RTCC will achieve its desired outcomes, including monitoring, analyzing, and responding to incidents in real time. A model will increase clarity, reduce risks, and ensure efficient RTCC operation.

This module covers five key initial planning steps.

WHY IS PLANNING IMPORTANT?

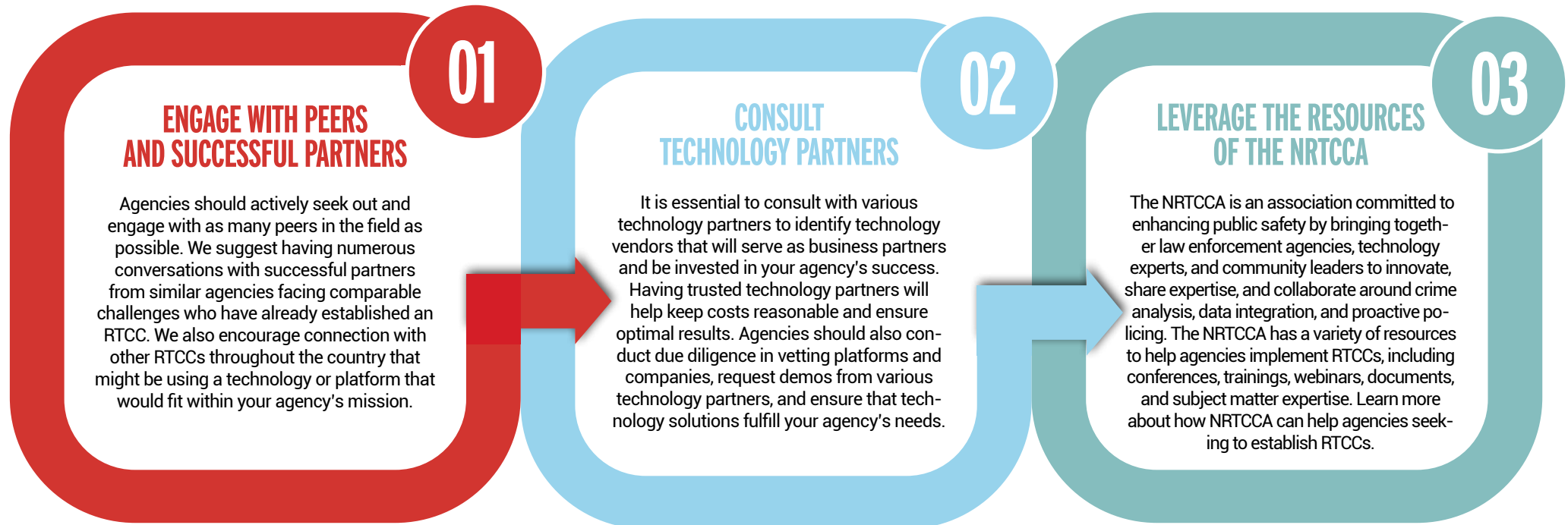
- Facilitates communication, coordination, and integration of various systems
- Informs budget and cost management
- Increases efficiency
- Ensures data accuracy and security
- Allows forecasting for potential challenges
- Generates internal and external support to the organization

CONDUCTING RESEARCH

Conducting thorough research before implementing an RTCC is paramount for several interconnected reasons. Rushing implementation without adequate research can lead to significant challenges and hinder the RTCC's ability to achieve its intended objectives. Research also allows agencies to learn from the experiences of others. By engaging with peers who have established RTCCs and technology partners, agencies adopt best practices and learn how their peers have responded to unanticipated challenges. We suggest three steps in this research phase:



Three Steps for Agencies to Take Prior to Implementing an RTCC



CONDUCT RESEARCH

The NRTCCA can help agencies seeking to establish RTCCs in three ways:

Three Ways the NRTCCA Can Assist Your Agency

01

COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING

The NRTCCA has a cadre of experts from law enforcement, technology, and community organizations, and it cultivates a strong network of professionals dedicated to enhancing public safety through RTCC initiatives. By engaging with NRTCCA, agencies can connect with peers who have expertise in establishing and operating RTCCs. Collaboration is a critical function of NRTCCA, allowing agencies to share expertise and challenges around shared priorities.

02

BEST PRACTICES AND GUIDANCE

The NRTCCA serves as a central hub for knowledge and expertise in the areas of crime analysis, data integration, and proactive policing. The association's Best Practices Working Group, which consists of representatives from more than 20 law enforcement agencies with RTCCs, developed a white paper on RTCC best practices that provides guidance for agencies seeking to establish or enhance their RTCCs, including critical aspects of implementation.

03

EDUCATIONAL AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The NRTCCA educates through a variety of sources, including conferences that provide opportunities for agencies to learn about RTCC best practices, strategies, and emerging technologies. The conferences also facilitate peer networking.

DETERMINING A MISSION AND VISION

To determine the mission and vision of an RTCC, your agency should undertake a thoughtful planning process that considers its unique needs and objectives. First, your agency must identify the mission of the RTCC, which typically revolves around leveraging technology for more efficient and effective policing. An effective RTCC enables quicker responses to crimes in progress or those that have recently occurred, with enhanced operational intelligence and a strong emphasis on the safety of officers, citizens, and the community. Understanding the functions (displayed in the box to the right) will guide decisions on the necessary technology, staffing, and partnerships. The team must understand the goal and intended outcome at the beginning of your RTCC launch point, starting with a clear understanding of the problem you are intending to solve.

To clearly articulate the mission and vision of an RTCC, your agency should define the primary focus and functions of your RTCC early in the planning phase. **An RTCC might focus on several of the following areas:**

- Proactively preventing crime
- Providing real-time support for patrol officers
- Enhancing investigative functions
- Offering situational awareness during live incidents
- Supporting long-term investigations
- Assisting with disaster response and crisis management
- Collecting and analyzing intelligence

DEFINING YOUR RTCC MISSION

For many departments, the overarching mission of an RTCC is to capitalize on a wide and expanding range of technologies for efficient and effective policing. These technologies allow agencies to manage real-time data and intelligence to proactively mitigate crime, reactively investigate crime, and provide situational awareness to increase officer and citizen safety. **Ultimately, the mission should align with the agency's overall strategic goals and enhance its ability to achieve its core mission.**



OUR MISSION

To provide the agency with the ability to capitalize on a wide and expanding range of technologies for efficient and effective policing by improving response times, communication, and customer service to better serve the citizens of Winston-Salem.

Such efforts may allow officers to respond quickly, or even immediately, to crimes in progress or to those that recently occurred. Technologies available will allow officers to respond to crime events more efficiently, more deliberately, with improved operational intelligence, and with a proactive emphasis on officer, citizen, & community safety.

- CONDUCT PROACTIVE MONITORING OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES TO AID IN THE PREVENTION OF CRIME, AND TO AID INVESTIGATORS IN THE GATHERING OF DIGITAL EVIDENCE PERTINENT TO MAJOR INVESTIGATIONS
- PROVIDE ALL OFFICERS WITH REAL-TIME INTELLIGENCE DURING THE INITIAL STAGES OF RESPONSE TO SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS
- LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY TO OFFER SITUATIONAL AWARENESS IN THE FIELD FOR OFFICERS AS THEY RESPOND TO VARIOUS CALLS FOR SERVICE

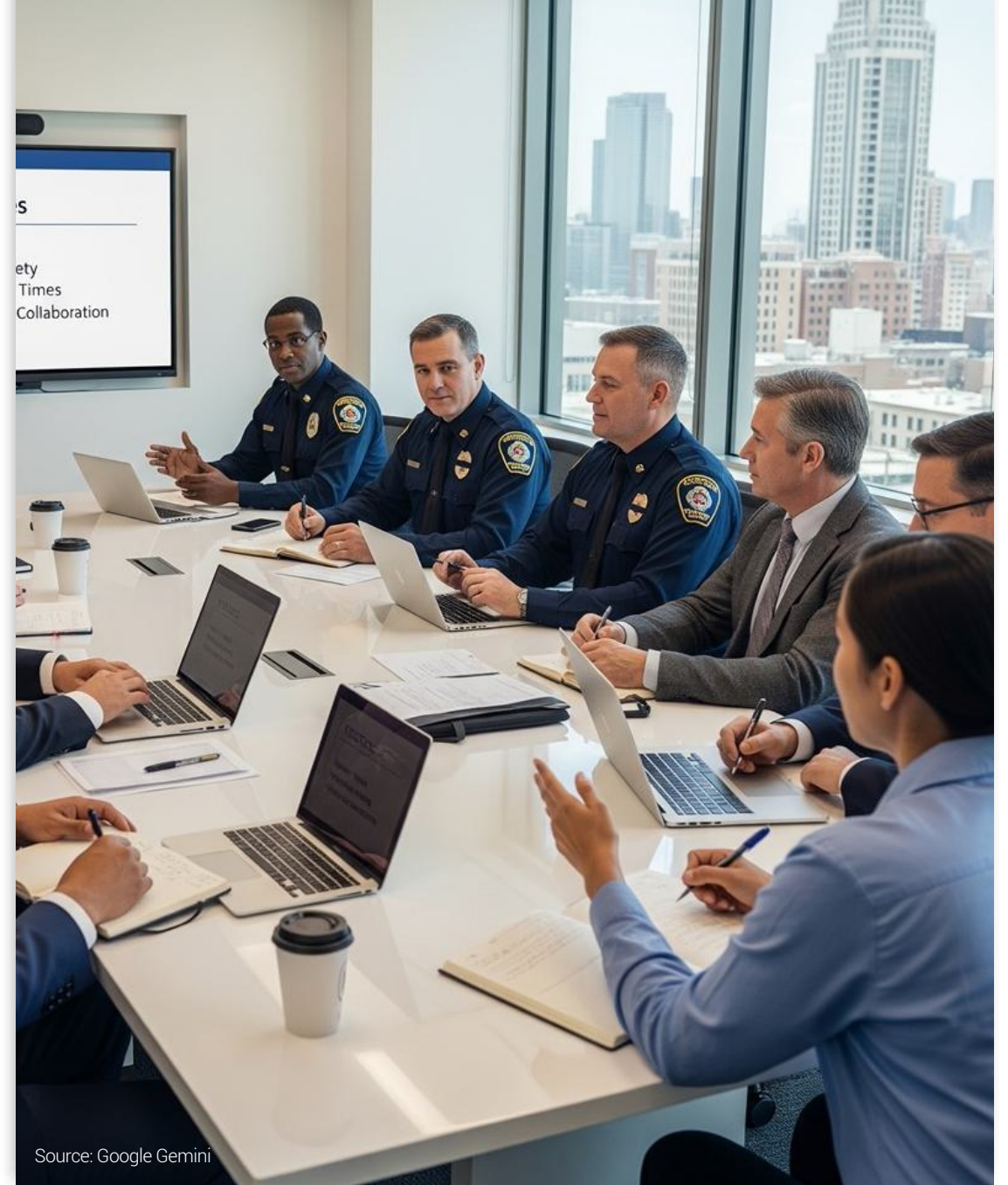
Source: Winston-Salem, NC Police Department

DEFINING YOUR RTCC OBJECTIVES

To achieve significant improvements in service, efficiency, effectiveness, and outcomes aligned with your agency's mission, the objectives of your proposed RTCC must be clear.

Agencies **must take inventory of each stakeholder's expectations** and document these objectives during the planning phase, which can be informed both by conversations with successful partners from similar agencies facing comparable challenges and through peer visits to RTCCs. The conceptual definition and actual implementation of an RTCC can vary greatly depending on the nature of crime in your community, citizen and governmental interests, available resources, and other stakeholder interests. Understanding these local nuances ensures that the RTCC is tailored to address the unique challenges and priorities of the jurisdiction.

Most agencies should think of the establishment of an RTCC as an evolving process.



Source: Google Gemini

ASSESSING YOUR AGENCY NEEDS AND CAPACITY

During the planning phase, the agency must assess its needs. Implementation without assessment can result in inefficiencies, wasted resources, and a less effective RTCC that may not align with the agency's goals or the community's needs. At a minimum, the assessment should evaluate the following needs and capacities:

A thorough needs assessment is the foundation for building an RTCC that is efficient, effective, sustainable, and aligned with the specific goals and resources of the law enforcement agency. It allows agencies to make informed decisions about technology, personnel, funding, and operational procedures, ultimately enhancing their ability to prevent and respond to crime and improve public safety.



INNOVATION IN RTCCS – MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Memphis Police Department's RTCC used Blue C.R.U.S.H. (Crime Reduction Using Statistical History) data gathered on hotspot crimes to better allocate resources to the hotspots in the city. Data collected includes time of day, day of week, location, and location type. In addition to internal crime data, the center oversees a city-wide network of more than 2,000 surveillance cameras. The "Connect 2 Memphis" program allows residents and businesses to register and integrate their private security cameras to the same network. The center includes gunshot detection technology and wall-to-wall screens, capable of displaying any video, tv, or crime data on the screens.

 *This is 21st century policing at its best. We may not have a police officer on every street corner, but we have a camera. MPD can only see the cameras that you choose, so we want outdoor cameras facing the street, your parking lot, the alley.*

– Deputy Chief Joe Oakley



Source: Memphis, TN Police Department

ASSESSING YOUR AGENCY NEEDS AND CAPACITY

Technology and Infrastructure

Assessing the current technology infrastructure is essential before acquiring new technology. It is important to leverage your existing systems and identify areas for integration into the RTCC. This assessment should include evaluating data management systems, security and cameras, and communication systems. Taking a full technological inventory can reveal useful resources already available within the agency, allowing for a more strategic and cost-effective approach to building the RTCC.



Source: Tempe, AZ Police Department

ASSESSING YOUR AGENCY NEEDS AND CAPACITY

Personnel

An RTCC's effectiveness relies heavily on the expertise of its staff, including sworn personnel and individuals skilled in data analysis and information technology (IT). Identifying the appropriate personnel and training requirements for the RTCC is essential. Agencies should seek out existing talent within their ranks and consider training programs to upskill personnel for RTCC operations. The agency's needs will dictate whether sworn staff, civilian analysts, or a hybrid model is most suitable.



Source: Google Gemini

Click the resource to access case studies describing agencies' staffing strategies to support the RTCC.

ASSESSING YOUR AGENCY NEEDS AND CAPACITY

Physical and Organizational Location

An assessment should also help determine the most effective physical and organizational placement of the RTCC within the police department. Locations to consider include investigations, isolated locations, or the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) (see Module 3). The optimal placement depends on the agency's mission objectives, staffing, and logistical considerations.



Source: Winston-Salem, NC Police Department

ASSESSING YOUR AGENCY NEEDS AND CAPACITY

Budget

Leaders should prioritize evaluating budget constraints and planning for funding in the needs assessment. A cost-benefit analysis can justify the investment by determining potential benefits, such as crime reduction, improved response times, and enhanced public safety. Starting with existing resources is often a practical approach, especially for agencies that are smaller or perceive RTCCs to be financially unobtainable. Understanding the financial needs also allows agencies to explore funding options like grants.



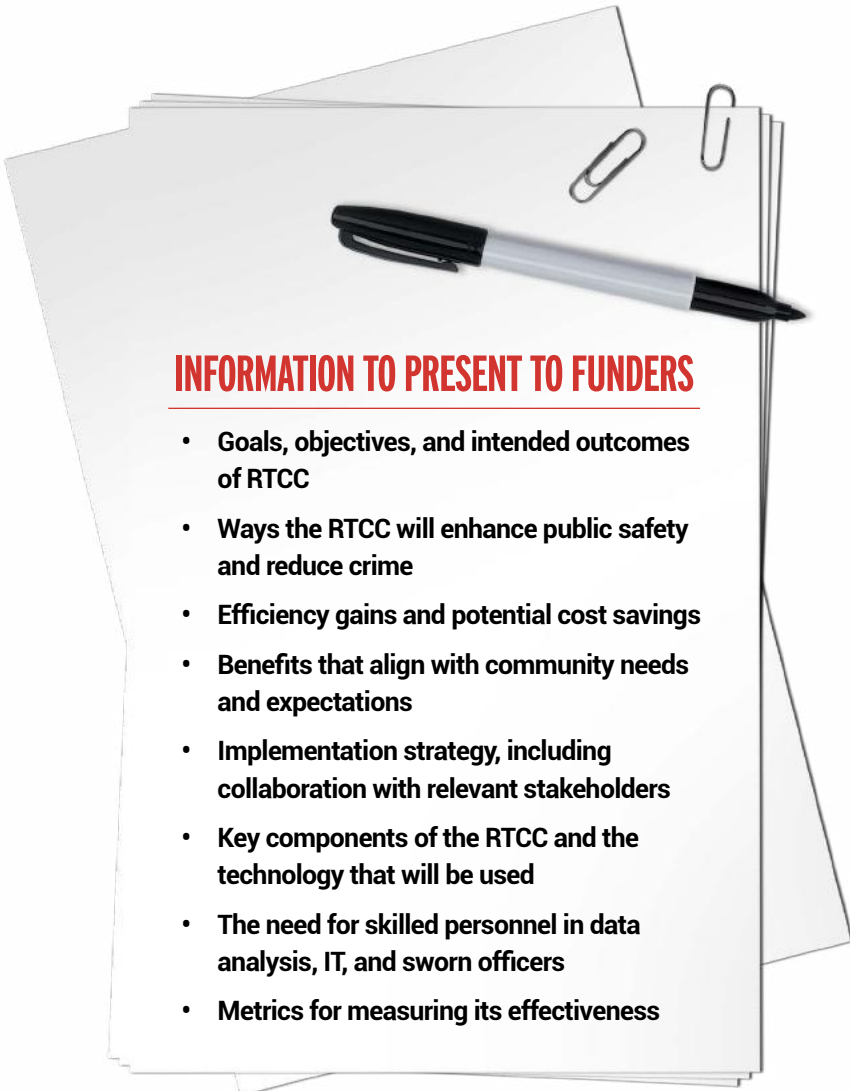
Source: City of Winnipeg

IDENTIFY FUNDING SOURCES FROM GRANTS AND FOUNDATIONS

RTCCs may require a significant initial investment in technology and infrastructure. It is essential to develop robust budget plans that account for these initial costs, which may require seeking funding from the local government, grants, foundations, or private-sector partnerships. Grants can be a crucial funding source to establish the program and get operations started. Partner agencies may also contribute through subscriptions or cost-sharing. Maintaining funding will depend heavily on the RTCC's success and the public perception of its effectiveness. Return on investment and efficiency impacts might even support funding through unfilled officer position salaries.

In addition to initial upfront costs, agencies must consider the recurring costs of maintenance, technology upgrades, operations, and new personnel training. Leaders must account for these ongoing expenses within the agency's budget to sustain the RTCC. Agencies that can identify consistent funding sources are better able to acquire emerging technologies and make upgrades to existing technology within the center.

Partnerships with other government agencies, community organizations, and businesses can ease the financial burden. Partner agencies can contribute to cost-sharing subscriptions or provide additional funding options for the RTCC, which is a crucial step.



INFORMATION TO PRESENT TO FUNDERS

- **Goals, objectives, and intended outcomes of RTCC**
- **Ways the RTCC will enhance public safety and reduce crime**
- **Efficiency gains and potential cost savings**
- **Benefits that align with community needs and expectations**
- **Implementation strategy, including collaboration with relevant stakeholders**
- **Key components of the RTCC and the technology that will be used**
- **The need for skilled personnel in data analysis, IT, and sworn officers**
- **Metrics for measuring its effectiveness**

IDENTIFY FUNDING SOURCES FROM GRANTS AND FOUNDATIONS

- **Grant opportunities.** Agencies should research federal, state, and local grant opportunities specifically designed to support law enforcement technology upgrades and crime prevention initiatives.
- **Local government budgets.** Agencies can seek allocations from their local government budgets to fund the initial investment and ongoing operational costs of the RTCC.
- **Private-sector partnerships.** Partnerships with private-sector entities and local businesses interested in improving public safety can bring financial contributions or resource sharing.
- **Partner agencies.** If the RTCC is intended to involve partner agencies, leaders can explore options such as subscriptions or cost-sharing agreements to fund RTCC operations.

IDENTIFY FUNDING SOURCES FROM GRANTS AND FOUNDATIONS

Agencies should also explore the following funding avenues:

Identifying diverse funding sources—including grants, foundations, and consistent budget allocations—is crucial for the initial implementation and long-term sustainability of an RTCC. Diverse funding allows agencies to acquire necessary technology and personnel, sustain operations, leverage partnerships, demonstrate value, and justify the financial investment, ultimately enhancing agencies' ability to improve public safety.

- **Existing unit resources.** Agencies should also consider leveraging existing unit resources and general funds to complement other funding sources. Agencies should inventory their existing technology and tools before acquiring new ones; they may already possess useful resources that can contribute to RTCC operations.
- **Leverage unfilled officer positions.** Return on investment and efficiency impacts of an RTCC have the potential to support funding through unfilled officer position salaries, if applicable to the law enforcement agency.
- **Community organizations.** Collaborating with community organizations interested in public safety might also yield funding opportunities or in-kind support.

