



YOUTH VIOLENCE

ASSESSMENT SUMMARY



PUBLIC SAFETY
PARTNERSHIP

Building Safer Communities

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INTRODUCTION

The National Public Safety Partnership (PSP) program provides an innovative framework for the US Department of Justice (DOJ) to enhance its support of state, local, and tribal law enforcement and prosecution authorities as they aggressively investigate and prosecute violent criminals, especially those involved in gun crime, drug trafficking, and gang violence. Through the PSP, DOJ assists American cities of different sizes and needs in supporting and building their ability to fight crime. PSP facilitates the development of data-driven, evidence-based strategies tailored to the needs of participating cities to address serious violent crime.

Departments and agencies participating in the PSP program complete a series of assessments to identify a baseline understanding of their challenges and areas for growth. Youth violence assessments help PSP sites evaluate their strategies for addressing youth who engage in violent crime and offer best practice recommendations to address youth violence. Youth violence assessments propose the following objectives:

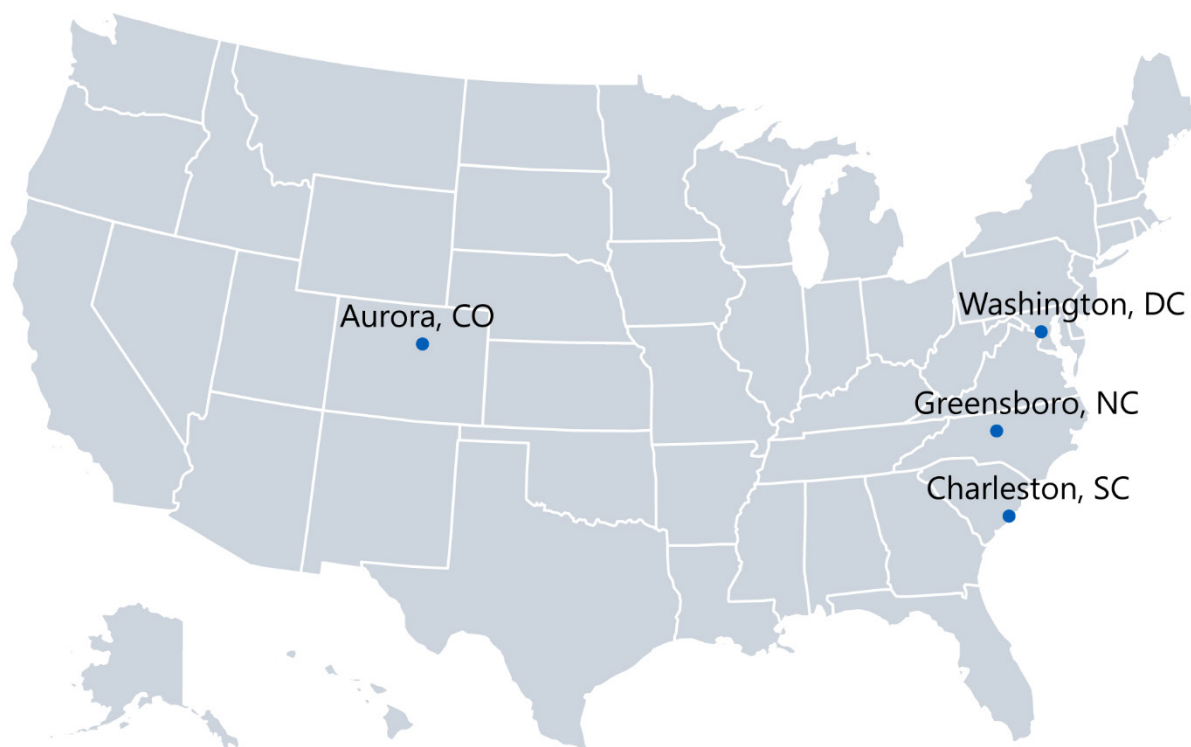
- Assess the extent and characteristics of youth gang and group violence.
- Identify evidence-based strategies for preventing youth violence and promoting youth development.
- Develop recommendations for improving data-driven policy and decision-making on youth gun violence reduction.
- Identify evidence-based law enforcement strategies for reducing youth violence.
- Develop recommendations for tracking youth violence strategies and outcomes and stakeholder investment in data analysis and assessment.

