



Evaluation of Bernalillo County Metropolitan Area Project Safe Neighborhoods

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I: Introduction

Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) is a violent crime reduction initiative sponsored by the Department of Justice (DOJ). It has been in operation for over a decade and has been implemented in jurisdictions throughout the country. It began with a focus on firearm crimes, and in 2006, expanded to include gang crimes. The current initiative is intended to address violent crime, gun crime, and gang crime in Bernalillo County and the surrounding Native American communities, including Isleta Pueblo and To'hajiilee.

Across the country, United States Attorney's Offices (USAO) coordinate PSN efforts in their respective districts. The USAO designates a Task Force Coordinator (also referred to herein as the "law enforcement coordinator") whose charge is to convene a PSN Task Force that brings together representatives from law enforcement and prosecution at all jurisdictional levels (local, tribal, state, and federal), as well as community leaders, research partners, and others. These Task Force meetings are a venue for planning, reporting on, and refining PSN activities and initiatives. In addition to managing these efforts, the PSN Task Force Coordinator reports to the Department of Justice regarding the implementation and short-term success of local PSN efforts.

New Mexico has had the opportunity to engage in a number of Project Safe Neighborhoods projects in a variety of locations throughout the state. This PSN effort intended to build on those prior initiatives by engaging with established partners, utilizing strategic efforts developed previously, and using other proven resources and strategies developed previously through other efforts like Weed & Seed. This PSN project intends to expand on prior efforts by addressing the concerns of nearby Native American communities, particularly with respect to the transference of criminal activity and values across jurisdictional boundaries, and by addressing the impact of violent crime on urban Native Americans both as victims and offenders.

As part of the research support and evaluation efforts for this PSN project, the New Mexico Statistical Analysis Center (NM SAC) at the University of New Mexico's Institute for Social Research has contracted with the New Mexico Department of Public Safety to conduct a process evaluation. Besides documenting project activities, this evaluation focuses on documenting the

activities and collaboration that occurred, the perceived impact and success of the initiative, facilitators and barriers to implementation, and directions for future growth.

Methods

This evaluation is primarily a process evaluation. In general, the purpose of a process evaluation is to answer questions about how a program is being implemented. The results can be used to make decisions about whether and how to improve a program and can provide context for any outcomes found. The current evaluation of the PSN initiative uses a participatory approach, which is one common approach to evaluation (Russ-Eft and Preskill, 2009). The goal of this evaluation is to understand how this initiative is being implemented from the perspective of those engaged in the activities. The objectives are to document program activities, collaboration success and challenges, and overall program success and challenges. The results are intended for use by the Task Force for understanding current efforts and for future planning purposes. In addition, the results may prove useful to other jurisdictions that can draw on this program's implementation successes.

Data

We utilized many sources of data for the process evaluation. First, we completed a total of six extensive semi-structured interviews with Task Force members. Using the sign-in sheets and notes from Task Force meetings, we identified those agencies or people who played a role in implementing the initiative. We then contacted individuals from those agencies who regularly attended Task Force meetings and who had key roles in the project to request an interview; most individuals agreed to be interviewed, though two were unable to participate. We developed a general interview guide focusing on collaboration, implementation, and perceived success; however, we did tailor some questions to specific agencies.

Two NM SAC staff members conducted the in-person interviews between September 1, 2015 and December 4, 2015. Interviews lasted between one-half and two hours. Interviews occurred at a location chosen by the interviewee: their office, a neutral location, or our office. These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

We could not interview everyone on the Task Force due to budget constraints, but did want to ensure that we received information from all of those involved in the project. Thus, those who did not engage in the extensive in-person interviews were asked to complete an online survey. The survey was sent to everyone who is invited to and/or attends Task Force meetings based on sign-in sheets and email lists. We sent an email invitation to 30 individuals to complete the survey; 15 people responded to the survey, though not all of those individuals completed all of the questions. After reviewing the responses from the surveys and interviews, we contacted six individuals to garner additional information about PSN activities or clarification about the responses they provided. Most of those contacted graciously provided that information. We briefly spoke with one individual in person, and recorded that interview. We spoke with the others over the phone or in person and took notes, but did not audio-record the conversation. These additional conversations lasted up to about ten minutes.

Besides surveys and interviews, we examined our notes from the Task Force meetings. Specifically, we looked for information about interaction and collaboration between team members, PSN related activities they engaged in, any problems identified and how they proposed to resolve those problems, and program success. These observations were also used to help refine questions for the interviews and surveys described previously. The first three Task Force meetings occurred monthly beginning in April 2014 and then were held bimonthly until August 2015; one meeting was held in January 2016 for a total of eleven meetings. All Task Force meetings were held at the USAO in Albuquerque. Research staff took notes during each Task Force meeting, which were later scanned or typed for analysis.