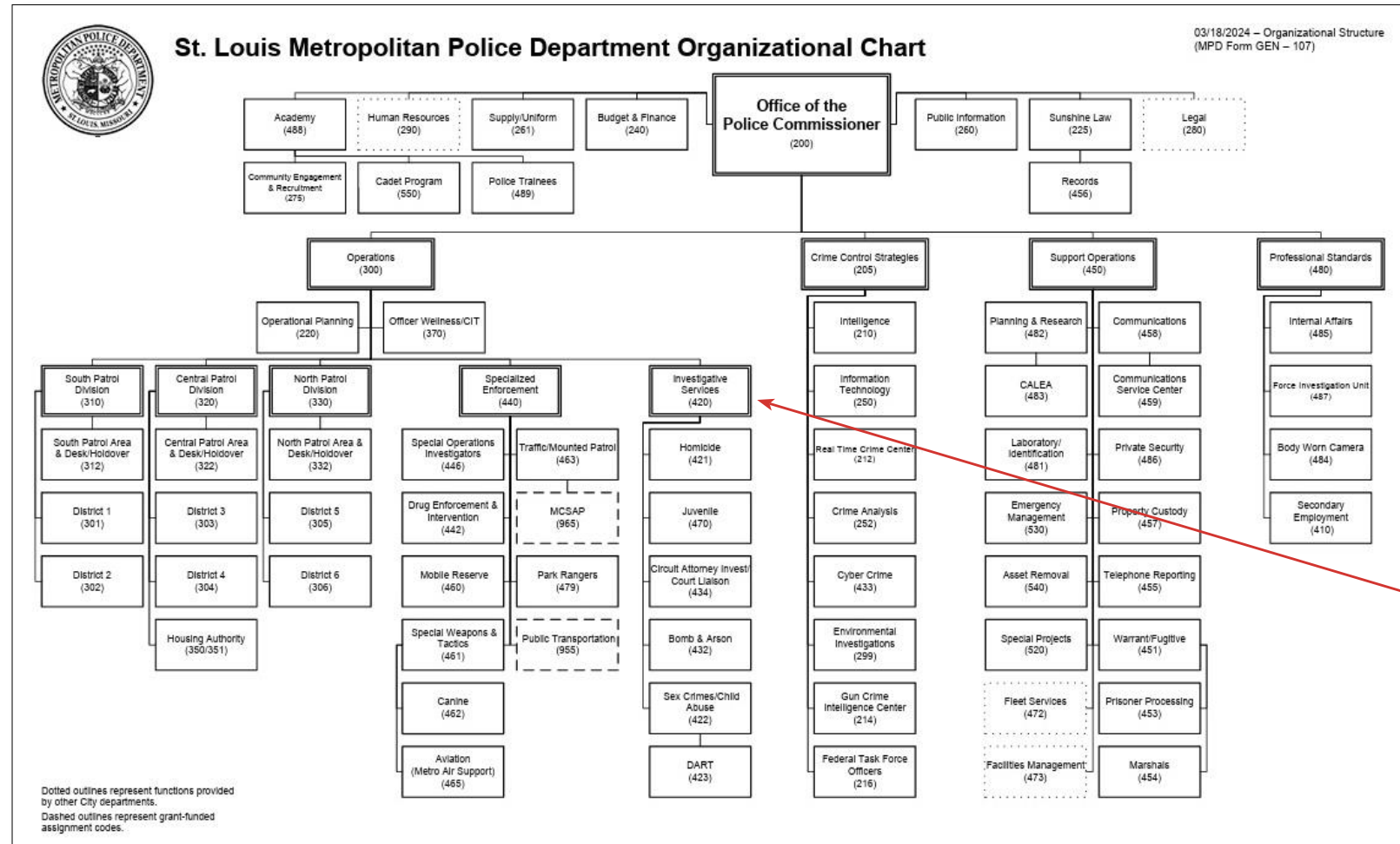
IDENTIFY A STRATEGIC PLACE IN THE AGENCY'S ORGANIZATIONAL CHART AND A CHAMPION IN THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

If an RTCC is to be effective and integrated within a law enforcement agency, it must be strategically placed within the agency's organizational chart. Well-defined RTCC placement clarifies the chain of command and adheres to organizational reporting and authority. A strategically placed RTCC can better communicate and collaborate with other key units within the agency, such as investigations or crime analysis, and its placement will also affect how the center supports specific units, including patrol and investigations. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the RTCC and similar units will minimize duplication. As each agency's RTCC matures, leaders are encouraged to evaluate its organizational placement. Analyzing performance and task data can help determine the most appropriate long-term structure. RTCCs can be placed in several areas, including within specialized units, within intelligence or investigative units, or within operations.

In addition, support from the agency's chief executive is paramount for successful RTCC implementation. A champion in the chain of command, especially at a high level, can advocate for the RTCC, help secure resources, and drive its implementation forward. Leadership, authority, and advocacy are necessary to overcome obstacles, secure necessary resources, obtain buy-in, and ensure the successful establishment and long-term viability of the center. Without a champion, RTCC implementation risks stalling because of lack of support, resources, or interdepartmental cooperation.



IDENTIFY A STRATEGIC PLACE IN THE AGENCY'S ORGANIZATIONAL CHART AND A CHAMPION IN THE CHAIN OF COMMAND



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES



RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Implementing an RTCC requires careful planning, and small and rural law enforcement agencies may need to consider specific limitations, particularly concerning resources and existing infrastructure. They may want to consider starting with a Level One RTCC, which has limited staffing coverage, including just one or two dedicated staff (sworn, professional, or a combination) covering between 8 and 15 hours per day on specific days. This scaled-down model is a feasible starting point for agencies with smaller staff sizes or limited resources. The dedicated staff would focus on proactive participation with in-progress calls, using available databases, and monitoring radio traffic.



FUNDING

For small or rural agencies, funding can be a major roadblock to establishing an RTCC. Agencies seeking to develop one should identify potential funding sources early in the project. A successful RTCC will combine the right mix of people, technology, and processes, and funding needs to cover these areas from development to implementation. Small and rural agencies may start with technology they already own, which can minimize initial costs.

To establish and sustain an RTCC, agencies must identify and secure diverse funding sources, including grants (such as the Byrne JAG grant), local government budgets, and potentially partnerships. Arguments about the cost of crime can be valuable when advocating for funding.



VALUE

It should also be noted that how RTCCs are implemented will change as new resources and technologies become available, creating an ongoing need for funding. Agencies must build the case for additional resources by tracking and reporting the accomplishments and effectiveness of the RTCC. Demonstrating that the RTCC is valuable even with initial limited resources can strengthen future funding requests.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES



PARTNERSHIPS

Agencies should explore federal, state, and local grant websites related to law enforcement, technology, and public safety for potential funding avenues. In addition, partnerships with the community or other agencies might open doors to shared resources or grant applications. For example, some rural agencies may partner with large businesses to share data obtained through the license plate readers those businesses already pay for.

Small and rural agencies should also consider partnering with other local agencies to establish a joint RTCC. Partnering may provide the possibility of a Level Five RTCC that serves as a standalone center supporting other agencies, or a regional center staffed by personnel from several participating agencies.



JOINT MODEL

This joint RTCC model is highly relevant for small and rural agencies seeking to pool resources and expertise. Partnering with neighboring law enforcement agencies can help distribute the costs associated with technology, equipment, staffing, and—potentially—a shared facility. This collaborative approach allows smaller agencies to access RTCC capabilities that might otherwise be financially or logistically prohibitive. A joint RTCC can also facilitate interagency and cross-jurisdiction collaboration and coordination. Sharing information and intelligence across jurisdictions can be particularly beneficial in addressing types of crime that often transcend geographical boundaries. When considering a joint RTCC, agencies should establish clear legal agreements outlining responsibilities, data-sharing protocols, funding contributions, and governance structures.



DEFINING MISSION AND SCOPE

Small and rural agencies should define a realistic mission and scope for their RTCC based on available resources and specific needs. Agencies that start small and expand over time using existing tools often find success.

Initially, agencies may find it easier to implement a reactive approach to RTCC operations (responding to calls for service) before moving toward a more proactive function.

MODULE 3: STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Successful RTCCs are highly collaborative, requiring internal collaboration with investigative, patrol, and technology services; external collaboration with partner agencies, such as local government departments, emergency services, federal agencies, and neighboring law enforcement agencies; and community collaboration, such as local businesses, governing and advisory councils, and neighborhood associations.

Ultimately, RTCCs enhance public safety by offering real-time information to officers so they can more rapidly, safely, and accurately address crime as it occurs. As such, RTCCs become powerful components of policing and community responses to violent crime, traffic accidents, natural disasters, and other large-scale situations. RTCCs also promote safety during community events. Many law enforcement agencies that have established RTCCs to help address community concerns about crime and public safety have found that their communities reported improved satisfaction with law enforcement services, more positive perceptions of public safety, and enhanced trust in law enforcement capabilities. However, some communities have reported distrust of technology advancements in law enforcement applications or unease caused by strained police-community relations. Law enforcement agencies pursuing an RTCC must pursue meaningful engagement and collaboration with all stakeholders—including the community—from the beginning of RTCC implementation efforts.

WHY IS STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

- Raises awareness of RTCC mission, goals, and benefits
- Creates opportunities to address fears, misconceptions, or opposition to technologies used
- Facilitates partnership and encourages collaboration between public and private stakeholders
- Shares positive success stories in which RTCC personnel and capabilities were instrumental
- Encourages enhanced trust and legitimacy in policing by demonstrating how RTCCs work

This module covers the stakeholder and community engagement aspects of RTCC development. Agencies must foster robust stakeholder and community engagement to maximize RTCC effectiveness, which involves tailoring strategies to different contexts, such as identifying and collaborating with partner agencies, as well as securing support from key stakeholders and agency staff and leaders. Engaging community stakeholders ensures that RTCC initiatives are well-integrated and widely accepted. Transparent communication and collaborative partnerships build trust and cooperation, ultimately enhancing the effects and reach of RTCCs.

This module covers engagement with four important stakeholders:



Source: Google Gemini

EDUCATE AND BUILD TRUST WITH OFFICERS, DETECTIVES, SUPERVISORS, CIVILIANS, AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS

To foster stakeholder and community engagement for RTCCs, agencies must implement a comprehensive education and communication strategy and organize training sessions and workshops to familiarize organizational staff with the capabilities and benefits of RTCCs.

In early planning phases, RTCC managers should consider gathering input from frontline personnel who may eventually interact with, support, or receive support from the RTCC. We recommend engaging officers, detectives, supervisors, crime analysts, special operations, and other personnel to introduce the RTCC model and your agency's planning team.

The introduction may include attending roll calls to provide explanations of what RTCCs are, what they can offer, and what agency leadership aims to accomplish by pursuing RTCC development. Providing examples through videos, case examples, or media pieces of nearby or similar jurisdictions with effective RTCCs can help agency members visualize and understand how RTCCs can positively affect the tangible, day-to-day responsibilities of law enforcement offices in the agencies.



Source: The Riverdale Press

GATHER SUPPORT FROM KEY STAKEHOLDERS

To increase engagement, police departments must strategically gather support from internal and external stakeholders. By sharing information about RTCC objectives and potential benefits, leaders can foster more support for implementation, improve policy and protocol development, and identify talented individuals who may be well positioned to help staff the RTCC.

Within the agency, the RTCC planning team may want to gather input from patrol, investigations, special operations, analysts, and other organizational units about common crime challenges as well as the highest priority technology and intelligence services for frontline staff.

Externally, law enforcement agencies should aim to engage potential partners and stakeholders early to ensure that the mission and model best meet the unique needs of the jurisdiction.

Potential partners may include the following governmental stakeholders:

- **City or county leadership** (e.g., mayor's office, city council, city managers, county board of supervisors)
- **City or county departments** (e.g., IT, 911/communications center, human resources, emergency management, fire and emergency medical services, public works, business and community relations)
- **Other law enforcement agencies** (e.g., local, state, federal, tribal, or campus police departments that regularly collaborate and support public safety efforts in your jurisdiction; engagement with these groups can be especially important for small and rural jurisdictions that seek to design a regional RTCC model)
- **Justice system partners** (e.g., prosecutor's office; United States Attorney's Office; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; Federal Bureau of Investigation; United States Marshals Service; Drug Enforcement Administration)

GATHER SUPPORT FROM KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Garnering early buy-in from stakeholders who will interact with the RTCC can help to engender greater support for and understanding of RTCC purposes, and it can help leaders identify additional resources to bolster RTCC implementation. To increase stakeholder engagement, agencies should prioritize transparent communication and a collaborative environment.

At this stage of planning, agencies may find it helpful to learn from other successful RTCCs, and this peer-to-peer learning may be even more helpful if it includes key external stakeholders. Agencies should consider hosting informational sessions, briefings, and direct observation opportunities (through video conferencing or travel) to encourage buy-in for the RTCC and ensure that stakeholders have a shared understanding of what RTCCs can —and cannot—accomplish.

BUILD TRUST WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY THROUGH PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE OUTREACH, AND COMMUNITY MEETINGS

To develop and maintain community trust, agencies should emphasize transparent and accessible information about RTCC goals, policies, and operations. Community members may have limited knowledge of what technology is currently used in policing efforts or may worry about privacy in ways that strain police-community relations or degrade public support for investments in an RTCC. Up-front, open, and accessible dialogue with community leaders, organizations, and community members can help engender support for RTCC goals.

Agencies can use public education opportunities, including community forums, public safety meetings, and business and neighborhood outreach, to help communicate the agency's vision for the RTCC to community members. At the same time, agencies can address any misconceptions or fears about expanded technology use to address local crime concerns.



Source: Tempe11Video

BUILD TRUST WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY THROUGH PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE OUTREACH, AND COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Agencies can leverage social media platforms and media partnerships to share positive narratives and updates about the RTCC, which can in turn amplify support, build public trust, and help community members understand how RTCCs contribute to public safety. Leaders should consider launching a public webpage to provide regular updates on RTCC activities, success stories, and outcome measures, and the agency can simultaneously share these through social and local media to highlight the RTCC's positive effects and enhance community support. To engage community stakeholders, we suggest agencies consider the following topics as displayed to the right.

Agencies should consider hosting open houses or taking key community stakeholder groups on tours through the RTCC to see behind-the-scenes operations of how RTCCs operate in the community. Alternatively, agencies could post video tours on their RTCC webpage and social media.

- Mission statement of the RTCC
- Goals for the RTCC (e.g., enhance situational awareness and safety of responding officers, improve allocation of limited resources, support more effective local crime prevention and response)
- Funding secured for the RTCC
- Tool and services available through the RTCC
- Policy and procedure, with a particular focus on how the agency regulates surveillance to prevent overreach and safeguard civil liberties and constitutional rights
- Partnership opportunities (e.g., business or resident camera sharing programs, funding mechanisms)
- Success stories from nearby or similar communities (and once the RTCC is implemented, regular communication of success stories)

BUILD TRUST WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY THROUGH PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE OUTREACH, AND COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Several jurisdictions have posted their RTCC policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) on their respective police department websites. Posting SOPs may help to increase public trust in the agency's use and management of RTCC technologies (e.g., automatic LPRs (ALPRs), cameras that require careful oversight, policy, and supervision to preserve individual privacy. By maintaining an open dialogue and actively addressing concerns, law enforcement agencies can build a foundation of trust and cooperation for stakeholders buy-in.

IDENTIFY PARTNER AGENCIES TO PARTICIPATE IN RTCC OPERATIONS

Police departments can identify and engage partner agencies (private businesses, hospitals, fire and emergency medical systems, departments of transportation, and other local law enforcement agencies) to increase engagement and strengthen support for RTCCs. Agencies can map community resources (including publicly funded and community-based resources) to identify potential collaborators. Leaders can foster interest and cooperation by communicating the mutual benefits of collaboration. Memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and information-sharing protocols can help agencies better integrate technology and increase RTCC effectiveness.

One partnership example implemented in many jurisdictions involved camera feeds. Agencies may want to consider supplementing readily available city or county camera feeds and agency body-worn camera (BWC) video capabilities with MOU agreements with other local entities, such as private businesses, hospitals, fire and emergency services, the department of transportation, or other local and campus law enforcement agencies.



INNOVATION IN RTCCS - DETROIT, MICHIGAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

In early 2016, the Detroit Police Department (DPD) partnered with eight local gas stations in high crime areas. These gas stations installed real-time camera connections with DPD headquarters as part of a partnership between local businesses, the City of Detroit, and community groups. The innovative project was titled, "Project Green Light Detroit."

Project Green Light Detroit participants installed high-definition cameras and upgraded to high-speed network connections capable of consistent video streaming to DPD. Participants also agreed to provide adequate lighting on all parts of their properties – and to make other improvements as needed to ensure that their businesses are customer-friendly, safe, and inviting.

Each Project Green Light participant purchases and installs external Project Green Light Detroit signage, including metal flag signs, decals at the top of their doors, and physical green lights—all to signify to customers and community members that they are Project Green Light Detroit participants.

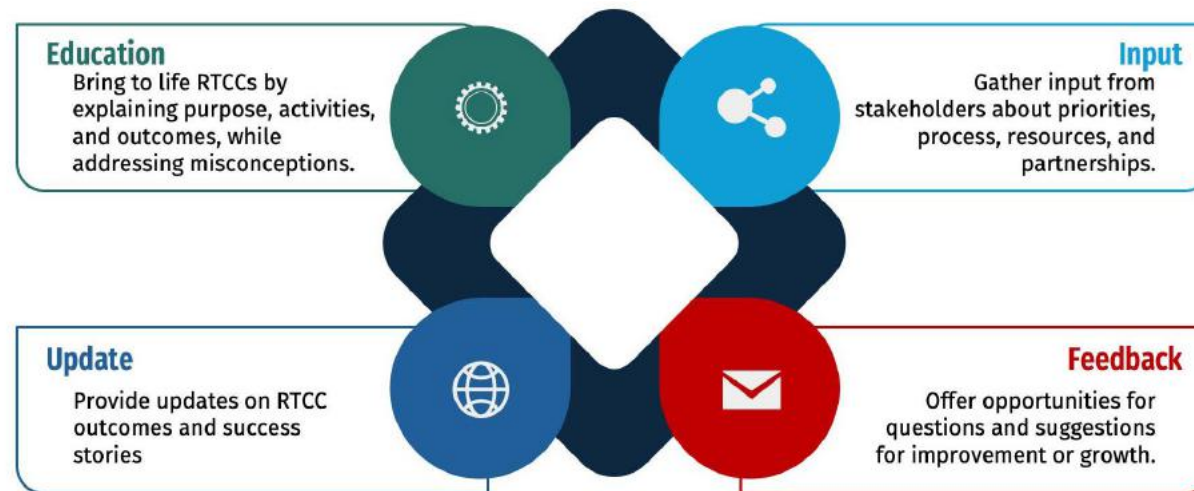
As part of Project Green Light Detroit, DPD and the City have committed to devote staff to effectively receive, monitor, and analyze video feeds from Project Green Light Detroit participants in the agency's RTCC. One year after implementation, overall violent crime decreased by 23 percent in the city and 48 percent at the original eight gas stations compared to year-to-date 2015.



IDENTIFY PARTNER AGENCIES TO PARTICIPATE IN RTCC OPERATIONS

Some communities have developed community programs in which neighborhood associations can register and share neighborhood LPR videos or community members can register their home surveillance camera systems for contact and requests to share relevant video footage of recent crimes. These programs can help expand the available inputs for the RTCC and can increase police-community engagement, but regular feedback loops should be developed to continue to collect input and share the positive effects of the RTCC with the community (see below for an example of a feedback loop).

Example Feedback Loop



Source: CNA

ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS AND OTHER NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS TO GENERATE SUPPORT FOR THE RTCC

To generate support for RTCCs by increasing community engagement, police departments must develop relationships with community leaders and neighborhood associations. As a first step, police should identify and conduct outreach to community leaders, heads of community organizations, and neighborhood advocates. Through established collaborations, police can host listening and information-sharing sessions tailored to community leaders to identify shared goals, concerns, and suggestions that will increase community support for RTCCs. Advisory committees or working groups can ensure that community voices are heard and foster a sense of ownership and collaboration. Community leaders can disseminate information to garner support within their networks.



Source: Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

Resource Challenges

Small and rural agencies often have challenges their larger agency counterparts do not. Limited funding, infrastructure and resources, staffing, access to training and expertise, and jurisdictional considerations may create challenges for RTCC implementation. However, any department—regardless of staffing or budget—can build out RTCC operations with the technology and equipment they already have in place. Strong collaborations are vital for RTCCs in small and rural agencies. In these cases, collaborations with better resourced agencies may be the most effective pathway to RTCC deployment. County, regional, or state partnerships between smaller and larger agencies may be mutually beneficial.