To assess a site's youth engagement and violence reduction strategies, PSP subject matter experts (SMEs) begin by reviewing background information provided by the site on the department's strategies, policies, and practices to address youth violence. The SMEs then visit sites to assess the current youth violence approach by interviewing local personnel, relevant stakeholders, and community members.

The SMEs then write a youth violence assessment report that identifies strategy gaps, needs, and best practices for reducing youth violence. The report also provides recommendations to advance the site's approach for reducing youth violence, identifies future training and technical assistance (TTA) opportunities, and identifies best practices for law enforcement to reduce youth violence. Finally, the PSP site team assists the site in implementing and tracking recommendations from the report, including facilitation of specific types of TTA, such as peer exchanges; further SME assistance; guidance on relevant youth violence reduction strategies; and provision of policy and procedure examples from other law enforcement agencies.

In 2023, youth violence assessments were introduced as a new assessment opportunity for PSP sites. As of October 2025, four PSP sites had completed a formal youth violence assessment (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. PSP sites with youth violence assessments



This report identifies common themes, technical gaps, and recommendations from completed youth violence assessments across all PSP sites. Our analysis of the common themes involved coding the recommendations to predetermined categories that aligned with PSP core outputs. We present our findings in both quantitative and qualitative formats. The following sections review our analytical methods and subsequent findings in detail. **This report will provide PSP stakeholders with an understanding of the common gaps in strategies to address youth violence, common practices among PSP sites, types of recommendations made to PSP sites through youth violence assessments, and areas for potential program-wide TTA to strengthen PSP site youth engagement and violence reduction strategies.**

Some common findings and recommendations include the following:

- Reducing and preventing youth violence require a robust community-based plan agreed on by stakeholders and based on a thorough assessment. Although some jurisdictions have community plans, stakeholders do not often participate in a focused effort to develop a shared vision and strategy for reducing youth violence.
 - Youth stakeholders should develop a shared vision and strategy for youth violence reduction based on collaboration and on data approved through stakeholder consensus.
- Youth commonly obtain access to firearms by stealing them from vehicles.
 - Youth stakeholders should develop a long-term public education campaign designed to change community norms and stop youth gun carrying and youth access to guns.

FINDINGS

Using the four youth violence assessment reports, the PSP evaluation team coded 36 references to 10 theme categories and 84 themes within those categories (see Appendix A for further details on the review method). The most common themes across the three reports were in the [crime prevention](#) and [community stakeholders](#) categories (as seen in Table 1).

Table 1. Theme categories found in youth violence assessments

Theme Category	Number of Occurrences
Crime prevention	13
Community stakeholders	9
Interagency partnerships	5
Planning	4
Data and analysis	4
Personnel	1
Governance and policy	0
Technology	0
Investigation and prosecution	0
Funding	0
Total	36

As shown in Table 2, [youth](#), [treatment and social services](#), [policing strategies](#), and [gun violence prevention](#) in the crime prevention category were the most common individual themes, receiving nine, two, two, and two references, respectively. [Strengthen partnerships](#), [external communication](#), and [outreach](#) were the next most common individual themes, in the community stakeholders category, and those themes received four, three, and two references, respectively. We discuss the most common themes later in this report, and we analyze specific SME recommendations pertaining to each theme.