The PSN program coordinator at the USAO documents program activities and generates semi-annual progress reports, which are submitted to the Department of Justice. These progress reports document activities and outputs, and identify problems encountered in implementing project activities. We requested copies of these reports, and received progress reports that covered activities that occurred between October 2013 and June 2015. The purpose of analyzing these data was to provide further information about which activities occurred, and to validate information that we obtained from interviews.

Besides the data collected, we also examined the 2013 Project Safe Neighborhoods SMART (State, Metropolitan Area, Rural, and Tribal) grant proposal. We used this proposal to generate a list of proposed activities. We also asked individual members to clarify information as we were analyzing the results and writing the findings.

Analysis of data

Each interview was transcribed by a professional transcriptionist, and then uploaded for coding and analysis into Atlas.TI software. We first identified the responses by categories based on the questions we asked (e.g., facilitators to collaboration). Within these categories, themes emerged. While the information we gathered from interviews reflects the perspective of individual interviewees regarding the PSN initiative, we looked for information common to most or all of the interviews. In addition, we looked for conflicting information, called “negative cases.” When negative cases occur, we note these differences in our summary of the analysis findings.

Throughout the report we include direct quotes from the interviews. This is common in qualitative work and is done to enhance understanding of a particular idea. These quotes are carefully chosen to reflect the general theme, provide a definition, or exemplify a negative case. Note that the gender pronoun used to introduce the quote is random.

Qualitative research of this type allows us to explore issues in depth, often providing a much richer understanding of a subject than would be possible with quantitative research. With any qualitative study, certain criteria should be met in order to ensure that the research is sound. We have paid careful attention to these criteria and have used appropriate methods to ensure the trustworthiness of our analysis. One method used to ensure accuracy and credibility in qualitative research is triangulation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Thus, we purposefully used other sources of data to verify and supplement the results found in the interviews. In addition, by having more than one researcher conduct interviews, we attempted to limit the effects of researcher-induced bias into the interviews themselves. These methods were used to ensure credibility of the data and analysis.

The surveys included both closed and open-ended questions, allowing for a combination of both quantitative and qualitative responses. The quantitative descriptive data were summarized and appear throughout the report. The qualitative survey data, along with information from the progress reports and meeting notes, were included in the analyses. The information contained in these sources were grouped into topic areas and joined with the themes that emerged from the interview data. All qualitative sources were then analyzed together by topic area.

Contents of report

We begin by briefly describing the setting of this PSN initiative. We then present the key activities listed in the proposal, and describe the implementation of those activities to date. Next, we describe the perceived success of the initiative to date, along with facilitators and barriers to program implementation. Finally, we provide recommendations for improvement and sustainment.