Source: Lakeshore Public Media

MODULE 4: LOCATION AND FACILITIES

An RTCC's usefulness is connected to the physical location and space in which it operates. As an agency develops its RTCC, its leaders must understand why location and facilities are important and what to consider when determining the infrastructure of the RTCC.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

When determining the RTCC's physical space, agencies must consider the space's size and capacity, accessibility, structure and functionality, as well as the agency's ability to modify and adjust the space.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Size and Capacity

The physical space must be large enough to accommodate all identified staff and their necessary equipment, including desks and tables, chairs, computers with multiple monitors per operator, radios or an integrated radio console, and phones. Even a bare-bones RTCC will require a desk or table and chair for each operator and supervisor, along with sufficient space for movement and collaboration.

If briefings for command staff or other agencies are anticipated, agencies should consider including extra chairs, a large conference table, and conferencing equipment in a separate room to avoid disrupting ongoing operations.



Source: Athens-Clarke County, GA Unified Government

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Accessibility

The chosen physical location (see section 2 in this module) should ideally allow for easy access for relevant personnel, including RTCC staff, supervisors, command staff, and potentially patrol watch commanders who may come to manage incidents from the RTCC.

Technology has mitigated some accessibility concerns; RTCC employees can access live 911 calls, CAD, and radios from any physical location within the agency's jurisdiction. However, physical proximity can still foster better collaboration and information sharing in some contexts.



Source: Chattanooga, TN Police Department

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Structure and Functionality

Agencies must consider several technological functions and limitations for the RTCC's space:



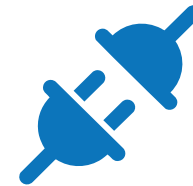
WORKSTATIONS

Operators should have their own workstations, each with multiple monitors for efficiency. Stations should be close enough to each other to allow for easy consultation and collaboration.



VIDEO WALLS

Large wall-mounted monitors (video walls) are beneficial for displaying information visible to all operators and visitors, mirroring operator screens, and allowing supervisors to oversee operations.



POWER AND CONNECTIVITY

The room's power supply must be sufficient to safely power all equipment while avoiding overloading outlets. To maintain functionality and safety, agencies must plan for wiring and cable management for the various technology components.



HEATING/COOLING AND VENTILATION

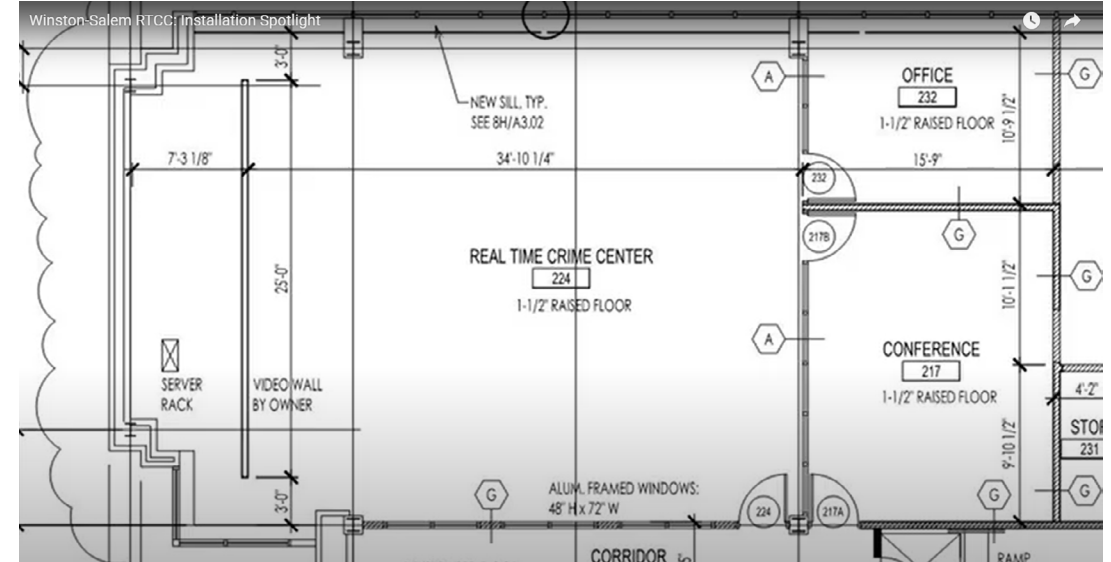
The room's heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system must be able to keep the room cool when fully equipped and staffed; additional ventilation or cooling may be necessary.

Agencies should consult with the IT department from the beginning to ensure that the space can support the necessary infrastructure and compatibility for all technology systems.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Ability to Modify and Adjust

When allocating space, agencies should have a blueprint for the center before installing any equipment to optimize layout. Agencies should factor consideration for future growth and the addition of new technologies into their space planning. The ability to modify the layout for desk and equipment placement should be a factor in choosing the space.



Source: Winston-Salem, NC Police Department

PHYSICAL LOCATION OF THE RTCC

The best location ultimately depends on the agency's overall mission, budget, staffing, physical space limitations, among other logistical considerations.

In addition, the physical placement of the RTCC can influence whether it is integrated with an existing unit. Housing it within Investigations or the EOC represents a form of physical integration. An isolated location would be a standalone physical space.

Functionally, the RTCC should work closely with various units, regardless of its physical location. For example, constant contact with the Crime Analysis Unit is crucial for up-to-date information on crime trends. Detectives should also be trained to engage with the RTCC for investigative leads.

The decision on physical integration versus a standalone location should consider the potential for synergy, information sharing, and minimizing distractions. A standalone location might offer more focused operations, but integration might foster better collaboration with specific units. There is no single method for physical placement; it depends on what best meets the defined mission objectives and logistical constraints of the agency.

PHYSICAL LOCATION OF THE RTCC

The physical placement of the RTCC within the agency can vary depending on its mission, budget, staffing, and available space.

Polling of multiple agencies reveals that the top physical locations for an RTCC within a department are in investigations, in the EOC, or at an isolated location.



PHYSICAL LOCATION OF THE RTCC

Investigations

This location is an effective choice for agencies who intend to use their RTCC as part of a combined Crime Analysis Unit.

Pros and Cons of RTCC Placement in an Investigations Division

PROS

Allows for proximity to detectives and investigators for case assistance while providing real-time functionality with CAD and radios.



CONS

May lead to the RTCC being seen solely as an investigative tool rather than a broader support function.

PHYSICAL LOCATION OF THE RTCC

Isolated Location

For this location, the RTCC is kept separate from other units.

Pros and Cons of RTCC Placement in an Isolated Location

PROS

Allows the RTCC to focus on its mission without interruptions and may provide the most space and focus without distractions.



CONS

May limit direct interactions among RTCC employees and officers, deputies, detectives, and investigations, potentially hindering real-time information flow and relationship building.



PHYSICAL LOCATION OF THE RTCC

EOC

Transitioning an underutilized EOC into an RTCC is a growing trend.

Pros and Cons of RTCC Placement in an Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

PROS



EOCs often have equipment, space, and most technology platforms already in place, making it a potentially cost-effective and efficient starting point. Once embedded, it allows police leaders to manage multiple incidents across the city from a single location.

CONS



EOCs may not be ideally located for daily accessibility for all relevant personnel outside of emergency situations. In addition, if a true emergency and non-crime event occurs (e.g., a weather-related crisis), conflicts may arise, and the RTCC staff may be expected to provide emergency management functions.

INNOVATION IN RTCCS – CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Chattanooga, TN Police Department (CPD) developed a Real Time Crime Center, which was fully functioning prior to their PSP engagement. CPD's RTCC is staffed with sworn and professional staff, including sworn supervisors, investigators, crime analysts, and intelligence analysts. Early in CPD's PSP engagement, RTCC staff attended several peer exchanges to learn how they could improve their RTCC operations and address some of the challenges they were experiencing, including overcrowding of both personnel and equipment, inability to see all screens and monitors, lack of offices or quiet working spaces, and limited ability to convene large groups during critical events in the city. As a result of peer exchanges and peer learning, CPD identified that a full remodel of the RTCC was necessary, which CPD completed before its PSP engagement concluded.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

An RTCC can be implemented with the right personnel, a desk, and a computer. Therefore, initially, a dedicated physical building is unnecessary, which is particularly relevant for small and rural agencies with potential budget and space constraints.

Most agencies are successful when they start small and slow, using tools they already have and then expanding over time. This approach is highly adaptable to the limited resources often found in smaller agencies. Instead of immediately investing in a dedicated space, small and rural agencies can use existing infrastructure. For instance, a portion of an existing office or a space within the police station could be designated as the initial RTCC. As agencies begin to demonstrate the RTCC's value, and as more resources become available, the physical space can be expanded if necessary.



MODULE 5: OPERATIONS

Establishing an RTCC allows your agency to harness the power of technological advancements in surveillance, data analytics, and communication to prevent and investigate crimes more effectively. RTCCs enhance real-time decision-making and situational awareness for patrol officers by providing immediate, pertinent information to assist in their response and initial investigation. RTCCs facilitate fast and efficient information sharing across different units and agencies to more effectively support disaster response, crisis management, and resource coordination. The demonstrated effectiveness of RTCCs in other jurisdictions serves as a strong motivator, with success stories highlighting improved response times, better resource allocation, and enhanced crime-solving capabilities.

This module contains the key considerations for establishing RTCC operations. Specifically, it includes guidance on 10 aspects of RTCC creation.

DEVELOP A STAFFING MODEL FOR THE RTCC

To determine staffing for an RTCC, your agency needs to consider a range of factors, including your operational needs, budget, the desired level of coverage, and the skills required for RTCC functions.



CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Begin by conducting a comprehensive needs assessment to identify where current operations are lacking and where real-time data analysis can have the greatest effects. This assessment will help leaders determine the scope and functions of the RTCC, which will in turn influence staffing requirements. Agencies should consider whether the RTCC will focus on reactive support for in-progress calls, proactive crime prevention, enhancing investigations, or any combination of the three. The chosen focus will dictate the necessary skills and number of personnel.



EVALUATE EXISTING RESOURCES

Leaders must conduct an internal assessment of the agency's available human and financial resources. Insufficient resources can significantly affect staffing decisions, so leaders must determine whether current staff can take on RTCC duties or new hires are necessary. Leaders must also consider whether using trained crime analysts in the RTCC would maximize expertise or whether additional training would be required.



INVOLVE KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Leaders should gather support from internal stakeholders, including department heads, patrol officers, detectives, and IT personnel, as well as external stakeholders such as community leaders. Stakeholder input can help determine staffing needs and ensure buy-in.



PLAN FOR TRAINING

Agencies must ensure that all RTCC staff, both sworn and professional, receive proper training on RTCC technology, legal considerations, and operational procedures. Systematically addressing these points can help the agency determine the most appropriate and effective staffing model for the RTCC, balancing the unique contributions of both sworn and professional personnel to meet the agency's specific goals and resources.

DEVELOP A STAFFING MODEL FOR THE RTCC

Consider the benefits of a hybrid staffing model that includes both sworn and professional staff. To determine a staffing model for an RTCC that includes both sworn and professional staff, leaders should consider the unique benefits each brings to the operation and tailor the model to the agency's specific needs, budget, and operational goals. A hybrid model that combines sworn officers and professional staff is often considered one of the preferred and most successful approaches. This model leverages the different viewpoints and resources that each type of personnel offers. To determine an effective hybrid staffing model, agencies should consider the strengths that sworn personnel and professional staff bring to operations.



Sworn and Professional Staff Strengths

Strengths of Sworn Personnel

- ✓ Possess a deep and innate understanding of what an officer in the field faces, which is beneficial for assessing incidents and prioritizing officer safety
- ✓ Have legal training to understand when something is viewed on camera provides the probable cause required for further action
- ✓ Experienced officers bring specific knowledge of working areas, including streets, locations, and even people, which can enhance response times and communication
- ✓ Can articulate identified crimes in progress due to their annual training in areas like active shooter scenarios, terrorism, human trafficking, case law, and city ordinances
- ✓ Some patrol officers prefer to receive information from other sworn personnel working in the RTCC
- ✓ Often have an investigative background and familiarity with investigative steps and the day-to-day work of police officers and detectives

Source: CNA

Strengths of Professional Staff

- ✓ Can provide long-term staffing stability, as turnover is often less compared to sworn
- ✓ Can advance on career paths created for the RTCC (e.g., director, manager, analyst)
- ✓ Civilian professionals, such as data analysts, bring specialized skills in data collection, mining, and statistical analysis, crucial for interpreting crime data and generating actionable intelligence.
- ✓ Maintain, optimize, and secure the center's technology systems with specialized skills (e.g., IT, data analysts)
- ✓ Using civilian staff can be more cost-effective than solely staffing sworn officers

ESTABLISH OPERATING HOURS

Agencies must establish appropriate operating hours and ensure sufficient personnel to manage the RTCC effectively. The desired operational hours (e.g., peak crime times, 24/7, special events) will significantly affect the number of personnel required. Operating 24/7 typically requires around 12 full-time personnel. Agencies that operate RTCCs on an as-needed basis may temporarily reassign existing personnel.

As shown to the right, the NRTCCA has identified [five levels of crime centers](#) based on duties, coverage, technology, and staffing.

Although most RTCCs are Level Two or Three, each agency's size, crime volume, and public safety needs will influence the appropriate level and corresponding staffing number. Agencies that operate RTCCs on an as-needed basis may temporarily reassign existing personnel.

RTCC Levels and Staffing



Source: NRTCCA, "Real Time Crime Center (RTCC) Best Practices White Paper."

DEFINE THE TEAM'S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic personnel and staffing decisions are critical. Options include staffing with crime analysts, sworn officers, both (a hybrid model), or contractors. The decision may depend on existing crime analysis capabilities and the agency's needs. For many RTCCs, a mixed staffing model that integrates both sworn officers and civilian professionals has proven optimal.

For personnel and staffing decisions to work, agencies must define roles and responsibilities clearly.

We recommend four steps:

Four Steps to Define RTCC Staffing Roles and Responsibilities

STEP 01

Specify the tasks each role will handle, such as data monitoring, radio communication, alert escalation, and documentation.

STEP 02

While defining roles, consider training all RTCC members as generalists capable of stepping into different roles when needed to ensure seamless operations.

STEP 03

Leverage the unique specialties of each team member to enhance overall effectiveness.

STEP 04

Discuss and delineate roles between sworn personnel and crime analysts (if applicable) to help eliminate duplication of work and confusion.

ESTABLISH CLEAR, WELL-PLANNED POLICIES AND SOPs

To establish clear, well-thought-out policies for RTCC operations, departments should take a systematic approach to developing a comprehensive set of SOPs, a fundamental first step for establishing an effective RTCC.

SOPs should establish the RTCC's mission and authority, providing a clear understanding of the RTCC's role within the agency. Agencies should also involve relevant stakeholders in the development of SOPs. Departments with a preexisting crime analysis unit may benefit from crime analyst input on how the RTCC will integrate with and augment their work.

Click the checklist to learn how your department can establish these crucial policies and SOPs.

Click the resource to review agency RTCC policies for examples when developing your agency's policy.

DEVELOP A SPECIALIZED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR STAFF IN THE RTCC

When developing a Specialized Training Program for RTCC staff, agencies should consider several critical factors, such as curriculum content, communications skills, the target audience, training delivery and format, ongoing training and evaluation, training resources and expertise, and integration with applicable legal and policy frameworks.

DEVELOP A SPECIALIZED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR STAFF IN THE RTCC

Curriculum Content

Real-time technology use. The training must cover the specific technologies and software used in the RTCC, such as surveillance systems, gunshot detection, LPRs, data integration platforms, and analytical tools. Staff need to be proficient in operating and interpreting data from these systems.

RTCC processes and procedures. The program should detail the established workflows, SOPs, and protocols for various scenarios, including how to respond to different types of incidents, escalate alerts, and document actions.

Data analytics and information interpretation. Training should equip staff with the skills to analyze the large volumes of data coming into the RTCC and synthesize it into actionable intelligence for field officers.



Source: Google Gemini

DEVELOP A SPECIALIZED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR STAFF IN THE RTCC

Communication Skills

Effective communication is paramount for RTCC personnel who need to relay critical information to officers in real-time. This communication includes clear, concise, and accurate verbal and written communication. Agencies should consider the following aspects of communications when establishing an RTCC:

Situational awareness. Staff should be trained to maintain high levels of situational awareness to understand the context of events as they unfold and anticipate potential developments.

Legal compliance. Given the sensitive nature of the information RTCCs handle, agencies must prioritize comprehensive training on relevant local, state, and federal laws, especially those regarding privacy and surveillance. Staff must understand data privacy guidelines as well as what they can monitor and when they can use camera footage.

Ethical considerations. Training should address the ethical implications of using RTCC technologies and handling sensitive data.



Source: Adobe Stock Image

DEVELOP A SPECIALIZED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR STAFF IN THE RTCC

Target Audience

The training program should be tailored to the specific roles and responsibilities of both sworn officers and civilian professionals working in the RTCC. Sworn officers may need more emphasis on tactical insight and operational knowledge, while civilian staff may want to focus more on data analysis and technology management.

Agencies should consider the existing skill sets and experience of potential RTCC staff. For instance, crime analysts may need training to shift their focus from long-term trends to real-time event analysis.



Source: Seattle, WA Police Foundation

DEVELOP A SPECIALIZED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR STAFF IN THE RTCC

Training Delivery and Format

Once agencies have determined what RTCC training should include, leaders should consider the most effective methods of instruction:

- Leaders should use a variety of training methods, such as classroom instruction, hands-on exercises, simulations, and scenario-based training to ensure effective learning.
- Agencies should provide IT training within the context of RTCC processes and procedures.
- Leaders should also consider developing an RTCC video that can quickly summarize the center's mission, capabilities, and operating guidelines for both new and existing personnel.
- The RTCC may benefit from using accredited bodies for training, especially if leaders are filling roles with civilian analysts.

DEVELOP A SPECIALIZED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR STAFF IN THE RTCC

Ongoing Training and Evaluation

Agencies must prioritize regular and ongoing training to ensure that staff remain proficient with evolving technologies, are prepared to handle complex situations, and can apply best practices effectively. Retraining plays a critical role by allowing staff to learn from past incidents (both within the agency and from other agencies) and analyze their responses.

- Agencies should implement continuous learning approaches to help RTCC personnel grow in experience and ensure that they can adapt to new challenges and improve operations over time.
- Leaders should also establish certification programs to ensure that all RTCC staff meet a minimum standard of proficiency, which will foster consistency and accountability.
- Agencies must evaluate the effectiveness of the training program through feedback from staff and performance metrics.

DEVELOP A SPECIALIZED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR STAFF IN THE RTCC

Training Resources and Expertise

To facilitate ongoing training, we recommend the following steps and resources:

- Agencies should identify internal personnel with the necessary expertise to develop and deliver training. These personnel might include experienced RTCC operators, IT staff, legal advisors, and training instructors.
- Leaders should consider external resources such as the NRTCCA, which provides best practices, training, and consulting services.
- Agencies can also learn from case studies and real-world examples of how other agencies have implemented RTCCs and their training programs.

DEVELOP A SPECIALIZED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR STAFF IN THE RTCC

Legal and Policy Framework Integration

In addition to training, agencies should consider legal and policy frameworks:

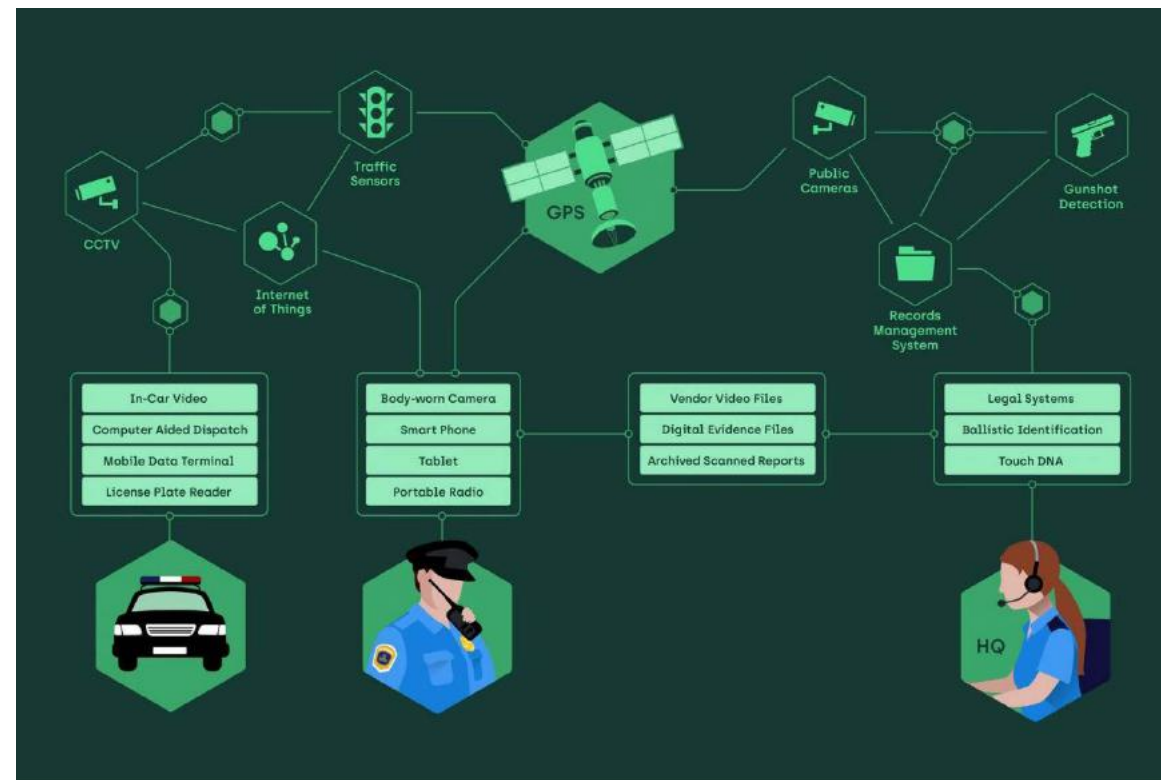
- Leaders should ensure that the training program reinforces the agency's established policies and SOPs for RTCC operations.
- Agencies should also emphasize legal compliance in all aspects of RTCC operations and data management.