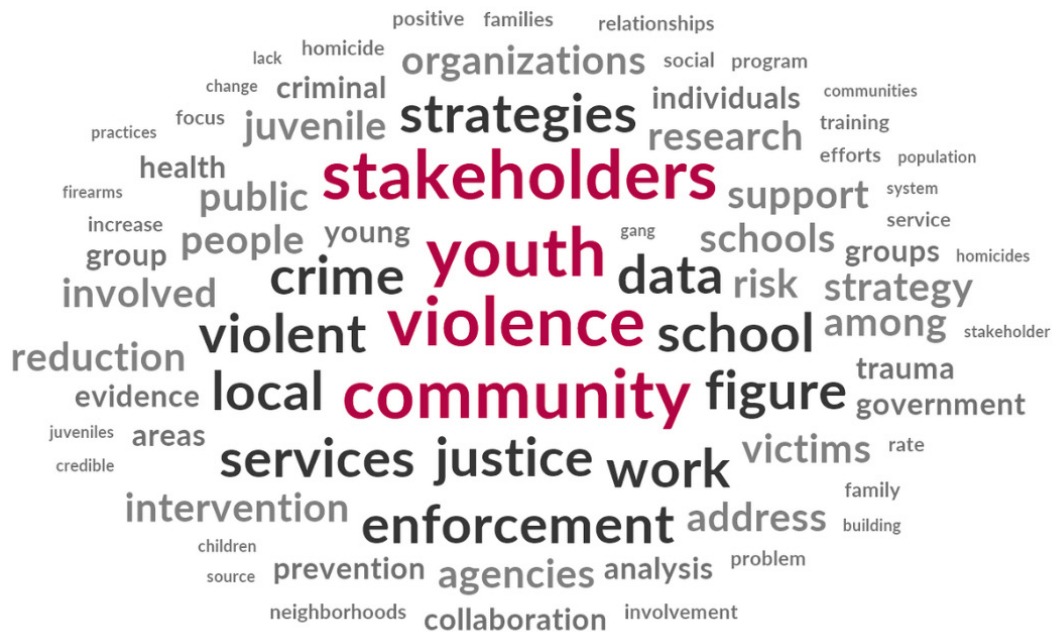
Table 2. Most common references at a glance

Theme	Number of References Coded (Cumulative)
CRIME PREVENTION	13
Youth	9
Treatment and social services	2
Policing strategies	2
Gun violence prevention	2
Gang crime prevention	1
Drug crime prevention	0
COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS	9
Strengthen partnerships	4
External communication	3

Theme	Number of References Coded (Cumulative)
Outreach	2
Trust	1
New partnerships	0
Policy and procedures	0
Procedural justice	0
Social media	0
Local media	0
New meeting	0

To further capture topics outside of the commonly discussed themes, we counted the frequency with which words were used. Figure 2 depicts our findings as a word cloud; larger words appeared the most frequently in the assessments. Youth, violence, stakeholders, and community were the most common words in the assessment reports.

Figure 2. Most common words in youth violence assessment reports



The following sections contain examples of recommendations made across youth violence assessments, to demonstrate the commonalities.

CRIME PREVENTION

Crime prevention was a prominent theme in youth violence assessment reports. Prevention efforts include evidence-backed strategies that extend past enforcement activities. Community violence intervention (CVI) organizations and schools were included in several recommendations for youth violence assessments.

All four reports included recommendations related to working with CVI organizations. These sites already had a CVI organization active in their areas.

RECOMMENDATION: *[The police department] should support and develop a clear and appropriate relationship with street outreach workers and violence interruption programs.*

Because safety is paramount for the outreach workers, regular communication and coordination between police and street outreach staff should occur at the executive level, but all officers should be educated on the purpose and value of street outreach workers. Such individuals are often a bridge between police and the community. [The department] should consider the following:

- Introducing street outreach executives at roll calls
- Notifying street outreach executives of shootings in the immediate aftermath so they can provide community members and victims with trauma-informed assistance on scene
- Sharing data on violence with these programs for understanding the problem and conducting evaluations

RECOMMENDATION: *[The department] and CVI organizations should develop a coordinated action plan on roles and responsibilities to establish mutual understanding and meaningful relationships and to share appropriate information.*

RECOMMENDATION: *[The site] should develop a communication strategy to ensure that the entire organization understands CVI and how it can benefit the community and the police department.*

It is helpful when police departments coordinate communications with management-level staff of CVI organizations to protect frontline CVI workers from engaging directly and losing community trust and credibility. The assessment team suggests the following be considered as the CVI component is strengthened:

- Designate a point of contact (POC) in the department on youth issues and CVI. Selecting the right person is critical; it should be someone who understands the benefits of community collaboration, who is open to sharing information, and who understands why successful CVI benefits the department. The POC can serve as a liaison to CVI organizations while educating officers throughout the department on the purpose and community safety benefits of CVI.
- Work with CVI managers to develop knowledge and criteria on who is at high risk of involvement in violence, so the right individuals are being served by CVI. For example, police can work with CVI organizations and probation or parole to identify high-risk individuals properly as part of a problem

analysis. This very important activity will help CVI organizations have the most significant effect and reach the population with the greatest need.