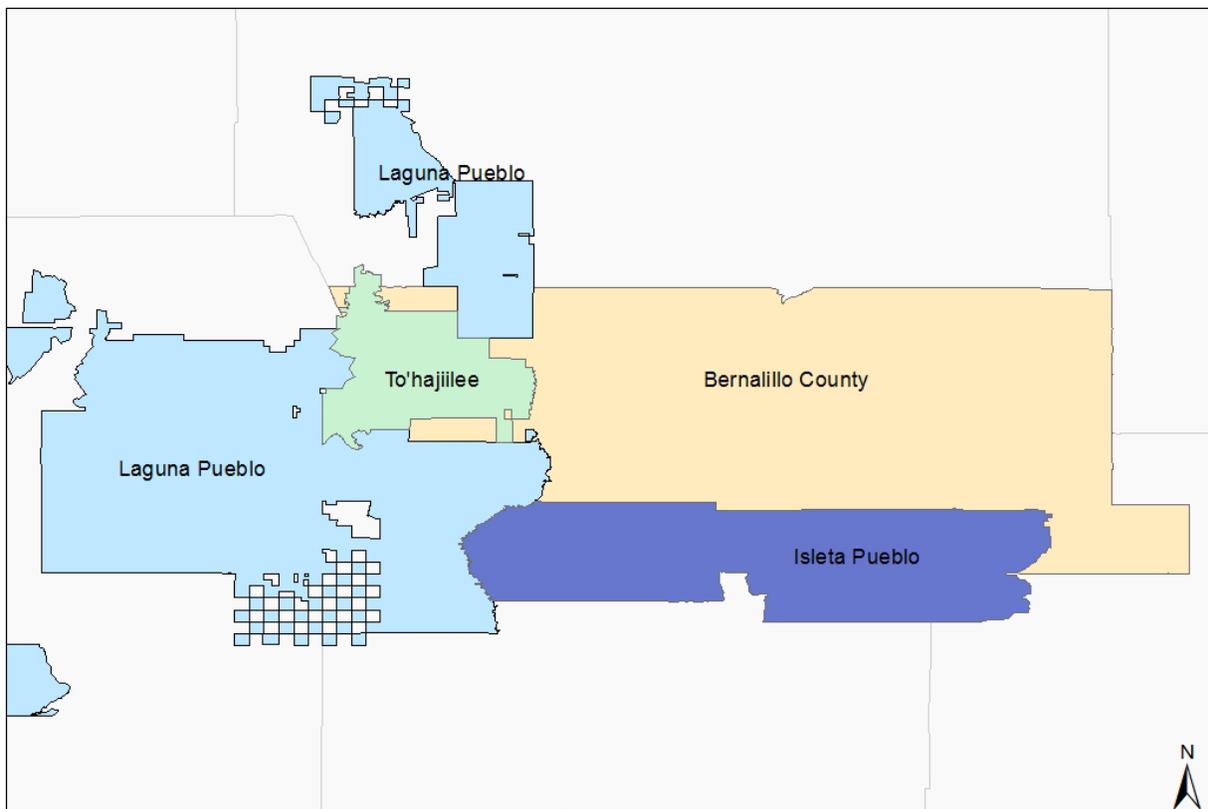
We refer to those who were interviewed primarily as “participants,” but also occasionally as “interviewees” or “respondents.” On occasion, we refer to the interviewee specifically in the text (he, she, him, or her). Note that we have randomly chose gender designations for the interviewees to ensure anonymity (thus, males are sometimes referred to as females, or males may be referred to as males, etc.).

We would like to thank those who participated in the evaluation. They graciously agreed to take time out of their very busy schedules to talk with us or respond to the survey. We appreciate their cooperation, insight, and candor.

II: Project setting

The Bernalillo County Metro PSN project proposal focuses on the Albuquerque area and neighboring tribal areas including: Isleta Pueblo, Sandia Pueblo, Laguna Pueblo, and To'hajiilee (part of the Navajo Nation) (see Figure 1). However, not all proposed areas were able to participate within the project period; Sandia Pueblo and Laguna Pueblo did not engage in project activities, though Laguna Pueblo representatives did attend some Task Force meetings. Thus, those areas that did actively engage in project activities include Albuquerque, Isleta Pueblo and To'hajiilee. Within the Albuquerque area, project activities were prioritized in several neighborhoods, but were not necessarily limited to those locations. A prior report (January 2015) provides detailed information about the characteristics and challenges within these areas.

Figure 1: Bernalillo County Metro PSN project site



III: Proposed and actual activities

In this section, we compare the activities that were listed in the 2013 grant proposal to actual PSN efforts to date. In order to determine what activities have been occurring, we asked participants to describe the PSN activities they were involved with and examined the progress reports submitted to DOJ and our notes from Task Force meetings. Each section begins with a summary of the activities proposed in the 2013 grant followed by a summary of what is occurring. This PSN initiative addresses three key areas: prevention, enforcement, and reentry.

The grant proposal's Project and Task Plan identifies five primary activities: collaborative partnerships; strategic planning and research integration; training; outreach; and accountability and data-driven efforts. Within each of these areas are a number of activities. For the purposes of this assessment, we have grouped these objectives and activities into the following categories: education/prevention; enforcement/prosecution; reentry; collaboration; and other activities (media outreach, strategic planning, research, and support of collaborative training).

Education/prevention, enforcement/prosecution, and reentry efforts were all intended to include culturally appropriate strategies.

Prevention and intervention

Proposed

Prevention activities are to include youth-oriented "Sentry" gun violence reduction, Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) delivered in the schools as well at Camp Triumph, and community awareness activities. These activities are intended to reach at-risk youth to prevent youth gang-related activity. The task plan also includes references to conducting information and awareness workshops and seminars. Finally, intervention activities, particularly OPT OUT, are to be included. OPT OUT involves home visits with gang-involved youth; a minimum of 24 home visits are to be completed. Education efforts are to be conducted in neighborhoods with greatest need of "intervention, prevention, re-entry, behavioral health, education, and employment alternatives" (SMART proposal 2013 p. 8).