By carefully considering these elements, agencies can develop specialized training programs that equip RTCC staff with the necessary knowledge, skills, and understanding to operate effectively, ethically, and legally, ultimately enhancing the safety and security of the community.

IDENTIFY DATA NEEDS

A critical step in the development in an RTCC is to determine which data sources will directly support RTCC operations because an RTCC's success depends on the data sources that feed into it. In addition to CAD and RMS, an agency should consider how its existing technology and data sources can integrate into RTCC operations. Common data sources include camera feeds, gunshot detection, social media monitoring, GPS, crime databases, and external agency data.

An agency that systematically addresses these considerations can develop a robust and effective data integration scheme for its RTCC, enhancing its ability to support real-time crime response and investigations.



Source: Police Chief Magazine

ENSURE DATA MANAGEMENT AND PRIVACY GUIDELINES

To establish data management and privacy guidelines for an agency's RTCC, leaders need to develop comprehensive policies and procedures that address the sensitive nature of the information RTCCs handle. Key steps and considerations include developing clear and comprehensive policies and SOPs, ensuring legal compliance with local, state, and federal law, addressing privacy and identity protection proactively, establishing access and security measures, engaging with community and citizen groups, developing specialized training for staff, and building in accountability measures.



Source: Google Gemini

ENSURE LEGAL COMPLIANCE WITH LOCAL AND FEDERAL LAW

To ensure legal compliance with local and federal law for RTCC operations, leaders must proactively integrate legal considerations into every aspect of the RTCC's establishment and ongoing functioning. A comprehensive approach includes engaging legal experts early and continuously, developing legally sound policies and SOPs, developing specialized training for staff that is thorough and ongoing, establishing protocols for monitoring legal compliance, engaging with community and civil liberty organizations, and maintaining transparency and public trust.

By prioritizing these steps, agencies can establish a framework that ensures the RTCC operates in full compliance with all applicable local and federal laws, safeguarding both public safety and individual rights. Leaders must remember that legal landscapes evolve, so continuous review and adaptation of policies and practices are essential.



Source: iStock

DEVELOP INCIDENT RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

To develop incident response protocols for an RTCC, agencies need to create detailed guidelines that dictate how RTCC staff should manage various situations, ranging from minor incidents to major emergencies. Agencies should take a comprehensive approach to developing incident response protocols that cover the range of scenarios the agency typically encounters or anticipates.

By carefully developing and regularly practicing these incident response protocols, agencies can ensure that their RTCCs will be better equipped to provide timely and effective intelligence and support to officers in the field, ultimately enhancing public safety.

Those protocols should include the following steps:

- 1 Outlining threat assessment procedures
- 2 Defining the prioritization of responses
- 3 Establishing coordination procedures with field officers and dispatch
- 4 Developing clear criteria for escalating incidents
- 5 Establishing communications protocols with other agencies
- 6 Incorporating technology usage and guidelines
- 7 Mandating regular training exercises and drills
- 8 Aligning with legal and policy frameworks
- 9 Including post-incident review processes

ESTABLISH COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

To establish collaboration and communication protocols for RTCC operation, leaders need to develop clear and well-defined guidelines for how the RTCC interacts with both internal and external stakeholders. A comprehensive approach to establishing collaboration and communications protocols includes developing comprehensive SOPs, educating and engaging stakeholders, defining communications channels and protocols, fostering internal collaboration, integrating with external agencies, and regularly testing and refining protocols.

Agencies that implement these steps can establish robust collaboration and communication protocols that are essential for effective RTCC operation. Agencies must continuously evaluate and adapt these protocols based on experience and evolving needs.



Source: Google Gemini

INNOVATION IN RTCCS – METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

In the summer of 2024, the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) established an RTCC to help track incidents of violence and provide immediate analytical support to detectives investigating violent crimes. The center became fully operational in only eight months. Through PSP support, MPD learned best practices from peer police departments (Miami, Florida, and Las Vegas, Nevada) with high-functioning RTCCs, allowing MPD to learn technical requirements and strategies to leverage the data to address violent crime. MPD's RTCC has improved coordination and distribution of intelligence information, both internally and externally across criminal justice partners. The center brings together detectives from various units, civilian operators, and analysts to ensure there is a variety in skills and expertise to handle any necessary tasks. While the center is led by MPD, other local law enforcement agencies are co-located and receive access to their systems and feeds. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority is embedded in MPD's RTCC, providing visibility to cameras on buses and trains. DC leaders credit the development of the RTCC as a critical component in the city's historic 35 percent reduction in violent crime in 2024.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

Small and rural agencies must consider resource and staffing limitations, technology adoption and integration, service area, community engagement, funding availability, and SOP development. Small and rural agencies should take the following steps before initiating plans for an RTCC:

- Ensure there is a robust data management system capable of storing large volumes of data.
- Ensure there is at least one internal and one external investigative database accessible to personnel.
- Identify existing personnel who have the skillset and ambition to work in the RTCC.
- Invest in training programs that will ensure RTCC personnel are knowledgeable about its operations.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES



Resource Limitations

All agencies face resource limitations, but small and rural agencies by definition operate with smaller resources than their larger counterparts. Leaders should consider the following aspects of necessary RTCC resources:



FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

Small and rural agencies often have more limited financial resources than their larger agency counterparts. This limitation can affect their ability to invest in the necessary technology, infrastructure, and personnel for an RTCC. These smaller agencies may struggle to afford the capital investments for technology projects and may not benefit from economies of scale in technology acquisition the same way larger agencies do.



PERSONNEL LIMITATIONS

Small and rural agencies typically have fewer personnel than their larger counterparts; as a result, they often require officers to fill multiple roles and act as generalists rather than specialists. This lack of specialization means that staff in a potential RTCC may need to handle a broad range of law enforcement operations and technologies. Small agencies may also struggle to spare personnel for dedicated RTCC staffing or for training.



TECHNOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS

Small and rural agencies may have limited access to advanced technologies considered standard in urban areas because of cost and infrastructure limitations. They might rely on outdated equipment or improvised solutions if they lack the resources to invest in newer technologies, and they may also struggle to acquire grant funding and training for new technologies. Technologies developed for larger departments may not always be applicable or scalable to the needs and resources of smaller agencies.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

Staffing the RTCC

Small and rural agencies may have difficulties dedicating sworn officers to RTCC duties given patrol needs. Agencies might consider using light-duty sworn employees or trained civilian staff with investigative backgrounds to staff the RTCC. Small agencies may also struggle to recruit and retain qualified personnel because they typically offer lower salaries and fewer benefits than larger agencies, which can limit small agencies' ability to find suitable RTCC staff.

Given these personnel limitations, small and rural agencies may need to consider creative staffing models for their RTCC. Options include staffing with existing personnel, using hybrid models with both sworn and civilian staff, or exploring part-time or shared staffing arrangements with neighboring agencies.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

Geographic considerations

Small and rural agencies often serve large geographic areas with dispersed populations, limited infrastructure, and challenging terrain, all of which can affect how RTCCs deploy and use technologies such as cameras and LPRs.

Long travel distances for law enforcement response can also influence the real-time value of information provided by an RTCC. Small and rural agencies may need to focus on providing information that aids more efficient responses or supports longer-term investigations.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

Training

Because most research and training resources focus on large urban agencies, access to training programs that address the specific challenges of small and rural jurisdictions is often limited.

Even when training is available, the cost of travel and the inability to spare personnel can be significant barriers. Small and rural agencies should therefore explore distance-learning strategies and collaborative training opportunities.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

Collaboration and communication

Small and rural agencies must establish clear collaboration and communication protocols with neighboring agencies, especially if the former are considering a centralized or interagency RTCC. Model MOUs for interagency mutual aid could be beneficial.

Given potential staffing limitations, the RTCC should aim to bolster and support existing functions within the agency and avoid duplicating work, particularly with units such as crime analysis. Agencies need to clearly define roles and responsibilities.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

Community context

Small and rural agencies often have close ties to the community. When these agencies implement an RTCC, they should seek to maintain this community-oriented approach and ensure transparency and accountability regarding the use of technology and data. Agencies must engage the public and address privacy concerns.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

SOPs

Developing a clear SOP for the RTCC—one that outlines its purpose, authority, chain of command, roles, and expectations—is essential. This SOP should be tailored to the agency's size and operational context.

By carefully considering these factors, small and rural law enforcement agencies can strategically plan and operate an RTCC that effectively addresses their unique challenges and enhances public safety within their communities.



MODULE 6: TECHNOLOGY

To establish an effective RTCC, leaders must plan for its technology needs. This module provides guidance on which technological components to consider and how to approach the planning process. We strongly recommend that agencies consult with IT professionals to determine the appropriate specifications and infrastructure for each agency's specific needs.

PLAN FOR YOUR RTCC'S TECHNOLOGY NEEDS

Agency leaders should proactively consider technology needs before establishing an RTCC. We recommend the following steps:

Assess existing technology. Leaders should begin by taking stock of the technology the agency already owns, including information from CAD, RMS, ALPR, and any other available data, even if it resides in disparate systems. Evaluate whether the current computers are new enough and have sufficient processing power to run multiple programs, especially those with video capabilities. The assessment should include the agency's existing radio systems and communication infrastructure.

Define goals and intended outcomes. Agencies must clearly understand what problems the RTCC is intended to solve and what the desired outcomes are. Leaders should consider the RTCC's directives, such as preventing and deterring criminal activity, identifying and monitoring crime in real time, capturing video evidence, supporting interagency collaboration, and enhancing officer safety.

Identify key technological components. Based on agency goals, leaders should determine the essential technology and data categories the RTCC will need.



Source: Google Gemini

PLAN FOR YOUR RTCC'S TECHNOLOGY NEEDS

Agency leaders should proactively consider technology needs before establishing an RTCC. We recommend the following steps:

Prioritize needs and phased implementation. Because budgets may be limited, agencies should prioritize the most critical technology based on their immediate needs and mission. Many agencies start small, using existing tools, and expand over time, so a phased approach to technology acquisition and implementation may be beneficial.

Consider integration capabilities. When selecting new technologies, agencies must ensure that the technologies can seamlessly integrate with existing systems and hardware. A key goal should be to have a unified platform that reduces operators' need to switch between multiple disparate systems.

Develop a data integration scheme. A data integration scheme lays out how an agency will use data sources from disparate data sources. To develop a data integration scheme for an agency's RTCC, leaders should follow a structured approach that considers various data sources, technical challenges, and best practices. Key considerations for each agency include identifying and inventorying data sources, addressing technical integration challenges, establishing a unified platform, involving IT professionals, prioritizing data pipelines and sources, building a database of assets, addressing data security, and focusing on 911, CAD, and RMS integration.

PLAN FOR YOUR RTCC'S TECHNOLOGY NEEDS

Agency leaders should proactively consider technology needs before establishing an RTCC. We recommend the following steps:

Ensure interoperability. To ensure interoperability between the technologies and systems required to operate an RTCC, agencies must adopt a strategic approach that focuses on integration, standardization, and communication between platforms. To ensure continued interoperability, leaders should consider implementing video and data integration platforms, prioritizing seamless integration, developing a comprehensive data integration scheme, adopting open architecture applications, standardizing data formats and protocols, involving IT experts at the outset, establishing clear communication protocols, developing SOPs, focusing on training, and continuously monitoring and evaluating innovation.

Focus on user-friendliness. Agencies should opt for solutions with a user-friendly interface to expedite personnel adaptation and minimize the learning curve.

Plan for scalability. Leaders should choose technologies that can scale alongside the agency's growth and evolving technological requirements.

Budgeting. Agencies must allocate adequate financial resources for the acquisition, implementation, and ongoing maintenance of the necessary technology. We encourage leaders to explore grant opportunities and partnerships to help with funding.

PLAN FOR YOUR RTCC'S TECHNOLOGY NEEDS

Agency leaders should proactively consider technology needs before establishing an RTCC. We recommend the following steps:

Engage IT support. Leaders should involve their agency's IT department from the beginning of the planning process to ensure system compatibility, infrastructure support, and proper network integration. Leaders should also consult with IT experts to ensure that desktop computers are sufficient for the platforms they will operate.

Address security and data management. Agencies must plan for robust data management to ensure that internal and external investigative databases are accessible to agency personnel. Agencies should also consider data storage, retrieval, and retention policies, especially for sensitive data such as video footage and LPR information, keeping privacy policies in mind.

Develop SOPs. Leaders must establish clear operational procedures for how RTCC personnel will use the technology, including active crime scene response protocols, data handling, and evidence management.

Provide adequate training to RTCC staff. Leaders must ensure that RTCC staff members receive comprehensive training on how to use all the technologies effectively in real-time scenarios within the context of RTCC SOPs and policies.

By following these steps and carefully considering the technological landscape and each agency's specific needs, leaders can develop a robust and effective technology plan for the RTCC.

EQUIPMENT CONSIDERATIONS TO SUSTAIN YOUR RTCC

In addition to general technology considerations, leaders must plan carefully for equipment use and upgrades in RTCCs. The following types of technology are common in RTCCs:

EQUIPMENT CONSIDERATIONS TO SUSTAIN YOUR RTCC

Computers

RTCC computers need to operate, access, view, and provide power to cameras, as well as run multiple programs simultaneously. Standard computers used for report writing may be inadequate for RTCC operators. IT analysts can help ensure that the desktop computers have sufficient power for the platforms they will operate. The required speed can vary depending on the agency and the number of cameras being used.

Consider the number of hours per day the computers will be used, the number of cameras they will access, and the speed at which an operator can move between cameras to respond to calls for service. The need for powerful desktops may be alleviated if some RTCCs use desktop computers located in a server room to perform single tasks—such as managing traffic cameras—and have RTCC operators access them remotely.

Agencies should also consider the number of programs that will be running in the background, such as LPRs, city cameras, traffic cameras, community cameras, and drone feeds, and ensure that the computers can support all these programs simultaneously.

RTCC detectives may benefit from having multiple screens at their workstations to keep multiple databases open simultaneously.



Source: Mesa, AZ Police Department

EQUIPMENT CONSIDERATIONS TO SUSTAIN YOUR RTCC

Video Wall Screens

A video wall, which can be one large screen or several interconnected screens, can help RTCC employees expand their desktop monitor real estate. Video walls can display various data feeds, including traffic cameras, LPR technology, and local or national news. Although beneficial, most RTCC leaders have indicated that a video wall is not a necessity initially, especially if resources are first needed for LPRs, traffic cameras, overt cameras, or drones.

Adding a video wall makes more sense as an RTCC grows from one to several employees per shift, allowing supervisors to get a “big picture” view without needing to look over individual operators’ shoulders. Video walls can also encourage patrol watch commanders or lieutenants to manage scenes virtually from the RTCC.

Once an agency has a video wall, it will also need video display processors to ingest multiple data feeds and display them on the video wall in the desired format. These processors also allow the RTCC to stream video wall images to other locations, including the dispatch center or watch commander offices. Leaders should consider adding a video wall backdrop option with the agency logo for visitor photos. Large wall-mounted monitors should be visible to all operators and visitors to mirror screens or display important information.



Source: Google Gemini

EQUIPMENT CONSIDERATIONS TO SUSTAIN YOUR RTCC

Servers (Cloud or Hybrid)

A strong, cloud-based centralized intelligence platform is a fundamental pillar for effective RTCCs. This platform should be able to extract and unify video and data feeds from any source, creating a central hub that strengthens situational awareness and investigative capabilities.

RTCCs need a robust data management system with at least one internal and one external investigative database accessible to RTCC personnel.

Implementing GIS in an RTCC utilizes a scalable platform for managing and improving real-time law enforcement response, implying the need for server infrastructure to support this. GIS can leverage city, county, state, or federal GIS infrastructures where appropriate.

It is important that adequate computing and network infrastructure is allocated to support GIS for RTCCs, including server infrastructure that can handle data storage, processing, and dissemination.

When considering server options (cloud or hybrid), leaders should first review their agency's current needs and capabilities as well as desired future capabilities, then consult with IT professionals to determine the most suitable and secure solution for data storage, accessibility, and integration with various technologies. IT professionals can help leaders understand the implications of each option for cost, maintenance, scalability, and security.



Source: Google Gemini

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Technology is the foundation for effective RTCC operations. Agencies should first identify which current technologies they can integrate into their RTCC before seeking to purchase more. The National Public Safety Partnership Technology Cost Considerations Guide in Law Enforcement is a valuable resource that identifies six considerations that affect the total cost of technology to an agency.

Click the resource to access
case studies describing
agencies' implementation of
technology to support the RTCC.

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

CAD and RMS

Access to CAD systems allows RTCC operators to receive real-time alerts about priority calls and to monitor the status of incidents.

RMS provides access to historical crime data and records for analysis and context. Agencies must integrate these systems to understand ongoing situations and past trends.



Source: City of Allen, TX

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

BWCs

BWCs offer real-time video information from the perspective of officers on the scene in locations where stationary cameras may not be available. Access to live feeds (depending on policies and legal considerations) can provide an additional set of eyes for officer safety and situational awareness. Historical BWC footage can also be valuable for investigations.



Source: Adobe Stock

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

ALPRs

ALPR systems scan license plates and compare them against hotlists (e.g., local, National Crime Information Center, state equivalents) to identify stolen vehicles or vehicles associated with known criminals. Real-time alerts can be sent to the RTCC when a flagged vehicle is detected, allowing for potential intervention. Agencies often store ALPR data, which can then be retroactively searched for investigative purposes. Agencies can use both fixed and mobile ALPR cameras.



Source: Cathedral City, CA Police Department

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

In-Car Cameras

Similar to BWCs, ICCs can provide live video feeds from patrol vehicles to the RTCC, offering another viewpoint of an incident that can enhance situational awareness and officer safety.



Source: Ottawa Police Service

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Traffic Cameras

Cities often already own traffic cameras that can be valuable resources for RTCCs, providing visual information about incidents and traffic flow. Many cities utilize pan, tilt, and zoom (PTZ) cameras, which offer flexibility in monitoring. Agencies who form partnerships with traffic management centers can improve access to and the capabilities of these cameras.



Source: Google Gemini

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Closed Circuit Television

Public surveillance cameras are a critical RTCC component, providing live and recorded video footage of public spaces and even private businesses with consent. Agencies must integrate various CCTV feeds into a single platform with efficient monitoring and response. However, the number and quality of cameras can vary greatly.



Source: Adobe Stock

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Overt Camera Trailers and Vehicles

Agencies can deploy these mobile surveillance units to areas lacking fixed camera coverage or for specific events. The units can be equipped with telescoping poles for better vantage points and can also host other technologies, including ALPR cameras.



Source: Valorence Mobile Surveillance

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Facial Recognition Software

This technology can be used to compare images of suspects from surveillance footage against databases of booking photos or other sources to aid in identification. Because the use of facial recognition software raises ethical and privacy concerns, agencies need to carefully consider and adhere to legal restrictions.

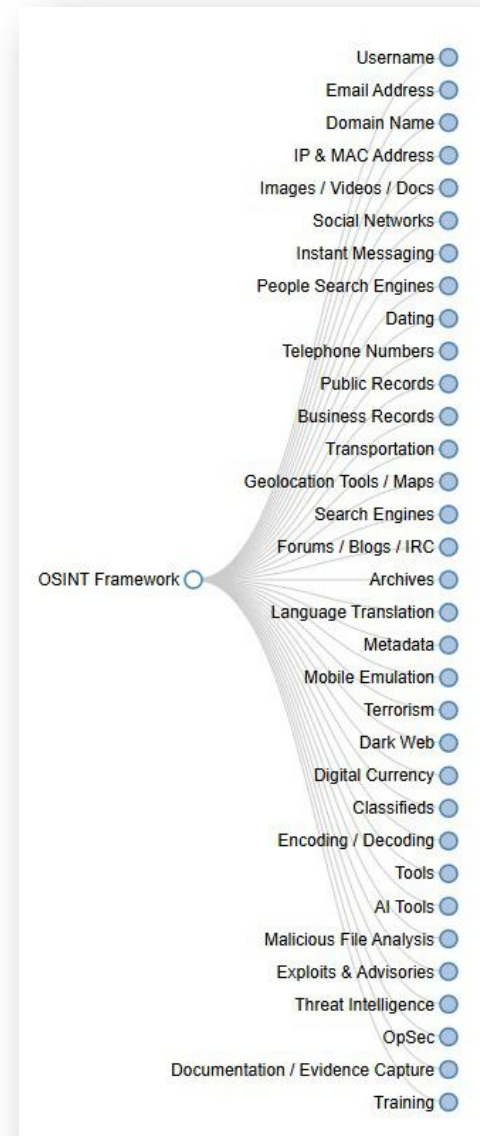


Source: U.S. Government Accountability Office

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Social Media Applications

Monitoring publicly accessible social media feeds can provide valuable open-source intelligence (OSINT) on potential threats, criminal activities, emerging trends, and geolocation data, the latter of which can be particularly useful. OSINT powered by artificial intelligence is vital for threat intelligence.