RECOMMENDATION: *Provide training and technical assistance to local credible messenger individuals and organizations to create opportunities for capacity building, develop administrative and management structures, seek grant funding, and provide continual training and trauma support for staff.*

TTA for credible messengers can be provided by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation. Funding opportunities to launch CVI programs may be available from the National Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative Resource and Field Support Center or the Everytown Community Safety Fund.

RECOMMENDATION: [Site] youth stakeholders should support efforts to complete a process and outcome evaluation of CVI so that the numerous programs involved in this work benefit from continuous learning, reassessment, and program changes based on the findings of evaluation research.

All four reports discussed cooperative strategies with schools and other youth-focused organizations.

RECOMMENDATION: *[Site] youth stakeholders should strengthen efforts to ensure school attendance, prevent truancy and absences, and ensure completion of a high school education.*

School attendance is vital to reducing youth violence, in the long and short terms.

RECOMMENDATION: *[Site] youth stakeholders should work with the county school district to become an active partner in youth violence prevention.*

If the school district joins the youth violence prevention collaborative, stakeholders could help the school district become more aware of necessary changes. They could build connections with the schools and bring more services to the students, and the schools could learn to better serve at-risk youth who have been exposed to violence in the community.

RECOMMENDATION: *[The site] should have a shared vision/strategy that clearly defines the youth population involved in violence, based on the data, for the right stakeholders to be at the table and for the most appropriate strategies to be developed and implemented.*

The strategy should include stakeholders who address juvenile and emerging adult populations (e.g., juvenile and adult probation officials, schools, and job training providers).

RECOMMENDATION: *Police can engage with youth in positive ways to gain trust and serve as positive role models at school lunchtimes, after-school activities, late-night sports programs, or community centers.*

Engagement can be most effective when it focuses on youth in high-violence neighborhoods.

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

As seen in the Crime Prevention section, prevention of youth violence is tied to the input and support of community stakeholders. Common recommendations focused on ways to expand the role of the community through collaboration with new partner organizations and the creation of shared intervention strategies.

All four of the assessment reports recommended that youth stakeholders develop a shared vision or strategy to reduce youth violence in each jurisdiction.

RECOMMENDATION: *[City] youth stakeholders should develop a shared vision and strategy for youth violence reduction based on collaboration and data agreed to by all stakeholder groups, including the police, prosecutors, juvenile justice departments, local government, public health departments, behavioral health departments, service providers, schools, and community organizations.*

Such a strategy would outline the goals and objectives for success and facilitate coordination among those working toward the same goals by focusing on what is working and filling in key gaps. Once the collaboration is established, stakeholders should create a cohesive strategy with a clear set of goals and action plans for reducing and preventing youth violence. This vision or strategy should clearly define the youth population involved in violence, based on the data, and the most appropriate strategies.

This step is critical for making progress and establishing sustainable efforts. All [city] stakeholders must understand the city's violence reduction goals, have input into these goals, and move in the same direction. The [site] must bring together a diverse group of stakeholders that includes existing coalitions to create a data-based plan with a clear set of goals and strategies for reducing youth violence. If all youth stakeholders have trust in the process and the plan, they can more effectively identify and bring in the resources needed to be successful in violence reduction.

In addition, all four assessment reports cited a need for PSP sites and their stakeholders to develop public education campaigns around youth involved in carrying firearms.

RECOMMENDATION: *[The city] should develop a long-term public education campaign about youth access to guns as one component of the multistrategy effort to prevent youth violence.*

This type of campaign would accomplish several objectives, including educating and engaging parents. SMEs heard from many parents in interviews who did not know their child may possess a gun, join a gang, or be involved in violence. Locating certain parts of this campaign where victims of gunshot violence can be found, such as hospital emergency rooms, would be a good place to start. This campaign should be targeted not only to youth but also to parents of students and should educate the public on preventing youth gun access through safe and secure storage practices.