Actual activities

The Task Force members regularly and actively engaged in education efforts, geared primarily to the youth of the community. Prevention efforts included Camp Triumph and community presentations focused on drug, gun, and gang prevention. Intervention included OPT OUT. Thus, the Task Force engaged in all activities proposed. In this section, we describe each of those activities.

Camp Triumph

Camp Triumph was offered to youth in Isleta, To'Hajiilee, and Albuquerque. Camps were offered in both Isleta and To'Hajiilee in the summers of 2014 and 2015; Isleta provided an additional camp in the spring of 2015. Two camps were held in Albuquerque in the summer of 2015. This three- to four-day camp was free to participants and targeted at-risk youth. Children engaged in activities at the primary camp location and went on field trips. Typically, while on site, children rotated through various stations, which included both physical activities and classroom instruction. The physical activities, such as climbing a rock wall or learning Zumba, were designed for fun as well as to increase self-esteem and encourage team building.

Classroom instruction included a variety of topics. The prevention specialist provided Project Sentry gun safety training (see below), and law enforcement officers taught G.R.E.A.T material. Other topics, such as substance abuse and bullying, were typically included. Some camps also addressed other topics of importance to that community. For example, in one community, suicide has become an acute problem; thus, the camp included a discussion about suicide prevention. In addition, children were taught the importance of having a good education or learning a trade. The camps also offered an opportunity to reinforce cultural values. For example, in To'hajiilee, they offered a session on K'é, which was described as a family system:

"...so talking to the kids about their clans and who they are. So they helped with giving some information to the students about that and reminded the kids to be proud of who they are...as a native person you always talk to whoever about who you are. You tell them your clan, where you're from, who your family is. So that way you can identify who you may be related to. It just brings the family system closer together."

Besides these on-site activities, kids were able to go off-site to engage in fun activities such as swimming, fishing, visiting the zoo, and bowling.

Community and law enforcement volunteers staffed the camp, with small adult-to-child ratios. Law enforcement worked one-on-one with the children, providing mentorship, encouragement, and positive interaction. Students were recruited through information passed out at area schools through administrators, counselors, and/or resource officers; at chapter meetings; health fairs; community resource meetings; and youth council. In some cases, students were referred to the program by law enforcement, social services and behavioral health. Students in Albuquerque were recruited from all public elementary and middle schools. Isleta targeted youth age 10 to 14, and To'hajiilee included youth between the ages of 8 to 16, approximately.

Project Sentry

Project Sentry is an anti-gun and gang educational outreach program targeting youth. Project Sentry focuses on “options, choices, and consequences” of engaging in gang and gun activities; the consequences addressed include legal, medical, and financial problems resulting from gun violence. A video called “Eddie the Eagle,” created by the National Rifle Association, is shown at presentations that include younger children. This video helps younger children to learn what to do if they find a gun, and does so in an age appropriate way.

The presentations occurred in a variety of settings. Besides Camp Triumph, Project Sentry was offered in local schools, community centers including the Albuquerque Indian Center, camps (e.g., a basketball camp and an overnight youth summit camp), and youth council meetings. These presentations are held year-round; they offer an opportunity for new kids to hear the same anti-gang, anti-gun, and anti-drug messages that were presented at Camp Triumph, and for those who attended the camp, the messages are reiterated. It is important for the youth to hear these messages repeatedly because it helps to ensure that they are aware of the issues and continue to be aware of them.

The prevention specialist actively reaches out to various entities to offer the educational outreach. Participants relayed that the more the prevention specialist and his activities are

known, the more requests are made for the presentations. While the prevention specialist may make presentations on his own, others may assist—individuals from the USAO were noted as having partnered with the prevention specialist at these presentations.

Other education

Besides Camp Triumph and Project Sentry, PSN provided at least two other trainings. These efforts were focused on school gun violence and safety education, and were provided to teachers, school resource officers, administrators, counselors, and law enforcement.

OPT OUT

In addition to the educational outreach efforts, the Task Force also engaged in OPT OUT in the Albuquerque area; during a Task Force meeting, a participant reported that OPT OUT is being planned in Isleta in the future. OPT OUT is a gang intervention program operated and led by county law enforcement. They, along with juvenile probation officers, adult state and federal probation officers, and service providers who target at-risk youth teamed up to conduct OPT OUT for this PSN effort. These partners identified individuals who are at risk of gang violence, conducted home visits with the youth and their families to teach them about the risks of gang involvement, and offered support and services to the families.