Source: OSINT Framework

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Public and Private Video Feeds

To expand camera coverage, agencies can integrate feeds from other government entities (e.g., transit authorities, schools) and private businesses through partnerships and legal agreements. Community camera registry programs can also enhance post-incident investigations.



INNOVATION IN RTCCS – NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA POLICE DEPARTMENT

During the terrorist attack on Bourbon Street on January 1, 2025, the New Orleans RTCC played a critical role in the response. The RTCC provided real-time intelligence by receiving video feeds from multiple cameras along Bourbon Street, which allowed them to track the attacker's movements. This network of cameras was also used to direct first responders to those who needed medical attention. Furthermore, the RTCC facilitated collaboration among federal and state agencies, including the FBI, HSI, ATF, ICE, and the Louisiana State Police to assess the scope of the attack. This collaboration involved turning over several terabytes of relevant video footage to these partner agencies. RTCC analysts also helped the FBI construct a timeline of the attacker's activities by using their network of cameras and LPRs. The FBI even publicly shared RTCC-captured images that showed the terrorist placing IEDs before initiating the vehicular assault. This highlights the value of RTCC cameras for providing immediate information, supporting multi-agency coordination, and aiding in the subsequent investigation of the terrorist attack.



TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Government-Owned Video Systems

This category includes cameras owned by various city departments and agencies, such as traffic cameras, cameras on city buildings, and cameras at airports or libraries.

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Drones as First Responders or Unmanned Aerial Systems

Drones can provide aerial views of incident scenes, assist in searches for missing persons, survey collision sites, and map crime locations. Agencies can stream live video feeds from drones to RTCCs and to responding officers, providing crucial real-time intelligence. Some agencies have implemented DFR programs, in which drones are launched quickly to provide initial scene assessments.



Source: Chula Vista, CA Police Department

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Gunshot Detection Software

Systems that use sensors to detect and locate the source of gunfire, enabling faster police response. When integrated with CCTV, these systems can provide visual confirmation and potential evidence related to shooting incidents.



Source: Northeastern University

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Internal Offender and Victim Databases

RTCC personnel can use these databases to quickly retrieve information about individuals involved in incidents, including criminal histories, gang affiliations, and other relevant details.

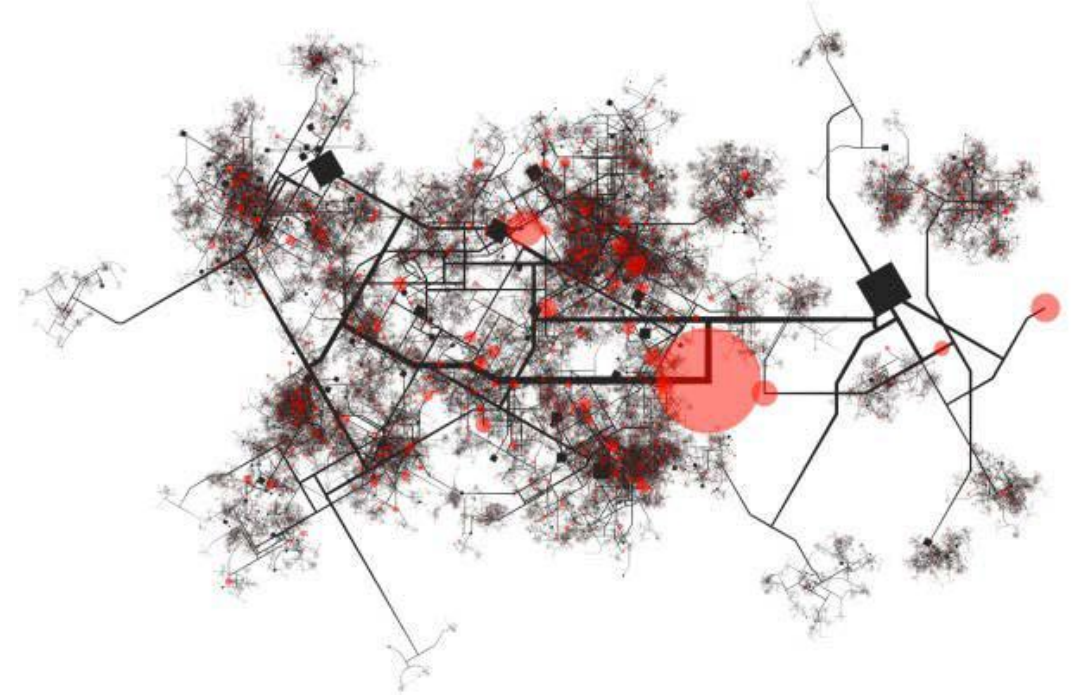


Source: Colorado Bureau of Investigation

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

GIS

Agencies can use GIS software and data to display and analyze geographically referenced crime data, identify crime hotspots, map resources, and improve response planning. GIS integrates various data feeds onto a map, providing a visual and understandable operational view.



Source: iStock

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

911 Call Systems and Call Transcription Tools

When agencies integrate with 911 systems, RTCC staff can listen to active calls (without directly interacting with callers in some setups) and potentially identify caller locations for camera deployment. Call transcription tools can help personnel quickly understand incident details.



Source: Boston, MA Police Department

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Officer and Unit Location Tracking (AVL)

If RTCC personnel know the real-time locations of patrol units and other assets, they can efficiently direct resources to incidents.

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Real-time Alerts

Systems such as gunshot detection, mobile panic buttons, and LPRs generate real-time alerts that agencies can integrate into the RTCC platform for immediate awareness and response.



Source: City of Murfreesboro, TN

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

“Smart City” Sensor-Related Data

As cities become more connected, agencies can integrate data from various sensors (e.g., water levels, traffic sensors) into the RTCC to provide broader situational awareness, especially for public safety concerns.

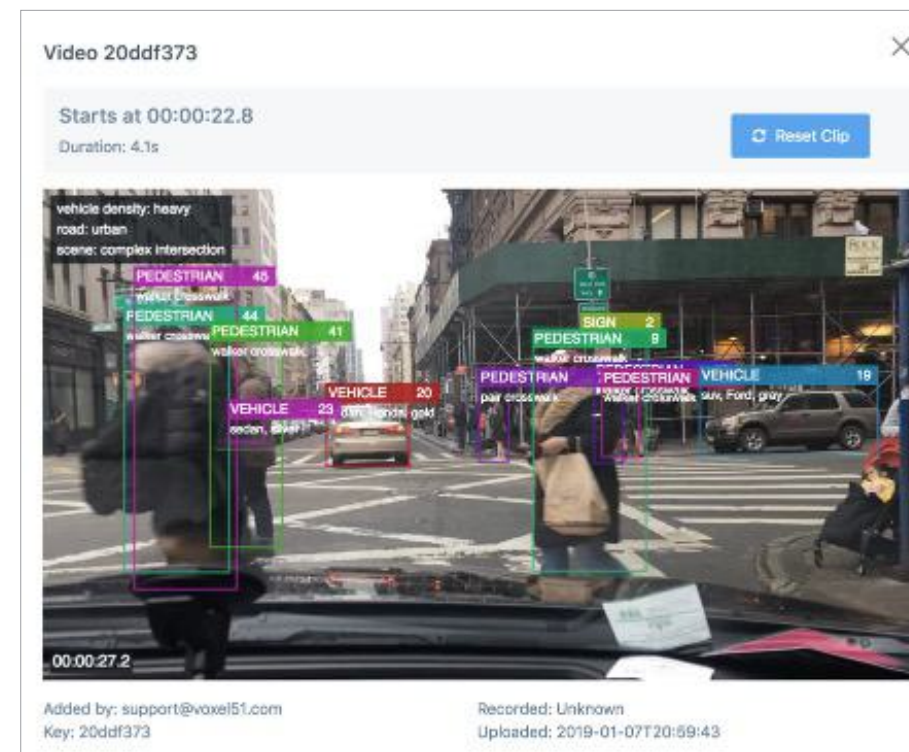


Source: City of Los Angeles

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Video Analytics Software

Beyond LPR, other video analytics can automatically flag specific events or content in video feeds, helping operators manage large volumes of data more efficiently. This software can include object detection, behavior analysis, and more.



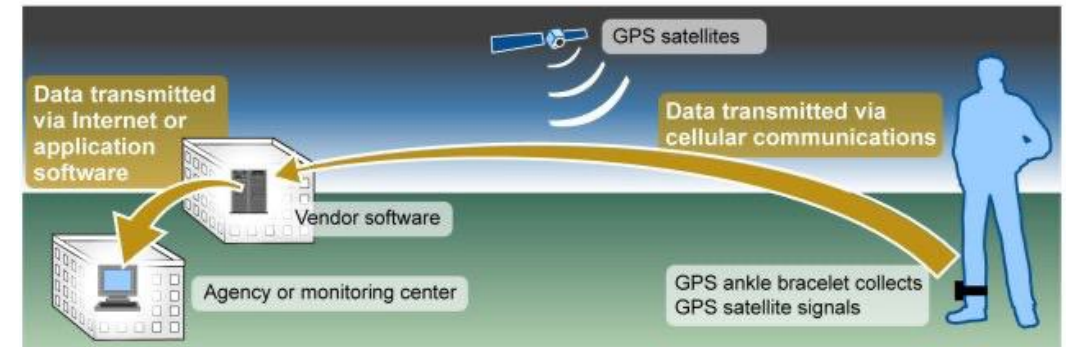
Source: National Institute of Standards and Technology

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Electronic Monitoring Systems

Access to electronic monitoring systems allows RTCC personnel to track the locations of individuals under electronic supervision, which can be relevant in investigations or for proactive monitoring in certain areas.

Global Positioning System (GPS) Offender Tracking System



Source: GAO analysis of National Institute of Justice and Center for Criminal Justice Technology information; Art Explosion (clip art). | GAO-16-10

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

National Integrated Ballistic Information Network

Law enforcement personnel often use this technology in conjunction with gunshot detection to identify bullet casings and match them to firearms used in different crimes.

Source: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Open Broadcast Software

This platform can be used to live stream video feeds (e.g., from drones or ingested cameras) to stakeholders in the field or commanders.



Source: Idaho Office of Information Technology Services

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE RTCC

Forensic Digital Investigation Solutions

Tools for analyzing data from mobile devices and computers are crucial for investigations and can provide valuable information to the RTCC. Agencies should note, however, that these forensics solutions require even more powerful computers than those used by the average RTCC employee.



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigations

COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE RTCC

The following communication technologies are important considerations for each RTCC:



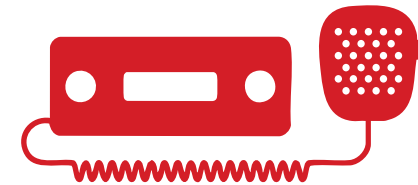
EMAIL ADDRESS

Each RTCC needs to create a dedicated email address as a basic necessity for communication. This address allows customers (e.g., officers, investigators, other agencies, and the public in some contexts) to easily contact the RTCC. The email address should be easy to identify and remember, potentially including "RTCC" in the name, such as APDRTCC@anytown.gov or RTCC@anytown.gov. Having a unit email address treats the RTCC as a brand and provides a consistent point of contact.



RADIO CONSOLE

Similar to those used in dispatch centers, these consoles reside inside the dispatch center, EOC, or other locations with primary radio channels. These consoles are the most expensive radio option and may require infrastructure upgrades, but they offer the most comprehensive monitoring and transmission capabilities across multiple channels.



MOBILE OR DESK RADIOS WITH HEADSETS

Installed in police vehicles or mounted on desks within the RTCC, these radios transmit with higher wattage than portable varieties but are also more expensive and inaccessible outside the RTCC. These radios often have a channel scanning feature, but transmitting on multiple channels simultaneously is less efficient than with a console.

COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE RTCC

The following communication technologies are important considerations for each RTCC:



PORTABLE RADIOS

Most RTCCs use portable radios because they allow employees to move around the center, attend meetings, or conduct site visits while staying informed about ongoing events. However, some portable radios have limited headset options and lack transmission power. Leaders should consider budget, the number of radio channels needing simultaneous monitoring, and operational logistics when selecting the appropriate radio system for the RTCC. During calls for services, officers need effective radio communication from the RTCC that includes real-time intelligence and actionable information.



DEPARTMENT CELL PHONES FOR RTCC STAFF

Issuing department cell phones to RTCC employees is considered a best practice, especially if patrol officers are also equipped with them. Department cell phones allow for direct communication with officers in situations in which they may not be near their in-car computers. Sharing information from the RTCC directly to patrol units via cell phone or radio is important for officer safety. Agencies should consider dedicated smartphones within the RTCC to enhance communication capabilities. For the central RTCC system, the phone number should be easy for customers to remember and attached to all positions within the RTCC for incoming calls.

To ensure that the RTCC is effective, agencies should use a combination of a dedicated email address for general communication, a robust police radio system for real-time interaction with field units, and department cell phones for direct and immediate contact. These tools facilitate the RTCC's mission to gather, analyze, and disseminate real-time data and information to enhance situational awareness and improve response times. Leaders must also ensure that communication protocols are clear and that personnel understand responsibilities both within the RTCC and for PSAP supervisors and dispatchers.

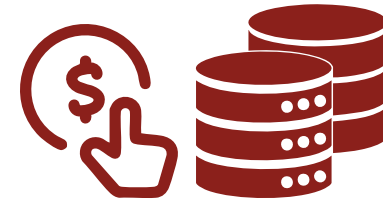
SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE RTCC

In addition to other forms of technology, agencies must weigh software options and decide which are most useful for their RTCC. We recommend considering the following categories:



CITY AND INTERNAL DATABASES

RTCCs must have access to city and internal databases as fundamental software resources. These databases can provide a wealth of information relevant to calls for service and investigations. If other city departments share data with the law enforcement agency, RTCC leaders should prioritize access to these resources because there is typically no cost involved. Examples of information that might be found in such databases include details on city infrastructure (such as camera locations), prior incident reports, and—potentially—information from other municipal departments that could be applicable to law enforcement activities. RTCC staff can use this information to provide responding officers with valuable context before they arrive at a scene.



SUBSCRIPTION DATABASES

Effective RTCCs also rely on subscription databases, which are typically external, commercially available databases that can provide detailed personal information that may be unavailable through internal systems. We recommend access to two or more different subscription databases because they can complement each other and may contain more current information than non-subscription options. Information commonly found in these databases includes first and last names, dates of birth, Social Security numbers, addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers. In some cases, even more detailed information may be available. These resources are particularly valuable in situations where initial information about a subject is limited, such as a suicide attempt where only a phone number or name is provided. RTCC personnel can leverage these databases to gather crucial background information to aid patrol officers before their arrival.

SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE RTCC

In addition to other forms of technology, agencies must weigh software options and decide which are most useful for their RTCC. We recommend considering the following categories:

COMMUNICATIONS AND DISPATCH SOFTWARE

Agencies should integrate communications and dispatch software within the RTCC to enhance real-time operational capabilities. This integration can include the following:

The ability to listen to active 911 calls (without the ability to speak to the caller), which allows RTCC employees to gain a direct understanding of the situation as it is unfolding and apply investigative resources accordingly.

The ability to identify the location of a 911 caller, enabling RTCC staff to use RTCC-accessible cameras to visually locate the caller and the incident.

The ability to access dispatcher software interfaces that provide a view of pending calls. These interfaces allow RTCC employees to potentially clear calls before police arrival or even close calls if the situation is resolved remotely using available technology, thus optimizing resource allocation.



Source: Google Gemini

SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE RTCC



INTEGRATION WITH CAD SYSTEMS

Access to CAD ensures that RTCC operators are immediately alerted to priority calls as they are dispatched. This allows operators to proactively check for relevant information and nearby camera feeds, cross-reference license plate readers, and provide timely intelligence to responding officers. Seeing CAD incidents in relation to camera feeds offers invaluable situational awareness.

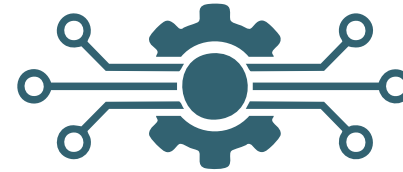
ENSURE THAT THE TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE CAN COLLECT, PROCESS, AND ANALYZE DATA FROM DISPARATE SOURCES

To ensure that an RTCC's technological infrastructure can effectively collect, process, and analyze data from disparate sources, agencies need to focus on data integration and management, interoperability, and appropriate technologies. We recommend the following actions:



ESTABLISH ROBUST DATA INTEGRATION AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

A successful RTCC fundamentally relies on its ability to integrate various data sources. The agency must ensure that its technological infrastructure can seamlessly collect, process, and analyze data from multiple systems, necessitating robust data management systems capable of handling large volumes of data while maintaining accuracy and reliability.

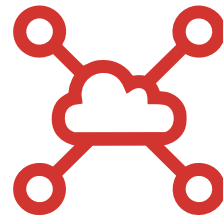


PRIORITIZE INTEROPERABILITY

Interoperability between different technologies and systems is critical. The RTCC must be able to communicate effectively with other agencies, including emergency services, federal agencies, and neighboring police departments, which often involves adopting standardized protocols and investing in interoperable communication systems. When selecting RTCC software, agencies should focus on integration capabilities, ensuring that the software can work with existing systems and hardware.

ENSURE THAT THE TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE CAN COLLECT, PROCESS, AND ANALYZE DATA FROM DISPARATE SOURCES

To ensure that an RTCC's technological infrastructure can effectively collect, process, and analyze data from disparate sources, agencies need to focus on data integration and management, interoperability, and appropriate technologies. We recommend the following actions:



IMPLEMENT A UNIFIED PLATFORM FOR DATA ACCESS AND ANALYSIS

An effective RTCC often uses a centralized platform or a “single pane of glass” to bring together data from various connected devices. This unified interface is critical for leveraging all available solutions to their full potential. For example, BWC feeds, LPR hits, and drone feeds can be displayed as layers on a map-based interface. Open platform video management systems can integrate all cameras, sensors, and data into a joint operating view, accessible in real time. These systems often use open application programming interfaces and software development kits to facilitate the integration of different technologies.

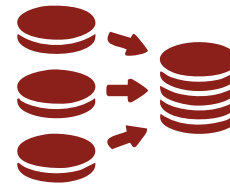


LEVERAGE DATA ANALYTICS TOOLS

Data analytics plays a vital role in processing and understanding large datasets from various sources within an RTCC. Data analytics involves collecting, sorting, and examining data to produce insights and guide decisions, which can range from directing patrol officers to setting investigative priorities. RTCCs use data analytics to support operational and tactical decision-making by collecting, integrating, and analyzing data in real time to provide actionable intelligence and situational awareness to officers in the field. RTCCs should use a data dashboard as a key tool for data analytics because it can provide a graphical interface that shows the most important and relevant data and metrics clearly and simply, allowing for easy access and sharing of data insights.

ENSURE THAT THE TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE CAN COLLECT, PROCESS, AND ANALYZE DATA FROM DISPARATE SOURCES

To ensure that an RTCC's technological infrastructure can effectively collect, process, and analyze data from disparate sources, agencies need to focus on data integration and management, interoperability, and appropriate technologies. We recommend the following actions:



ADDRESS DATA QUALITY AND INTEGRATION CHALLENGES

Agencies need to adopt and implement data quality and integration standards and protocols to ensure the validity and reliability of their data analytics. These efforts include employing data cleaning, validation, and transformation techniques and tools to address issues including data errors, inconsistencies, and incompleteness. Agencies must address data interoperability and compatibility challenges when integrating data from different internal and external sources, which may require agencies to develop and use common data models, formats, and vocabularies, as well as to leverage data exchange and integration platforms.

By focusing on these key areas, law enforcement agencies can build a technological infrastructure that effectively collects, processes, and analyzes data from disparate sources, enhancing the capabilities of their RTCCs.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

Small and rural agencies with potential budgetary limitations that are considering the establishment of an RTCC should address several key considerations. Agencies should consider starting with existing resources, that is, leveraging the technology and equipment already available within the agency. These leveraging efforts could include using existing CAD systems, basic computer equipment, and communication systems. Small agencies should focus on core functionalities by initially concentrating on a reactive approach, assisting officers with information during active calls for service using available cameras and databases. Incremental expansion will occur as the RTCC demonstrates its value and as more funding or resources become available, at which point the agency can gradually layer in additional staffing, incorporate new technology (e.g., ALPR cameras, video analytics), and expand the RTCC's operational hours and proactive capabilities. After establishing a foundational RTCC, small agencies should focus on building relationships with community partners to gain access to their camera systems.