RECOMMENDATION: *[The city] youth stakeholders should develop a long-term public education campaign designed to change community norms and stop youth gun carrying and youth access to guns.*

Such a campaign would accomplish several objectives and focus on disproportionately affected communities. It should be designed to change the notion that violence is accepted as an appropriate—

even expected—way to solve conflict, engage gun-owning parents and caregivers to store all firearms in a secure manner so they are not accessible to children or teens, and educate young people on the dangers of spreading violence on social media.

All four youth violence assessment reports encouraged strengthened collaboration among all stakeholders involved in preventing and reducing youth violence.

RECOMMENDATION: *[The city] should strengthen collaboration and coordination among the agencies and organizations working with high-risk youth and focus efforts on evidence-based programs and promising practices.*

Some example practices to consider include the following:

- *Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and cognitive behavioral therapy.* FFT is an evidence-based program found to be effective at changing the behavior of young people involved in violence and has been used specifically for gang members, a population in which it was shown to reduce involvement in crime.
- *Safe Passage Program.* Because of shootings that occurred near [city] high schools last year, school safety is an ongoing issue and concern for students and their family members. Therefore, [the city] may want to consider implementing the Safe Passage Program, which organizes collaborative teams—school leadership, parent organizations, community partners, law enforcement officials—to identify hot spots of violence surrounding schools and places reputable adults in those areas to ensure that children arrive and depart school in a safe manner.
- *Community of support.* The SMEs heard in some stakeholder interviews about “resource deserts” in [the city]—that is, the neighborhoods with high poverty, struggling families, and limited (or no) services and facilities.
- *Young Adult Court.* [The city] could work with the local court system to establish a Young Adult Court to provide meaningful alternatives and better outcomes for young adults charged with misdemeanors.

RECOMMENDATION: *[City] youth stakeholders should increase coordination, cooperation, and collaboration among all agencies and organizations involved in youth violence reduction to improve outcomes.*

The assessment team recommends taking small steps to get this off the ground. Stakeholders gave examples of areas where much greater coordination and regular communication would be beneficial: (1) between justice system agencies and departments of behavioral health, to better address the mental health needs of high-risk youth and families, and (2) across agencies working with the same youth and families so that judges and others have all the data they need to make the best decisions. To be successful in violence reduction, attention and resources must focus on the factors driving the violence. Therefore, everyone involved should have access to information and knowledge, meet and communicate regularly, and work toward the same ends.

CONCLUSION

The PSP evaluation team analyzed all youth violence assessment reports available as of May 2025. This analysis uncovered the two most prevalent themes across all youth violence assessments. First, the SMEs recommended that law enforcement engage partners to establish prevention and intervention strategies. Second, community stakeholder participation is integral to the delivery of youth services that affect violent crime rates.

These findings will help us execute youth violence assessment reports and provide TTA to PSP sites. The findings in this report suggest potential training and workshop ideas and those for facilitated discussions on PSP site common challenges. The findings also identify potential priorities for program-wide PSP strategy development.

APPENDIX A: APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The PSP evaluation team reviewed all PSP assessment reports covering a range of topics to identify common themes, such as records management, data sharing, and peer agencies (see Appendix B for a full list with definitions). We also included themes that we did not find in the reviewed assessment reports but that we deemed relevant to PSP (and considered likely to be present in other PSP assessment reports), based on our background knowledge of PSP processes and TTA. Through this process, we identified 84 individual themes that correspond to assessment recommendations. We organized these themes into 10 categories (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Assessment theme categories



The PSP evaluation team used the qualitative analysis software NVivo to code the recommendations from the detective function assessment reports against the 94 themes (both the 84 individual themes and the overarching theme categories) at the sentence level or higher, and we coded the recommendations to multiple themes when appropriate (Figure 4). The PSP evaluation team used the same themes for each topical assessment type; therefore, not all themes were present in every assessment.

Figure 4. Recommendation coding process



Each appearance of a coded sentence or group of sentences in the assessment reports created a “reference.” We could then rank the most common of the 84 themes by identifying those that had the greatest number of references.

APPENDIX B: THEME DEFINITIONS

Table 3. Theme definitions

Theme	Definition
Community stakeholders	Interacting with community members and groups
External communication	Establishing formal communication with stakeholders and the community
Local media	Interacting with local media
New meeting	Creating a meeting with community partners
New partnerships	Creating partnerships that did not previously exist with community members or organizations
Outreach	Engaging with the community to share information and promote relationships
Policy and procedure	Policy and procedure related to community engagement and external information sharing
Procedural justice	Maintaining internal and external procedural justice
Social media	The use of social media
Strengthen partnerships	Improving and strengthening relationships between the police agency and its community
Trust	Increasing citizen and community trust in the police agency
Crime prevention	Proactively reducing the incidence of crimes
Drug crime prevention	Proactively reducing the incidence of crimes related to drugs and the drug market
Gang crime prevention	Proactively reducing the incidence of gang-related crimes
Gun violence prevention	Proactively reducing the incidence of gun-related crimes
Policing strategies	Structured approaches or methods used by law enforcement to prevent crime, maintain public order, and build community trust
Treatment and social services	Working with local social service providers to deliver assistance to community members
Youth	Working to address youth-related community issues
Data and analysis	Collecting and using metrics and information
CompStat	Recommendations related to the CompStat process and/or data and accountability
Crime mapping	Documenting and analyzing the geographical representation of crimes
Data dissemination	Methods to ensure data are sent to or consistently available to officers or agency partners
Evaluation and research	Assessing a departmental program
Data sharing	Agreements or methods to view or transfer data between organizations
Interoperability	The ability to access data between organizations or pieces of equipment
More analysis	The addition of specific forms of analysis to existing practices
New metrics	Additional information or data to collect that is not currently being collected or documented
Offender-based strategy	Analysis strategies that focus on the individual or individuals committing a disproportionate number of offenses
Processes and procedures	Analysis practices in a department
Report automation	Creating reports automatically using software rather than analytical personnel
Social network analysis	Analysis strategies that map or explore connections between offenders
Funding	Gathering and using financial resources
Budget	Adding additional line items to the budget; finding money in the budget
Cost benefit analysis	Measuring the costs and benefits of a proposed technology to an agency
Diverse funding sources	Soliciting funding from a variety of sources
Federal funding and grants	Seeking funding and grants from federal organizations
Grant writing process and staff	An agency's grant writing procedures and the staff involved in writing and managing grants
Local funding	Soliciting funding from local sources
More funding	Pursuing and using additional funding beyond an agency's current level
Private and foundation funding	Soliciting funding from private sources, including foundations
Research partnerships	Partnerships with universities or colleges to conduct research
State funding	Soliciting funding from state sources

Theme	Definition
Governance and policy	Agency management, standards, processes, and procedures
Discipline	Disciplinary actions in the department
Leadership	The training, structure, and role of leadership
Morale	Officer morale and departmental cohesion
SOPs	Standard operating procedures or established departmental procedures
Transparency	Being open, honest, and clear about actions, decisions, and processes
Use of force	Use of force policies, procedures, or practices
Wellness	Officer safety and physical and mental health
Interagency partnerships	Creating, strengthening, and sustaining relationships with other agencies
Criminal justice system	Developing partnerships among organizations across the justice system
Federal partnerships	Developing or strengthening partnerships with regional federal partners
Local partnerships	Developing or strengthening partnerships with local partners
New partnerships	Creating partnerships that did not previously exist
Peer agencies	Learning from other law enforcement (peer) agencies
State partnerships	Developing or strengthening partnerships with state partner organizations
Strengthen partnerships	Further developing existing partnerships
Investigations	Conducting and managing investigations, including crime-specific approaches to investigations
Case management	Managing the investigations process and associated materials
Cold cases	Old and challenging cases
Evidence	Evidence practices in investigations
Feedback	Information or responses about performance, actions, or work to guide improvement or reinforce positive behavior
Gangs	Gang-related crimes and activities
Homicide	Investigations of homicides
Procedures and policies	Investigation practices and standards
Social media	Using social media in investigations
Witnesses	Managing witnesses in investigations
Personnel	Staffing management and officer professional development
Civilianization	Assigning non-sworn (civilian) personnel to perform tasks that do not require the authority or training of a sworn police officer
Cross-unit collaboration	Collaboration among groups in a department
Culture	Collective values, norms, attitudes, and behaviors that exist within an agency, shaping how employees interact and make decisions
Departmental organization	Department units, hierarchy, and organizational relationships
Internal communication	Communication within the department
Organizational awareness	Ability of individuals within an agency to understand what is happening across the organization—such as ongoing initiatives, priorities, decisions, challenges, and internal dynamics. It means being informed about who is doing what, why it's being done, and how different teams and functions connect and impact each other.
Performance review	Formal assessment in which an individual's work performance is evaluated
Schedules and shifts	Departmental scheduling and shift practices
Staffing	The need to create and fill a specific position or unit; promotions
Training	Training for department personnel
Planning	Developing and institutionalizing agency changes
Strategic planning	Creating a plan of direction and action for the department
Sustainability	Institutionalizing technology and procedural changes
Working group	Small, focused team of individuals brought together to accomplish a specific goal or address a particular issue