Source: Google Gemini



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

We recommend that small and rural agencies take the following steps:

Leverage existing LPRs and security cameras. If budget constraints make acquiring new technology challenging, leaders must determine whether any publicly or privately funded LPR cameras or security cameras already exist within the jurisdiction that could be integrated into the RTCC. Many agencies are created to share resources across jurisdictions because of staffing and budget constraints. Agencies can explore partnerships with other government or municipal entities, such as surrounding public safety agencies or local and state governmental bodies (e.g., public transportation authorities or school systems) that may own or operate CCTV cameras. With the right software and agreements, these camera resources can be integrated into the agency's new RTCC.



Source: CONNECTRALEIGH

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

We recommend that small and rural agencies take the following steps:

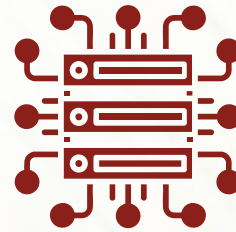
Pursue camera integration via community partnerships. Agencies should work with local businesses and the community to expand the reach of the RTCC without significant upfront investment. Many local businesses, including retail stores, gas stations, and restaurants, likely already have CCTV networks in place. Through public-private partnership programs, leaders can integrate these camera feeds into their RTCCs, significantly increasing the RTCC's physical camera coverage. We recommend that agencies create a legal agreement allowing law enforcement and the city to access community partners' cameras. Leaders should consider exterior cameras as a starting point. Alternatively, agencies can also establish a camera registry program for individual private cameras in the community, allowing analysts to liaise with the community and investigators for more efficient post-incident investigation and evidence collection.

Source: CONNECTRALEIGH



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

We recommend that small and rural agencies take the following steps:



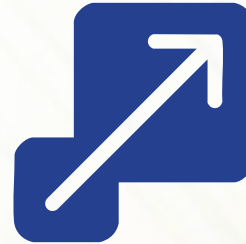
PRIORITIZE TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

When purchasing new technology, small and rural agencies must ensure that the software can easily integrate with existing systems and hardware. Leaders should consider technology providers whose software seamlessly integrates with the agency's current infrastructure, reducing the need for a complete tech overhaul. A video surveillance integration platform that allows RTCC operators to access multiple camera feeds quickly and efficiently, even if they run on different video management software, is essential. Agencies can explore options for integrating 911 call and CAD systems into the same software platform to provide enhanced situational awareness. GIS software should also be able to easily connect with other hardware and software providers for easy application and data exchange at low cost.

Small and rural agencies also need to carefully evaluate the costs and benefits of RTCC technologies, considering not just the initial purchase but also data storage, maintenance, and training costs. They should prioritize technologies that are relevant to their specific crime issues and geographic challenges. Interoperability of communication systems and data across different agencies (local, county, state) can be a significant challenge and must be addressed when considering RTCC technologies. Agencies may need to collaborate with larger city- or state-level agencies to access resources such as crime analysts, technology specialists, and forensic technicians.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

We recommend that small and rural agencies take the following steps:



ENSURE THAT TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS ARE SCALABLE

Agencies with limited current resources but potential for growth must invest in scalable technology. Agency growth often leads to evolving technology requirements, so leaders must select a solution that can scale alongside the agency's current needs. Leaders should start small and slow, using the tools the agency already has and expanding over time as the RTCC proves its value and as more resources become available. An RTCC's fundamental technological requirements include video cameras, database access, and electronic equipment, suggesting that more advanced technologies can be added as funding allows.

Small and rural agencies facing budgetary constraints can effectively establish and grow their RTCCs by strategically leveraging existing public and private camera resources through partnerships, prioritizing technology solutions that offer seamless integration with current systems, and ensuring that any new technology investments are scalable to accommodate future growth. Many agencies find success by starting with a basic infrastructure and gradually adding more sophisticated tools.

MODULE 7: DEVELOP MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Demonstrating the utility of RTCC efforts back to the RTCC personnel helps increase their understanding of need, increases their feeling of ownership in the investigative and response process, and can lead to overall increased job satisfaction and RTCC performance.

Click the resource to access case studies describing agencies' benefits and outcomes of their RTCC operations.

Evaluation of RTCC efforts can help agencies take several steps:

- 1 Determine whether the RTCC is achieving its desired goals and objectives (i.e., realizing its mission and vision)
- 2 Maintain transparency with stakeholders regarding the desired goals, objectives, and intended outcomes of the RTCC
- 3 Ensure that the RTCC's technology and personnel are being used to the maximum extent possible (i.e., optimize use of limited agency resources)
- 4 Ensure that the RTCC is meeting the needs of the agency, its partners, and its stakeholders
- 5 Improve RTCC operations continuously
- 6 Increase stakeholder buy-in
- 7 Justify continued support for agency resources and personnel

This module discusses how to evaluate the development and performance of an RTCC.

Each of the evaluations can include qualitative and quantitative metrics. Agencies should be careful not only to capture statistics regarding operations, but also to provide context to the statistics with a qualitative evaluation component.

To evaluate an agency's RTCC, follow the steps in the Module 6 checklist, which generally follows the standard approach to program evaluation. Additional resources for program evaluation are available online, such as those from the Kellogg Foundation.



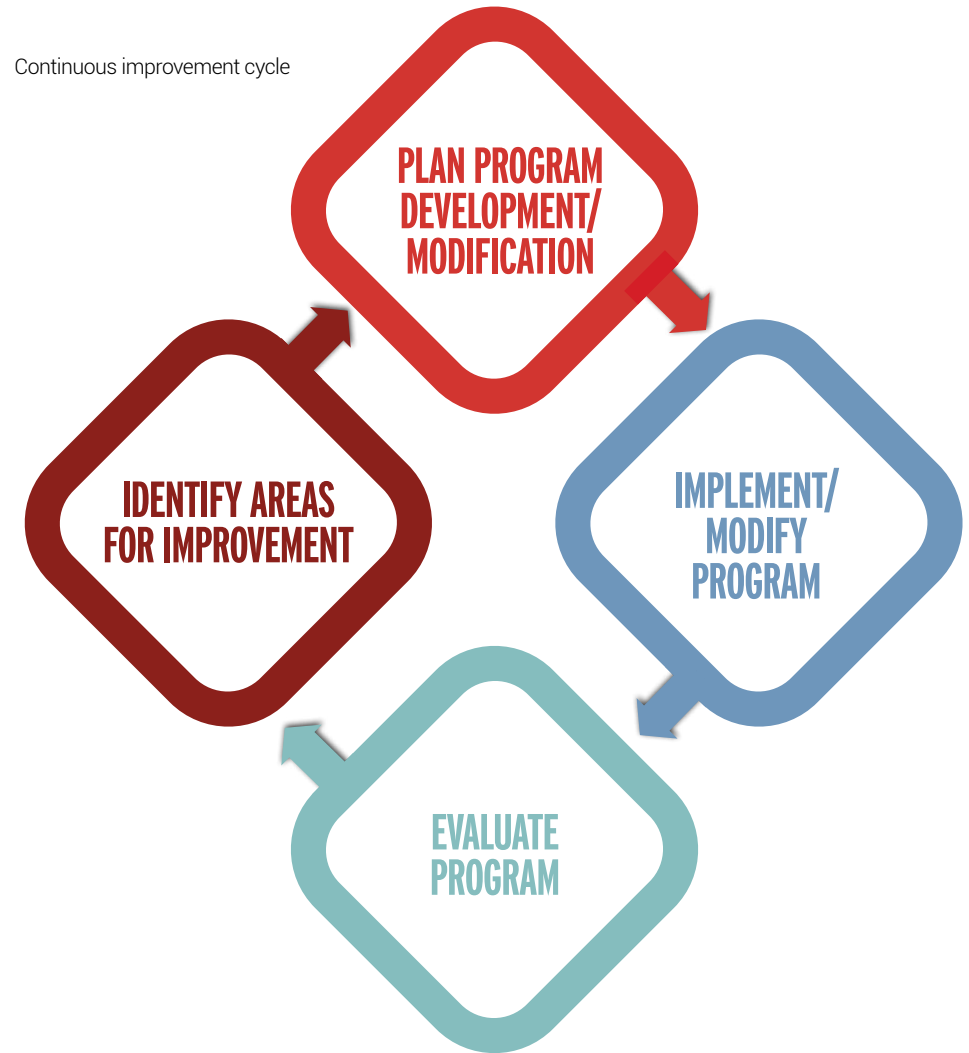
IDENTIFY THE MEASURES AND METRICS BY WHICH THE RTCC WILL BE ASSESSED

An evaluation of the utility and performance of an RTCC should begin by identifying the specific measures and metrics by which the RTCC will be assessed. This evaluation can begin as soon as the forming entity starts developing plans for the RTCC and should continue throughout the lifetime of the RTCC, following and enabling a continual improvement process.

Because each RTCC is unique and will likely evolve over time, the measures and metrics of RTCC success should be tailored to the individual RTCC, and they should evolve. For example, metrics should be informed by and tailored to the following:

- The model for the RTCC (e.g., stand-alone or regional, reactive or proactive)
- The agency's desired goals, objectives, and outcomes (i.e., what the agency hopes to achieve by building the RTCC)
- The demographics and crime profile of the community supported by the RTCC (e.g., small, rural, urban, population served, crime hot spots)
- The real-time information and intelligence needs of the agency and its stakeholders
- The functions the RTCC will perform
- The support the RTCC provides to partner agencies and stakeholders
- The size, capacity, and other operational parameters of the RTCC

Continuous improvement cycle

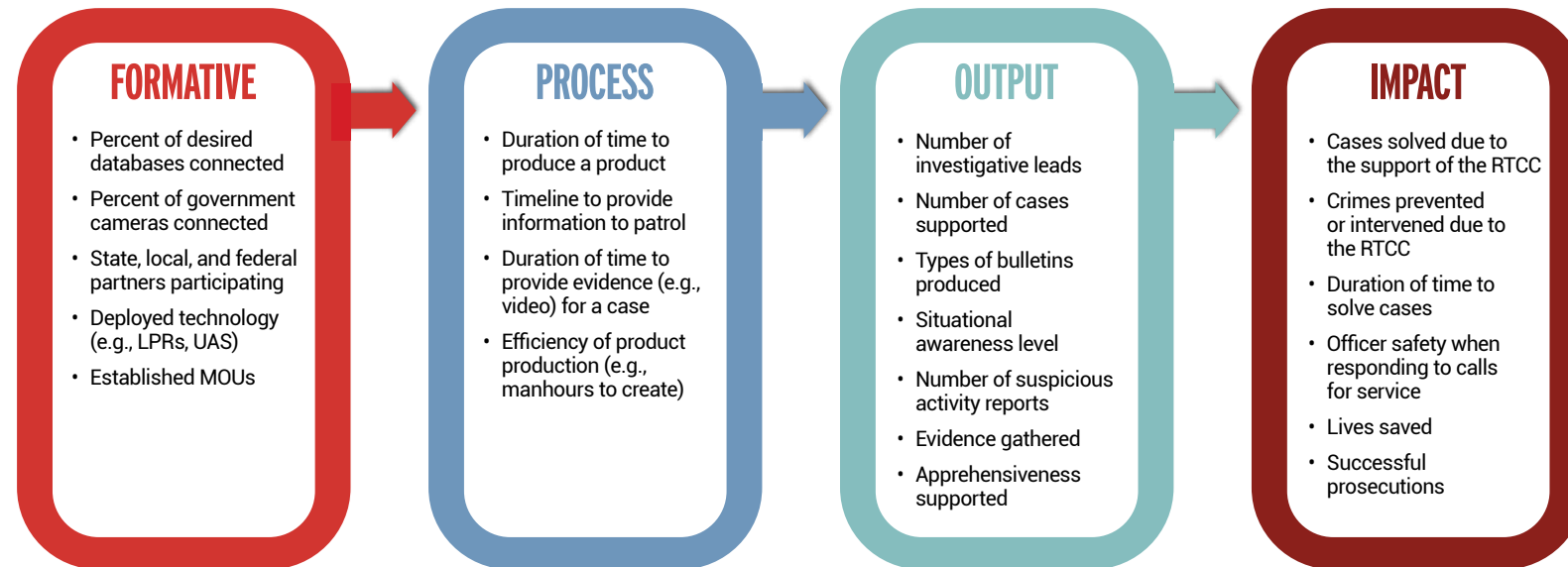


PARTNER WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO DEVELOP AN EVALUATION PLAN FOR THE RTCC

Leaders should identify the individual metrics by which an RTCC will be evaluated during program development in collaboration with key stakeholders. The RTCC should then capture the metrics in an evaluation plan. Partnerships with academic institutions can help RTCCs develop and track evaluation measures, especially when agency resources are limited and when an unbiased evaluation of RTCC effectiveness would be helpful. The evaluation plan should examine the RTCC at key intervals (e.g., phases of deployment) and continue throughout the lifetime of RTCC operations to support continual improvement.

As shown below, we divide the individual metrics to define and evaluate into four evaluation measures: formative, process, output, and impact. We include examples of metrics for RTCCs in each category in the figure.

Four Evaluative Measures and Metrics for RTCC Evaluations



INCLUDE EVALUATIVE COMPONENTS FOR EACH TYPE OF MEASURE

Although many evaluations of RTCCs and other programs focus primarily on output measures, all four types of measures are important because they evaluate and reveal information about different aspects of RTCC operations, program challenges, and successes:

The **FORMATIVE EVALUATION** measures the creation and modification of the RTCC. This evaluation assesses whether the RTCC is being implemented as planned. If development of an RTCC is phased, the formative evaluation measures can help ensure that the RTCC meets each milestone in development before the next phase begins. This type of evaluation helps the agency course correct as necessary during development. Implementation challenges and successes identified through the formative evaluation also provide context for processes, outputs, and impacts. Specifically, these results can help leaders identify the root causes for why an RTCC may (or may not) be able to effectively implement planned processes, create desired outputs, and achieve its goals.

The **PROCESS EVALUATION** measures the steps (e.g., policies, procedure) the RTCC uses to produce outputs. The process evaluation also provides context for RTCC outputs and effects and can help identify whether certain aspects of RTCC operations are preventing or enabling successful outcomes. This evaluation is also a key component of continuous improvement because information learned in this way can help identify areas to streamline and optimize to help improve outputs and increase effectiveness.

INCLUDE EVALUATIVE COMPONENTS FOR EACH TYPE OF MEASURE

Although many evaluations of RTCCs and other programs focus primarily on output measures, all four types of measures are important because they evaluate and reveal information about different aspects of RTCC operations, program challenges, and successes:

The **OUTPUT EVALUATION** measures the RTCC's productivity by examining what the RTCC creates and enables. The evaluation includes measures of the services and products resulting from RTCC operations. This assessment helps determine whether the RTCC is achieving the results that creators anticipated.

The **IMPACT EVALUATION** measures how the RTCC benefits the agency, stakeholders, and the community. The impact measures should be very closely tied to the desired outcomes for the RTCC, such as preventing and mitigating crime, solving crimes, and decreasing fatalities. Agencies must measure progress made toward the desired outcomes to evaluate, document, and share with partners and stakeholders. However, the effects can also be most difficult to achieve (and the evaluation of the impacts can be tenuous and complicated to assess) for two reasons: first, because they may take a long time to be realized, and second, many factors can affect crime.

Learn more about Impact Evaluations of RTCCs in the article above.

INNOVATION IN RTCCS – MIAMI, FLORIDA POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Miami Police Department developed a RTCC in 2019 in conjunction with academics from the Florida International University and a grant from the federal government. Partnering with the university allowed the department to evaluate the effectiveness of its operations. The evaluation consisted of a survey of frequent uses of RTCC technologies to identify their role in MPD assignments and officer perceptions of benefits, a network analysis of violent crime case components to determine how RTCC technologies have become integrated into case processing, and a quasi-experiment to understand the effects of technologies on clearance rates and the timeliness of clearances.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

As with other aspects of the RTCC, small and rural agencies have unique considerations regarding RTCC evaluation plans. Small and rural agencies will likely have fewer resources and different crime trends than larger cities, so outcome measures should consider these factors.

Just as with large agencies, small and rural agencies should regularly assess RTCC' performance and make adjustments to operations, technology, and staffing based on the agency's evolving needs and available resources.

Instead of focusing on large-scale metrics such as percentage reductions in crime, smaller and rural agencies should consider demonstrable impacts. These can include the following:

- **Increased situational awareness for officers.** Agencies should document situations in which RTCC information enhanced officer safety or provided crucial details before arrival at a scene.
- **Faster response times.** Agencies should also document and measure the time between a reported crime or call for service and resolution in cases where the RTCC provided assistance.
- **Support to officers in the field.** Agencies should document instances when the RTCC provided real-time data that supported responding officers in the field.
- **Community feedback.** Leaders should solicit community feedback through public meetings, listening sessions, and other mechanisms. Agencies should also document community perception of and cooperation with RTCC operations.
- **Focus on core pillars.** Small agencies should evaluate RTCC success based on the core pillars of safety, identification, and apprehension. Demonstrating improvements in these areas can indicate success.



RESOURCES

Implementing an RTCC requires careful planning, beginning with clearly defined objectives aligned with the agency's mission and stakeholder expectations. Success hinges on establishing a robust technological infrastructure for data integration and management, training skilled personnel to analyze and interpret real-time information, and proactively addressing legal and ethical concerns, especially regarding data privacy and community trust. Despite potential budgetary challenges, agencies can leverage existing technology and pursue funding opportunities to establish an RTCC. Ultimately, the goal is to create a centralized hub that enhances public safety by providing real-time intelligence and situational awareness to law enforcement and enabling more efficient responses, proactive crime prevention, and improved case clearance rates.

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RTCC POLICY EXAMPLES

A NOTE ON THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN RTCC OPERATIONS

The future use of artificial intelligence (AI) in real-time crime centers (RTCCs) appears promising, with the potential to significantly enhance agencies' ability to analyze and predict criminal activities.

To the right, we offer some ideas for how RTCCs may use AI in the future.

In essence, AI is poised to become an even more integral component of RTCC operations, providing enhanced analytical power, predictive capabilities, and overall efficiency in the ongoing effort to combat crime and improve public safety.

Enhanced data analysis. AI algorithms are expected to make RTCCs even more efficient in analyzing vast amounts of data, information, and intelligence, including data from video feeds, social media, and various databases.

Predictive policing. Integrating AI and machine learning algorithms will enable RTCCs to more effectively predict criminal activities based on historical data patterns, which allows for a more proactive deployment of resources to potentially prevent crimes before they occur.

Video analytics. AI-powered analytics are already growing in importance for video surveillance in RTCCs, including in capabilities such as biometrics, facial recognition, and smart cameras that can help personnel identify suspects and tracking activities in real time. In the future, these capabilities are likely to become even more sophisticated and integrated.

Open-source intelligence (OSINT). AI-powered OSINT is important for threat intelligence, providing law enforcement with greater insights into emerging threats and vulnerabilities by analyzing publicly accessible data from the dark web. RTCCs will likely expand their use of AI to sift through and analyze large volumes of OSINT.

Improved efficiency. By automating certain analytical processes and providing quicker insights, AI can contribute to streamlining workflows and improve decision-making processes for law enforcement personnel within RTCCs.

Beyond surveillance footage. The future may see RTCC use of AI expand beyond monitoring surveillance footage to potentially using drones for aerial surveillance and further implementing facial recognition technology to rapidly identify suspects.

CASE STUDIES

Case studies can significantly enhance leaders' understanding of the practical application of RTCC concepts. This section contains case studies that describe how three agencies implemented RTCCs in their jurisdictions.

Implementing an RTCC requires careful planning, beginning with clearly defined objectives aligned with the agency's mission and stakeholder expectations. Success hinges on establishing a robust technological infrastructure for data integration and management, training skilled personnel to analyze and interpret real-time information, and proactively addressing legal and ethical concerns, especially regarding data privacy and community trust. Despite potential budgetary challenges, agencies can leverage existing technology and pursue funding opportunities to establish an RTCC. Ultimately, the goal is to create a centralized hub that enhances public safety by providing real-time intelligence and situational awareness to law enforcement and enabling more efficient responses, proactive crime prevention, and improved case clearance rates.

CASE STUDY: SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA POLICE DEPARTMENT

In 2023, the Scottsdale Police Department (SPD) employed approximately 380 sworn and 235 civilian staff. SPD serves a population of approximately 250,000 residents in a city spread over approximately 185 square miles with an additional 12 million annual visitors who come for national and international events.

RTCC GOALS



Although SPD's official statement of its RTCC goals is not publicly available, media accounts point to a number of uses for the RTCC. The RTCC supervisor identified three goals: be "first on scene" to help with proper deployments, support patrol in their work by monitoring situations involving officers and provide mutual aid to surrounding police departments. SPD's chief information officer reported that a significant goal is to improve officer safety by providing information on conditions in the area so officers can identify what resources they need for their own safety as well as that of the community.

In addition, RTCCs convey correct information (in cases where initial dispatch information is inaccurate) as well as greater nuance about developing situations. The RTCC provides law enforcement support as incidents are happening so they can intervene proactively rather than reactively. SPD uses its RTCC to improve the quality of investigations and resolve cases more quickly.



CASE STUDY: SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA POLICE DEPARTMENT

IMPLEMENTATION AND STAFFING



One SPD staff member developed and piloted the RTCC in February 2021; a soft launch followed in 2022. Currently, the RTCC is staffed seven days a week by up to three full-time technicians and one supervisor from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, plus Wednesday through Saturday from 2 p.m. to midnight.

TECHNOLOGY



The SPD RTCC relies on several technological tools, including LPRs, drones, and 4,000 SPD-owned and privately owned surveillance cameras. All of these tools feed information into cutting-edge analytical software that aggregates live feeds into a single point of control.



CASE STUDY: SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA POLICE DEPARTMENT

BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES



RTCC operations serve as a “force multipliers” that support enhanced safety for both officers and communities and more efficient and effective management of everyday and major events such as the Super Bowl. The SPD has seen improvements in case closures that are driven by gathering evidence that leads to arrests as well as increasingly successful prosecutions. These efficiencies contribute to overall savings of officer time (officers do not need to canvass door-to-door if they can simply see what happened) and detective time (less “footwork” to uncover evidence). SPD has numerous accounts of successful public safety outcomes resulting from RTCC work, including identifying and apprehending kidnappers and sex traffickers. SPD has seen a significant increase in vehicle recoveries because of RTCC work, with more than 1.8 million vehicles returned to owners and more than 100 felony arrests.



CASE STUDY: DETROIT, MICHIGAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

In 2023, the Detroit Police Department (DPD) employed approximately 2,465 sworn and 680 civilian staff. DPD serves a population of approximately 633,000 residents in a city spread over approximately 140 square miles.

The DPD RTCC is central to Project Green Light—first implemented in 2016—which integrates cameras from more than 800 businesses in Detroit. The program has been credited for contributing to decreases in violent crime.



The mission of the DPD RTCC is to serve as a “center for analytic excellence, providing useful, actionable information to law enforcement and first responders” by strategically using technology to identify, solve, and reduce crime.



DPD created the RTCC in 2016 and expanded it in 2019 to a 9,000-square-foot command center supported by two satellite stations. As of 2021, the RTCC included a staff of 82 (mostly civilian). The DPD RTCC operates twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and it continuously monitors all DPD radio traffic to provide real-time information to responding units.



CASE STUDY: DETROIT, MICHIGAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

TECHNOLOGY



The DPD RTCC incorporates several technological tools, including drones, LPRs, gunshot detection systems, BWCs, facial recognition technology, social media monitoring, a helicopter, and thousands of publicly and privately owned surveillance cameras, all of which feed information into cutting-edge analytical and predictive software for real-time and strategic responses.

BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES



In 2023, homicides in Detroit were at the lowest recorded number (252) since 1966; non-fatal shooting decreased approximately 16 percent and carjackings 33 percent. Beyond typical metrics, DPD reports numerous positive outcomes, including more efficient and effective investigations. For example, using RTCC resources, DPD can “track” individuals’ physical movements to identify them before they commit gun violence, then “follow” their physical movements after the shooting to locate them, supplemented by other data mined through social media. This process has led to fast apprehension and comprehensive evidence collection for prosecution. DPD also points to the success of the RTCC in driving down illegal street racing by using RTCC technology (including their helicopter) to identify locations for strategic deployment.



CASE STUDY: COBB COUNTY, GEORGIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

In 2023, the Cobb County Police Department (CCPD) employed approximately 640 sworn and 70 civilian staff. CCPD serves a population of approximately 788,000 residents in a city spread over approximately 340 square miles.



The CCPD RTCC “uses technology to capture and share real-time information with law enforcement and other public safety personnel” to facilitate resolution of public safety incidents. In addition, the RTCC enhances officer and public safety “by identifying and disseminating immediate and actionable information during real-time incidents and supporting post-incident investigations.”



As of February 2025, the RTCC employs 12 full-time staff, including sworn officers and civilian analysts. The RTCC is staffed Monday through Saturday through a decentralized platform. Because the department is short-staffed, civilian analysts provide real-time information allowing officers to remain in the field and access information on mobile devices. With continuous access from the field, CCPD's RTCC is effectively a 24/7 operation.

CCPD considers RTCC development to be a “crawl, walk, run approach,” one that can scale to fit the needs of any agency. The CCPD RTCC is a collaboration with six different agencies in the county. Because RTCCs can be expensive, combining staff and technology resources creates efficiencies and allows for greater communication and intelligence sharing as well as development or enhancement of interagency partnerships.



CASE STUDY: COBB COUNTY, GEORGIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

TECHNOLOGY



CCPD's RTCC includes several technological tools that feed into the command center and can be used to improve officer and community safety, investigations, and prosecution. Their RTCC incorporates data from BWC feeds, dash cameras, ALPRs, traffic cameras, gunshot sensors, and surveillance cameras. CCPD owns about 800 surveillance cameras but has access to almost 12,200 camera feeds from neighboring jurisdictions and private business, in addition to 3,200 from residents. The RTCC analyzes and integrates data from multiple sources, including from CAD, RMS, and GPS mapping.

BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES



CCPD's RTCC offers real-time support that enhances public and officer safety as well as suspect identification and apprehension. Increased efficiencies from "precision policing" has improved case resolution while ensuring targeted prosecution of the right individuals.

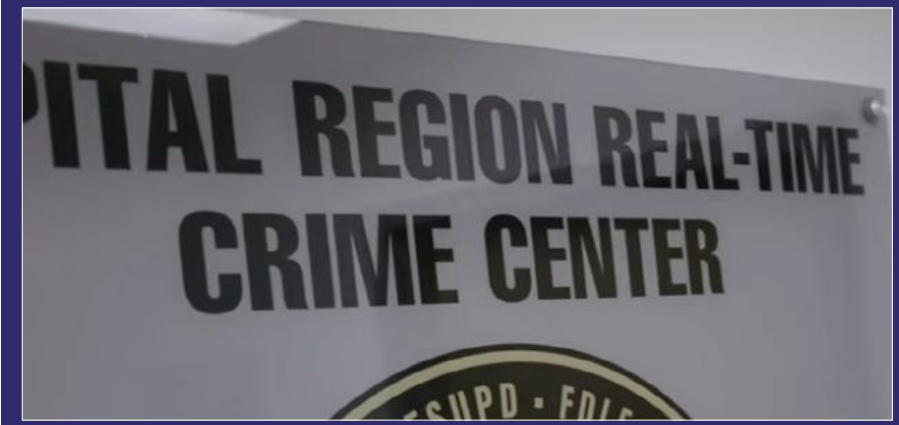


VIDEOS



High Point Police Department's Real-Time Crime Center: Advancing Public Safety

Source: High Point, NC Police Department



Capital Region Real-Time Crime Center

Source: Florida State University



Baton Rouge Real-Time Crime Center to Break Down Barriers Between Police and Community

Source: Baton Rouge, LA Police Department



How D.C. #police launched a real time crime center in 8 months

Source: Police1

CHECKLIST

CONDUCT RESEARCH

Review resources, guidebooks, and best practices, and consult with subject matter experts about RTCCs.

Identify agencies with model RTCCs for peer learning opportunities.

Consult with technology partners.

Consult the NRTCCA for guidance, support, and subject matter expertise.

Attend conferences that discuss emerging technology and its integration with RTCC operations.

DEFINE CLEAR OBJECTIVES

Identify the RTCC's intended goals.

Inventory each stakeholder's expectations and document these objectives.

Ensure that objectives align with the agency's mission.

Present objectives in an executive summary informed by conversations with successful partners.

Define the vision, mission, and function of the RTCC early on.

ASSESS AGENCY NEEDS AND CAPACITIES

Evaluate current systems and identify areas that can be integrated into the RTCC.

Assess the agency's current technology infrastructure.

Determine whether the agency already has internal and external investigative databases.

Identify appropriate personnel and training requirements.

DEVELOP A FUNDING STRATEGY

Research federal, state, and local grant opportunities for RTCC funding.

Explore opportunities to leverage partnerships with other government agencies, community organizations, and local businesses for shared funding and resources.

Consider a phased implementation approach that gradually expands capabilities to manage costs.

Conduct a cost-benefit analysis to justify the investment.

Present relevant information that highlights the RTCC's value to potential funders.

Budget for ongoing costs, including maintenance, upgrades, training, and operations.

SOLICIT SUPPORT FOR THE RTCC

Solicit support for strategic placement within the agency's organizational chart.

Identify a champion in the chain of command.

Secure internal and external buy-in for the RTCC.

CHECKLIST

IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS

Develop goals for stakeholder participation and identify key roles that can be assigned to stakeholders (e.g., working groups to tackle specific issues).

Identify internal stakeholders (e.g., leadership, relevant units, specialized assignments) who can and should support RTCC development and implementation.

Identify external agencies necessary for interagency coordination.

Identify community leaders, organizations, and individuals who can contribute to planning and implementation.

Create outreach and recruitment plans.

SOLICIT IDEAS AND SHARE INFORMATION

Create and distribute resources about the planning and implementation process, the model, benefits, capabilities, goals, and intended outcomes (e.g., printed materials, white papers, short videos).

Create opportunities and venues for brainstorming and idea sharing.

Conduct internal and public information-sharing sessions.

Solicit input from internal and external stakeholders on goals, needs, and ideas to inform design and planning efforts.

ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

Conduct outreach and recruitment of identified parties with information about goals, expectations, and requests of different stakeholders (e.g., engagement in regular meetings, ad hoc input on issues as they arise, participation in issue-specific working groups).

Develop MOUs incorporating partner expectations and contributions into the RTCC operational plan.

Incorporate stakeholder feedback in RTCC planning and implementation and report back on how concerns have been addressed, how ideas have been incorporated, etc.

Provide updates to stakeholders and the public (e.g., websites, media stories, social media) about implementation status, updates, and successes, as well as challenges that need to be addressed.

Communicate next steps and other opportunities for participation to stakeholder group via conversations and planning.

Formally acknowledge stakeholder participation in process.

Create ongoing communication strategy and venues for input to establish a continuous feedback loop with internal, external, and community stakeholders once the RTCC is fully implemented.

Design regular engagement opportunities focused on status updates, questions, and suggestions for modifications and enhancements to the RTCC.

CHECKLIST

CONSIDER PHYSICAL SPACE AND SIZE

Identify required equipment based on specific goals and mission and consult with technology partners.

Determine operational capacity for workers, supervisors, command staff, and visitors.

Determine functionality and structure based on required number of workstations and supervisor positions; include meeting and briefing space if required.

Consider future growth and the addition of new technologies.

Calculate physical size requirements based on usage, staffing, equipment, and space for future growth.

CONSIDER PHYSICAL LOCATION

Review purpose and identify desired location.

Select location after considering mission, staffing, physical space limitations, logistical considerations, and budget.

CHECKLIST

ESTABLISH CLEAR, WELL-PLANNED POLICIES AND SOPS

DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE SOP DOCUMENT

Establish the primary purpose and authority of the RTCC through the SOPs, clarifying why the RTCC exists and its mandate within the department.

Clarify the RTCC chain of command through the SOPs, including differentiating it from the crime analysis division/unit and outlining the functions and chain of command of crime analysts, if applicable. This clarification helps avoid confusion about reporting structures and authority.

Communicate the roles and expectations of the RTCC and its employees through SOPs. Clearly defining who does what minimizes overlap and territorial issues.

Clarify operational procedures, including active crime scene response protocols. This ensures a consistent and effective response during critical incidents.

Identify all technologies used by RTCC operators to provide a clear understanding of the tools available and their purposes.

Clarify follow-up and proactive investigative roles for RTCC operators, which is especially important for delineating responsibilities between the RTCC and other units such as crime analysis or investigations. The SOPs should specify when the RTCC's involvement in a case begins and ends. This delineation can be task-oriented or time-oriented.

Establish procedures for documenting operator workload to track productivity, identify trends, and justify resource allocation.

Crucially, the SOP must clarify procedures for electronic and video evidence storage, retrieval, and retention for agencies with advanced systems such as video cameras or LPRs. Because the data is sensitive, establish identity protection and privacy policies proactively. Include details on data retention periods (e.g., three to six months for LPR data before deletion).

ADDRESS SPECIFIC POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Data management and privacy guidelines. Develop specific guidelines for how data is collected, accessed, used, and secured. These guidelines include addressing legal responsibilities and civil liberties related to camera usage. Policies should outline what operators can monitor and when footage can be used. Avoid using cameras to monitor private areas without proper justification.

Use of technology. Establish SOPs for the use of new technologies. Train operators on how to use each technology effectively and ethically. Define policies that maintain the integrity of video evidence and how it is stored and disseminated.

Incident response protocols. Create detailed protocols to guide RTCC staff in managing various scenarios, from minor incidents to major emergencies. These protocols should outline how staff assess threats, prioritize responses, and coordinate with field officers and dispatch. Include clear criteria for escalating incidents and communicating with other agencies. Regularly rehearse these protocols.

Collaboration and communication protocols. Establish clear protocols for communication and data sharing with patrol officers, detectives, emergency services, federal agencies, and potentially partner agencies if the RTCC integrates them. Define how information is shared in real time and how teams will work together during incidents. In addition, establish guidelines for public communication to ensure transparency and accountability.

Legal compliance. Ensure that all policies comply with local, state, and federal laws, especially regarding data privacy and surveillance. Consult legal counsel to understand the specific laws in your jurisdiction.

CHECKLIST

ESTABLISH CLEAR, WELL-PLANNED POLICIES AND SOPS

ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Proactively work with community and citizen protection groups (e.g., the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)) before installing RTCC cameras. These groups can help decide on appropriate camera locations and data retention periods.

For departments with a preexisting crime analysis unit, involve crime analysts in developing policies and procedures for RTCC integration to facilitate healthy future relationships and address concerns about data access and territoriality. Crime analysts can help identify specific information needs.

Gather support from internal stakeholders such as department heads, patrol officers, detectives, and IT personnel to ensure that stakeholders buy into the policies and that they address operational needs.

BUILD IN ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

Establish accountability measures to ensure that the RTCC meets its goals and operates efficiently. These measures can include setting key performance indicators (KPIs) to track response times and the accuracy of alerts.

Consider regular internal audits of the RTCC's activities to ensure compliance with policies and identify areas for improvement.

REGULARLY EVALUATE AND INNOVATE

An effective RTCC must continuously evolve. Regularly evaluate the RTCC's performance and policies, and be willing to make adjustments based on experience, changing technologies, crime patterns, and operational demands. Incorporate a culture of innovation to continuously improve operations and outcomes.

Use these steps to establish clear, well-planned policies that will guide RTCC operations, ensure legal compliance, protect civil liberties, and enhance the effectiveness of real-time crime fighting efforts.

CHECKLIST

IDENTIFY DATA NEEDS

DEVELOP A DATA INTEGRATION SCHEME FOR YOUR AGENCY'S RTCC

Identify and inventory data sources. Begin by thoroughly identifying all potential data sources that can feed into your RTCC.

Law enforcement databases. An agency's existing RMS and CAD platforms are crucial data sources. Consider how to integrate CAD and RMS information, including real-time alerts and incident details, into the agency's RTCC software.

Camera systems. Consider police-owned cameras (e.g., BWCs, fleet cameras, aerial cameras).

Community camera registries. Explore the possibility of establishing a community camera registry program to integrate feeds from privately owned cameras (e.g., from businesses and residents). Community registries can significantly expand the agency's coverage without the cost of deploying many public cameras. To encourage participation, make it easy to sign up and demonstrate the RTCC's effectiveness.

ALPRs. Integrate data from ALPR systems to track vehicle movements.

Gunshot detection systems. Incorporate real-time alerts from gunshot detection technology.

Internet of Things (IoT) applications. Consider other relevant sensors and IoT data that could enhance situational awareness.

Floor plans. Integrate floor plans of critical infrastructure or frequently visited locations.

Public tip lines. While not a direct data feed, consider how information from public tip lines can be efficiently entered and utilized within the RTCC.

Supplemental data solutions. Explore services that can provide real-time data from community members' devices during emergencies.

Counter-drone technology. If relevant, integrate systems such as Dedrone that can detect and track drones.

Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping. Integrate GIS data for spatial analysis and visualization of crime data.

9-1-1 call systems and call transcription tools. Integrate these systems to provide RTCC operators with real-time information about incoming calls.

CHECKLIST

IDENTIFY DATA NEEDS

DEVELOP A DATA INTEGRATION SCHEME FOR YOUR AGENCY'S RTCC

Address technical integration challenges. Recognize that seamless integration of data from various sources is not always straightforward; different systems often differ in format, standard, and level of compatibility, making it challenging to combine them into a cohesive, unified platform.

Establish a unified platform. Aim to integrate these diverse data streams into a single software platform within the RTCC, which allows RTCC operators to access and analyze information from multiple sources in one place, maximizing the likelihood of an effective real-time response.

Involve IT professionals, who are indispensable team members for designing and maintaining the RTCC's technical infrastructure.

- Structure your IT team with clearly defined roles to cover areas such as network security, software development, system integration, and database management.

- Ensure that the technical infrastructure includes redundant systems and backup protocols to prevent downtime.

- Implement regular system audits, updates, and testing to identify vulnerabilities and maintain optimal performance.

- Ensure that IT professionals and RTCC staff collaborate so the technical infrastructure aligns with the operational needs of the center.

Prioritize data pipelines. While building the RTCC, strategically consider which data sources (pipelines) will provide the most significant benefit to the agency's operations. Leaders should explore a community camera registry as a potentially significant improvement.

Focus on integrating 911/CAD information into the agency's RTCC software, which allows operators to see incidents as they come in, enhanced by the context of nearby camera feeds, potentially enabling them to provide incident disposition or valuable information to responding officers.

Build a database of assets. For resources such as cameras, build a database that includes information such as inventory, location, labeling, status, and visibility. The database will aid in maintenance, expansion, and integration efforts.

Address data security, which is a critical concern for RTCCs because of the vast amounts of sensitive information they collect.

- Ensure that strong cybersecurity measures are in place to protect against cyberattacks.

- Implement continuous monitoring to safeguard against potential threats.

CHECKLIST

ENSURE LEGAL COMPLIANCE WITH LOCAL AND FEDERAL LAW

ENSURE LEGAL COMPLIANCE WITH LOCAL AND FEDERAL LAW

Engage legal experts early and continuously. Agencies must engage legal experts early in the development process to provide guidance on local, state, and federal privacy and surveillance laws to ensure that the RTCC operates within legal parameters. This engagement should be ongoing, involving regular consultations to address new legal developments and ensure continued compliance. As laws concerning monitoring can vary significantly by state, agencies must consult legal counsel specific to their jurisdictions.

Develop legally sound policies and SOPs. An agency's comprehensive policies and SOPs are the foundation of legal compliance. These documents should explicitly address legal requirements related to the following seven categories:

Data collection. Define what data can be collected, from what sources, and under what circumstances. Ensure that these practices align with privacy laws.

Data storage. Establish secure storage protocols that comply with data protection regulations.

Data access and sharing. Clearly outline who can access the data, for what purposes, and under what legal framework the data can be shared with internal and external agencies. Establish protocols for communication and data sharing that respect legal boundaries.

Data retention. Implement data retention policies that specify how long different types of data can be stored and when they must be deleted, adhering to legal requirements and best practices (e.g., archiving license plate data for a defined period).

Use of technology. Develop specific SOPs for each technology used (e.g., surveillance cameras, LPR, facial recognition), outlining when the technology can be activated, who is responsible for monitoring it, and how data is verified and acted upon, all while adhering to legal restrictions. Agencies must pay particular attention to legal responsibility and civil liberties when using cameras.

Video surveillance. Ensure that staff understand the legal acceptability of video surveillance in public places as well as the explicit prohibition against monitoring of private areas without legal justification. Define what constitutes probable cause to monitor an individual via video and the legal limitations on the duration of such monitoring without a criminal predicate action.

Evidence handling. Establish procedures for maintaining the integrity of electronic and video evidence in accordance with legal standards for admissibility in court.

CHECKLIST

ENSURE LEGAL COMPLIANCE WITH LOCAL AND FEDERAL LAW

ENSURE LEGAL COMPLIANCE WITH LOCAL AND FEDERAL LAW

Develop a specialized training program for staff. Thorough and ongoing training is crucial to ensure RTCC personnel understand and adhere to legal requirements. Training should cover the following areas:

- Local, state, and federal privacy and surveillance laws.

- The legal limitations and appropriate use of each technology deployed in the RTCC.

- Proper procedures for data collection, storage, access, and dissemination in compliance with the law.

- What constitutes probable cause for monitoring activities.

- The importance of respecting civil liberties and avoiding the misuse of technology.

Establish protocols for monitoring legal compliance. Implement mechanisms to regularly review data handling practices and the use of technology to ensure ongoing legal compliance and prevent inadvertent violations of privacy or civil liberties. These protocols could involve periodic audits conducted internally or by legal counsel.