Theme	Definition
Technology	Agency use of technology, including new equipment and procedural changes
Insufficient equipment	The need for additional equipment or replacement or repair of existing equipment
Integration	Combining different systems, software, or technologies so they work together seamlessly
Interoperability	The ability to access or use technology systems between organizations or pieces of equipment
IT support needed	Services or technology changes needed by the agency from the responsible IT organization
Privacy	Maintaining individual privacy as new technology and systems are introduced
Records management	RMS (records management systems) and the agency's ability to collect and store information
Software and hardware	Software or hardware technology needed by the agency
Technology suggestion	Specific new technology or technology change recommended to be implemented
Training needed	Technology training needed or recommended
User interface	The specific dashboard or form of presentation through which end-users (usually officers) engage with a software

APPENDIX C: THEMES CODED BY EVALUATION TEAM

Table 4. Themes coded by category and number

Theme	Total number of times theme was coded across all PSP assessments
Community stakeholders	177
External communication	24
Local media	18
New meeting	3
New partnerships	7
Outreach	36
Policy and procedure	13
Procedural justice	2
Social media	43
Strengthen partnerships	29
Trust	10
Crime prevention	35
Drug crime prevention	2
Gang crime prevention	2
Gun violence prevention	6
Policing strategies	16
Treatment and social services	2
Youth	11
Data and analysis	122
CompStat	9
Crime mapping	10
Data dissemination	5
Evaluation and research	14
Data sharing	16
Interoperability	9
More analysis	42
New metrics	27
Offender-based strategy	3
Processes and procedures	9
Report automation	6
Social network analysis	5
Funding	210
Budget	18
Cost benefit analysis	1
Diverse funding sources	17
Federal funding and grants	10
Grant writing process and staff	54
Local funding	6
More funding	22
Private and foundation funding	34
Research partnerships	25
State funding	13
Governance and policy	35
Discipline	0
Leadership	3

Theme	Total number of times theme was coded across all PSP assessments
Morale	1
SOPs	13
Transparency	1
Use of force	0
Wellness	8
Interagency partnerships	137
Criminal justice system	56
Federal partnerships	10
Local partnerships	61
New partnerships	14
Peer agencies	13
State partnerships	7
Strengthen partnerships	12
Investigations	425
Case management	81
Cold cases	0
Evidence	18
Feedback	2
Gangs	3
Homicide	23
Procedures and policies	283
Social media	0
Witnesses	38
Personnel	435
Civilianization	13
Cross-unit collaboration	32
Culture	3
Departmental organization	83
Internal communication	45
Organizational awareness	5
Performance review	19
Schedules and shifts	18
Staffing	52
Training	169
Planning	91
Strategic planning	56
Sustainability	1
Working group	27
Technology	106
Insufficient equipment	2
Integration	5
Interoperability	17
IT support needed	7
Privacy	0
Records management	25
Software and hardware	30
Technology suggestion	40
Training needed	6
User interface	3



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