Engage with community and civil liberties organizations. Proactively working with groups such as the ACLU can provide valuable insights into community privacy concerns and help ensure the agency's RTCC operations are perceived as legitimate and respectful of civil liberties. This engagement can inform decisions about camera placement and data retention policies.

Maintain transparency. Agencies must be transparent to build public trust and demonstrate commitment to ethical and legal practices. Leaders should clearly communicate the RTCC's goals, methods, and outcomes, including the safeguards in place to protect privacy and ensure legal compliance. Publicly available information on RTCC operations can help alleviate fears about invasive surveillance.

CHECKLIST

DEVELOP INCIDENT RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

DEVELOP INCIDENT RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

Create detailed protocols covering a range of scenarios. Agency protocols should not be generic; instead, they should address specific types of incidents the agency commonly encounters or anticipates. These protocols should provide clear, step-by-step guidance for RTCC staff.

Outline threat assessment procedures. The protocols should specify how RTCC staff will assess the nature and severity of threats as they unfold. This assessment might involve evaluating information from various data streams and determining the potential risk to public safety and responding officers.

Define prioritization of responses. Given that multiple incidents may occur simultaneously, agency protocols must establish clear criteria for prioritizing responses. This ensures that the RTCC's resources are directed to the most critical situations first.

Establish coordination procedures with field officers and dispatch. Seamless communication and coordination are paramount. Agency protocols should detail how RTCC staff will coordinate with field officers and the department's dispatch unit, including the following considerations:

- How the RTCC will provide real-time information and intelligence to officers on the scene.

- Which channels of communication the RTCC will use.

- The roles and responsibilities of RTCC staff, field officers, and dispatch during an incident.

Note: A best practice identified in the sources is to have RTCC personnel undergo dispatch training or work in a dispatch center before being fully embedded in the RTCC. Dispatchers have valuable skills in maintaining composure under pressure, managing high volumes of information, and coordinating responses across multiple units, which can significantly benefit RTCC staff during crises.

Develop clear criteria for escalating incidents. The protocols should outline specific triggers and procedures to address escalating incidents that exceed the RTCC's initial response capabilities or require involvement from other units or agencies.

Establish communication protocols with other agencies. If the agency plans to use the RTCC to support or collaborate with external agencies (e.g., neighboring law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services), the incident response protocols should detail how the RTCC will communicate and share information with these partners during an incident.

Incorporate technology usage guidelines. Given that RTCCs heavily rely on technology, the incident response protocols should specify how various technologies (e.g., cameras, mapping systems, databases) should be used during different types of incidents. These guidelines should align with the agency's SOPs for the use of new technology.

Mandate regular rehearsals and drills. To ensure that the RTCC operates efficiently and effectively under pressure, the protocols should mandate regular rehearsals of these response protocols. These drills will help identify areas for improvement and ensure that all RTCC staff are familiar with their roles and responsibilities during an incident.

Align with legal and policy frameworks. Leaders must ensure that incident response protocols are consistent with all relevant local, state, and federal laws and the agency's existing policies, particularly those related to data privacy, surveillance, and use of force. Ongoing consultation with legal experts is crucial here.

Include post-incident review processes. Leaders should consider incorporating a process for post-incident review to analyze how the RTCC responded and identify lessons learned for future incidents. This continuous improvement approach is essential for refining agency protocols over time.

CHECKLIST

ESTABLISH COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

ESTABLISHING COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

Develop comprehensive SOPs. The foundation of effective collaboration and communication lies in clearly documented procedures. An SOP should, at minimum, fulfill the following steps:

Clarify the primary purpose and authority of the RTCC, which sets the context for its interactions.

Define the RTCC chain of command and clearly differentiate it from other units such as the crime analysis division, including their respective roles and expectations. A clear chain of command will help employees avoid confusion about who to contact for specific needs.

Communicate the roles and expectations of the RTCC and its employees to all stakeholders. This ensures that everyone understands what the RTCC can and cannot do.

Document the procedure for the RTCC to communicate over the primary radio channel, add comments to CAD incident notes, and other supporting activities for calls for service, all of which are crucial for joint understanding with Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) supervisors and dispatchers.

Educate and engage stakeholders. Proactive communication and education are essential for building trust and ensuring effective collaboration. We recommend four steps:

Educate officers, detectives, supervisors, and other organizational units about the mission of the RTCC, its capabilities and constraints, and its operating guidelines. Consider developing an RTCC video to quickly summarize this information.

Engage the general public, local businesses, and other community external stakeholders to enhance organizational legitimacy and trust. Transparency about the RTCC's role in community safety is vital. Release press statements or social media posts to educate the community and track and release "success stories."

Involve PSAP supervisors and dispatchers early in the process of setting up an RTCC to ensure a joint understanding of responsibilities when the RTCC supports a call for service.

Gather support from key stakeholders, both internal (department heads, patrol officers, detectives, IT personnel) and external (community leaders, local government, business stakeholders) early in the planning phase.

CHECKLIST

ESTABLISH COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

ESTABLISHING COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

Define communication channels and protocols. Establish clear methods for information sharing in real time and beyond, including the following actions:

Establish protocols for communication and data sharing with patrol officers, detectives, emergency services, and federal agencies. These protocols should define how information is shared in real time and how teams will work together during incidents.

For real-time communication with patrol units, use methods such as cell phones or radio for officer safety purposes, especially when officers are not in their vehicles. CAD messaging functions are also beneficial when officers are in their vehicles.

After an incident, ensure that any potential information or investigative leads are shared with detectives and judicial partners.

If a potential crime pattern or trend is discovered, relay this information to patrol and other units. Consider establishing a procedure for RTCC operators or supervisors to distribute briefings of unfolding information.

Establish guidelines for public communication detailing when and how the RTCC disseminates information to the media or the public, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Foster internal collaboration. Ensure seamless teamwork within the RTCC and with other units by taking these steps:

Ensure constant contact between the RTCC and the crime analysis unit to stay updated on crime trends and patterns.

Train the detective unit to check with the RTCC when assigned to a case for investigative leads or intelligence gathered, which helps avoid duplicating work.

Ensure proper communication between RTCC shift personnel to maintain efficiency and effective resource utilization.

Consider strategically positioning the RTCC physically close to the crime analysis division to enhance communication and understanding of each other's functions.

Integrate external agencies. For any agencies considering an interagency RTCC, establish protocols for collaboration and communication with partner agencies (e.g., departments of transportation, fire and EMS, private businesses, federal and state law enforcement). We offer two recommendations:

Clearly define how information will be shared in real time and during large-scale events.

Consider assigning partner agency representatives to the RTCC to facilitate direct collaboration. Federal and state law enforcement agencies are commonly represented.

Regularly test and refine protocols. Communication protocols should be living documents. Leaders should include the following steps:

Conduct regular testing and drills to refine these protocols and prepare all teams for real-world scenarios.

Establish accountability measures and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of communication and collaboration efforts.

CHECKLIST

DETERMINE A STAFFING MODEL FOR THE RTCC

- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify gaps and determine the scope and functions of the RTCC.
- Evaluate existing human and financial resources.
- Consider whether current staff can take on RTCC duties or new hires are necessary.
- Assess whether utilizing trained crime analysts would maximize expertise or additional training is required.
- Involve key stakeholders (internal and external) to help determine staffing needs and ensure buy-in.
- Plan for training for both sworn and professional staff on RTCC technology, legal considerations, and operational procedures.
- Consider the benefits of a hybrid staffing model that includes both sworn and professional staff, tailoring it to your agency's specific needs, budget, and operational goals.
- investigative leads or intelligence gathered, which helps avoid duplicating work.

ESTABLISH OPERATING HOURS

- Determine the desired operational hours (e.g., peak crime times, 24/7, special events).
- Ensure that sufficient personnel are available to manage the RTCC effectively for the chosen operating hours.

DEFINE THE TEAM'S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Make strategic personnel and staffing decisions, considering options such as crime analysts, sworn officers, a hybrid model, or contractors. A mixed staffing model is often optimal.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities.
- Specify the tasks each role will handle (e.g., data monitoring, radio communication, alert escalation, documentation).
- Consider training all RTCC members as generalists capable of stepping into different roles when needed.
- Leverage the unique specialties of each team member.
- Discuss how to delineate roles between sworn personnel and crime analysts to eliminate duplication and confusion early in the process.

CHECKLIST

ESTABLISH CLEAR, WELL-PLANNED POLICIES AND SOPS

Systematically develop a comprehensive SOP document, which is a fundamental and important first step.

Involve relevant stakeholders in the development of SOPs.

For departments with a preexisting crime analysis unit, solicit input from crime analysts on how the RTCC will integrate with and augment their work.

Establish the primary purpose and authority of the RTCC.

Clarify the RTCC chain of command, including differentiating it from the crime analysis division/unit and outlining the functions and chain of command of crime analysts.

Communicate the roles and expectations of the RTCC to its employees.

Clarify operational procedures, including active crime scene response protocols.

Identify all technology used by RTCC operators.

Clarify follow-up and proactive investigative roles for RTCC operators, specifying when the RTCC's involvement in a case begins and ends.

Establish procedures for documenting operator workload.

Clarify procedures for electronic and video evidence storage, retrieval, and retention, especially for advanced systems.

Establish identity protection and privacy policies proactively because of the sensitive nature of data.

Include details on data retention periods (e.g., keep LPR data three to six months before deleting).

Develop data management and privacy guidelines for data collection, access, use, and security, addressing legal responsibilities and civil liberties related to camera usage.

Establish use of technology SOPs that define policies for effective and ethical use and maintain the integrity of video evidence.

Create detailed incident response protocols for managing various scenarios, outlining threat assessment, response prioritization, coordination with field officers and dispatch, criteria for escalating incidents, and communication with other agencies. Regular rehearsals are essential.

Establish clear collaboration and communication protocols—including public communication—for sharing information in real time with internal and external partners.

Ensure legal compliance by consulting legal counsel and crafting policies that comply with local, state, and federal laws, especially regarding data privacy and surveillance.

Engage stakeholders in policy development, including community and citizen protection groups and crime analysts.

Build in accountability measures using KPIs and regular internal audits.

Regularly evaluate and innovate policies based on experience, changing technologies, crime patterns, and operational demands.

CHECKLIST

DEVELOP A SPECIALIZED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR RTCC STAFF

Consider curriculum content, communications skills, the target audience, training delivery and format, ongoing training and evaluation, training resources and expertise, and legal and policy framework integration.

Include real-time technology use covering specific technologies and software, RTCC processes and procedures detailing workflows, SOPs, protocols, and data analytics and information interpretation skills training.

Emphasize effective communication skills for relaying critical information and include situational awareness training.

Include comprehensive legal compliance training on privacy and surveillance laws, including what can be monitored and data privacy guidelines and address ethical considerations.

Tailor training to the target audiences (sworn officers and civilian professionals) and consider existing skill sets.

Use a variety of training methods (classroom, hands-on, simulations, scenario-based).

Provide IT training within the context of RTCC processes and procedures.

Consider creating an RTCC video summarizing the center's mission and capabilities.

Explore using accredited bodies for training.

Implement ongoing training and evaluation to ensure proficiency with evolving technologies and the ability to adapt to new challenges.

Establish certification programs to ensure a minimum standard of proficiency.

Evaluate training effectiveness through feedback and performance metrics.

Identify training resources and expertise, using internal personnel, external resources such as the NRTCCA, and case studies from other agencies.

Ensure that the training program reinforces agency policies and SOPs.

CHECKLIST

IDENTIFY DATA NEEDS

Determine which data sources will directly support RTCC operations.

Identify how existing technology and data sources (e.g., CAD, RMS, cameras, gunshot detection, social media monitoring, GPS, crime databases, external agency data) can integrate into an RTCC.

Integrate law enforcement databases such as CAD and RMS, data from camera systems (police-owned and potentially community registries), ALPR data, and gunshot detection systems.

Consider other relevant IoT applications and sensors.

Integrate floor plans of critical locations.

Determine how public tip line information can be efficiently integrated and used.

Explore supplemental data solutions providing real-time data from community members' devices during emergencies.

Integrate counter-drone technology (if relevant), GIS mapping data, and 911 call systems and call transcription tools.

Address technical integration challenges posed by disparate systems. This integration requires significant technical expertise and resources.

Establish a unified platform to integrate diverse data streams.

Involve IT professionals as indispensable team members. Structure the IT team with clearly defined roles. Ensure that the technical infrastructure includes redundant systems and backup protocols. Implement regular system audits, updates, and testing.

Ensure collaboration between IT professionals and RTCC staff.

Prioritize data pipelines that provide the most significant benefit, highlighting community camera registries as well as 911 and CAD integration.

Build a database of assets (e.g., cameras), including inventory, location, status, and visibility.

Address data security with strong cybersecurity measures and continuous monitoring.

CHECKLIST

ENSURE DATA MANAGEMENT AND PRIVACY GUIDELINES

- Develop comprehensive policies and procedures that address the sensitive nature of the information handled.
- Ensure legal compliance with local, state, and federal law.
- Proactively address privacy and identity protection.
- Establish access and security measures.
- Engage with community and citizen groups.
- Develop specialized training for staff.
- Build in accountability measures.

ENSURE LEGAL COMPLIANCE WITH LOCAL AND FEDERAL LAW

- Proactively integrate legal considerations into every aspect of the RTCC.
- Engage legal experts early and continuously to provide guidance on privacy and surveillance laws specific to your jurisdiction.
- Develop legally sound policies and SOPs explicitly addressing legal requirements related to data collection, storage, access and sharing, retention, and use of technology.
- Address the legal acceptability of video surveillance in public places, prohibitions against monitoring private areas without legal justification, and definitions of probable cause and legal limitations.
- Establish procedures for evidence handling in accordance with legal standards.
- Develop a specialized training program for staff covering privacy and surveillance laws, technology limitations, proper data handling procedures, probable cause, and respect for civil liberties. Training should be thorough and ongoing.
- Establish protocols for monitoring legal compliance through regular reviews and audits.
- Engage with community and civil liberties organizations (e.g., the ACLU) to address privacy concerns and inform decisions.
- Maintain transparency by clearly communicating RTCC goals, methods, outcomes, and safeguards to build public trust and alleviate fears.

CHECKLIST

DEVELOP INCIDENT RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

Create detailed guidelines for how RTCC staff should manage various situations ranging from minor incidents to major emergencies and align protocols with legal and policy frameworks.

Develop protocols to cover a range of scenarios the agency typically encounters or anticipates, providing clear, step-by-step guidance.

Outline threat assessment procedures for evaluating the nature and severity of threats and develop clear criteria for escalating incidents.

Define prioritization of responses so staff can direct resources to the most critical situations.

Establish coordination procedures with field officers and dispatch, detailing communication channels, RTCC roles and responsibilities, and how RTCC staff will provide real-time information. Consider having RTCC personnel undergo dispatch training.

Establish communication protocols with other agencies if the RTCC supports or collaborates with them.

Incorporate technology usage guidelines specifying how technologies should be used during different types of incidents, aligning with SOPs.

Mandate regular rehearsals and drills of response protocols to ensure efficiency and familiarize staff with roles.

Include post-incident review processes to analyze responses and identify lessons learned.

ESTABLISH COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

Develop clear and well-defined guidelines for how the RTCC interacts with internal and external stakeholders.

Develop comprehensive SOPs that clarify the RTCC's purpose, authority, chain of command, and roles, differentiating it from other units.

Document procedures for RTCC communication over radio channels and CAD incident notes.

Educate and engage stakeholders. Educate internal units about the RTCC's mission, capabilities, and constraints. Engage the public, local businesses, and community stakeholders to build legitimacy and trust. Involve PSAP supervisors and dispatchers early in the process. Gather support from key internal and external stakeholders in the planning phase.

Define communication channels and protocols for real-time information sharing. Establish protocols with internal and external partners. Use methods such as cell phones, radio, and CAD messaging for real-time communication with patrol units.

Ensure that potential investigative leads are shared with detectives and judicial partners after an incident.

Relay potential crime patterns or trends to patrol and other units. Consider distributing briefings of unfolding information.

Establish guidelines for public communication, detailing when and how information is disseminated to the media or public.

Foster internal collaboration. Ensure constant contact with the crime analysis unit. Train the detective unit to check with the RTCC for leads. Ensure proper communication between RTCC shift personnel. Consider strategically positioning the RTCC physically close to the crime analysis division.

Integrate external agencies if considering an interagency RTCC. Define information sharing and potential assignments for partner agency representatives.

CHECKLIST

ASSESS EXISTING TECHNOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Determine what technology the agency already owns and has authority over, such as existing security cameras and LPRs.

Evaluate current computer infrastructure to ensure sufficient processing power, hard drive space, and speed to run multiple programs, including video.

Consult with the agency's IT department to assess the compatibility of existing systems and plan for future infrastructure needs.

Check whether the agency has a space large enough to accommodate all identified staff and their necessary equipment, including sufficient and safe power supply and adequate heating, ventilation, and air conditioning.

ESTABLISH CORE TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Ensure access to a radio system or an integrated radio console for communication with dispatch and officers in the field.

Provide computers with multiple monitors for each operator to enhance efficiency.

Implement access to a CAD system to receive real-time alerts on dispatched calls.

Establish access to the department's RMS.

Consider a video camera infrastructure with camera directional controllers, video screens, and video recording technology to access, direct, and record camera feeds.

PRIORITIZE DATA INTEGRATION PLATFORMS

Invest in a video surveillance integration platform to access multiple camera feeds (agency-owned and partner feeds) quickly and efficiently from one place.

Explore options for integrating 911 call systems and call transcription tools into the agency's software platform.

Consider integrating CAD into the agency's video and data platform to see incidents in relation to camera feeds.

If budget allows, explore integration of other relevant systems such as gunshot detection systems and mobile panic buttons.

INCORPORATE RELEVANT DATABASES

Establish access to city and internal databases for relevant information on infrastructure and prior incidents.

Secure access to subscription databases—preferably two or more—for in-depth personal information.

Ensure access to state and national databases.

Integrate access to the license plate hot hit list of the agency's jurisdiction.

IMPLEMENT GIS

Consider using GIS mapping to provide relevant location-based context pre- or mid-incident, or for post-incident analysis.

Leverage the jurisdiction's existing GIS resources, such as mapped fire hydrants and patrol zones.

Ensure that the GIS can integrate different systems and data sources, displaying results on a digital map.

CHECKLIST

ADDRESS SPECIFIC TECHNOLOGY TYPES

LPR technology and databases. Implement systems to scan and capture license plates and compare them to databases for alerts. Consider both fixed and mobile LPR cameras.

Video analytics software. Explore software that can flag or alert operators to specific events or content in video feeds, including LPR. Consider technologies such as biometrics and facial recognition.

OSINT. Implement platforms capable of collecting and analyzing publicly accessible data for threat intelligence and investigative purposes.

Forensic tools. Ensure access to robust forensic tools for information extraction from mobile devices and computers.

Traffic cameras. Integrate access to government entity–owned cameras, including traffic cameras.

Drone technology. If applicable, consider incorporating UAS or drones and ensure compliance with Federal Aviation Administration regulations.

Shot detection platforms. Integrate gunshot detection resources for real-time alerts on gunfire locations.

BWCs. Consider the feasibility of integrating BWC feeds (potentially in real time) for enhanced situational awareness while continuing to address potential privacy and liability concerns.

Mobile communications. Equip RTCC employees with department cell phones (if patrol officers are also issued them) to facilitate direct communication.

Video wall. Consider a video wall to expand desktop monitor real estate and provide a comprehensive view of ongoing events, especially as the RTCC grows.

PRIORITIZE INTEGRATION AND SCALABILITY

When purchasing technology, ensure that the software can easily integrate into existing systems and hardware.

Select technology solutions that are scalable to accommodate your agency's future growth and evolving needs. Start with essential technologies and add more as resources become available.

WORK WITHIN BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS (SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES)

Prioritize identifying and integrating existing public or privately funded LPRs and security cameras.

Actively work with local businesses and the community to integrate their existing camera systems into your RTCC through public-private partnerships and camera registry programs.

When procuring new technology, focus on solutions that offer seamless integration to avoid costly overhauls.

Choose scalable solutions that allow for phased implementation and expansion as funds become available.

ESTABLISH NECESSARY AGREEMENTS

Develop legal agreements with community business partners to formalize camera access.

Ensure transparency and track when and why you access community partner systems.

CHECKLIST

EVALUATE YOUR AGENCY'S RTCC

Clearly define goals, objectives, and desired outcomes for the RTCC.

Work with stakeholders to identify specific metrics by which to measure RTCC progress for all phases of deployment and in all four metric categories (formative, process, output, and impact).

Identify a plan and responsible entity for capturing evaluation data and performing a recurring assessment of the RTCC.

Develop an evaluation plan based on input to the second and third items above.

Develop and operate the RTCC.

Collect data to support the evaluation (collect metrics) in accordance with the evaluation plan.

Evaluate the RTCC, identifying successes and areas for improvement.

Communicate the results of the evaluation to stakeholders.

Work with stakeholders to identify and plan corrective actions.

Implement changes.