Enforcement/prosecution

Proposed

The grant proposal identifies several enforcement activities aimed at reducing gun and gang related violence. Specifically, law enforcement activities are to include investigation, deconfliction, and apprehension, all of which are to involve intelligence-led, place-based strategies. PSN provides some funding to law enforcement agencies to complete these activities.

The proposal also addresses prosecution as part of the overall efforts to reduce gun and gang violence. The effort is intended to identify and accept appropriate gun cases for federal prosecution, screen gang cases for federal prosecution, and ensure gang members are successfully prosecuted in state court.

Current activities

Law enforcement activities

Law enforcement activities included targeted patrols, and creating and engaging in tactical operations all focused on gangs and guns. In addition, participants noted they conducted fugitive round-ups. According to participants, law enforcement efforts focused on priority areas within Bernalillo County initially identified by the research partner, and then used law enforcement intelligence to identify specific targets (places and people) and develop appropriate operations within those areas. In addition, law enforcement worked in other (non-priority) areas in response to law enforcement threat assessments, as explained by one participant:

“It’s basically based on the law enforcement threat assessment, and where they need to apply their resources, which is fine because our target site is within the county area, and that includes Indian country.”

This is important to note because the intent was to allow law enforcement to conduct operations that effectively address gun and gang violence in the target site; as one participant explained, PSN is meant to be a “force multiplier.” Respondents noted that there was some collaboration across agencies for at least some operations. For example, the municipal police partnered with federal probation and parole on some operations. Respondents indicated that law enforcement operations did include strategic planning; both data from the research partner and law enforcement’s analysis of crime patterns were used when planning and prioritizing operations. Further, there was multi-agency cooperation on another law enforcement operation that was ultimately deemed to be outside of the scope of this project. Nevertheless, the impetus for the joint operation appeared to be a result of PSN.

One important aspect of this grant is to focus on the urban Native American community. Law enforcement efforts occurred in areas with relatively dense populations of Native Americans and high rates of violent crime, particularly firearm-related violent crime. Thus, while crime amongst Native Americans was not always directly addressed, by addressing crime in these locations, Native Americans were indirectly impacted.

Prosecution

The USAO of the District of New Mexico has actively pursued prosecution of firearm-related cases at the federal level. Project Exile, which targets the “worst of the worst,” was mentioned frequently during Task Force meetings. Federal prosecution of firearm-related offenses often results in longer prison sentences than cases prosecuted in state courts. Several respondents noted that they know what is required to build a successful case for federal prosecution of firearm-related offenses. For example, one participant explained:

“And that's why that's [building cases for federal prosecution] successful. Because the feds are very – we know exactly –you know, you hear the – what are they called? The worst of the worst, is the mantra now. .. what's behind that is very clear. It's very clean. We know exactly what [to do] and then things get done.”

In addition, at the February 2015 Task Force meeting, it was reported that over 90 PSN-related cases were prosecuted at the federal level in 2014.

While efforts to ensure successful prosecution at the federal level are strong, we did not see that emphasis at the state level. However, an outreach coordinator from the District Attorney’s office did attend Task Force meetings. The coordinator provided information to community members, neighborhood associations, law enforcement, and others, alerting them about upcoming hearings involving gang members. The compilation of these data also helped law enforcement and the research partner to track gang-related crimes. However, the position was vacated in the fall of 2015 and has not yet been filled, leaving a void in the tracking of gang-related prosecutions.

Reentry

Proposed

Reentry is an important focus of this PSN initiative. The grant proposal addresses reentry in a broad way. Through reentry (and other) efforts, the intention is to create safer neighborhoods. The SMART Strategy diagram illustrates the incorporation of reentry into the overall approach in addressing drugs, gun and gang violence (see Appendix A). Like other activities, reentry

activities are intended to be collaborative, comprehensive, intelligence led, and culturally appropriate.

Current activities

Reentry efforts, focused in the Isleta Pueblo, are a key component of the grant activities to date. The impetus for the focus on reentry began even before the grant, when Isleta Pueblo became concerned with the extent of recidivism they were seeing, the lack of support for those reentering the community, and the high costs of detention. The PSN grant provided Isleta the opportunity to pilot a reentry program aimed at reducing that repeat offending. Not only is reentry as structured new to Isleta, it is a new component to PSN in New Mexico, which has traditionally focused on prevention, intervention, apprehension, and prosecution.

The program, named the Pueblo Justice Healing Circle, is designed to complement the existing tribal court system. It addresses both violent crime and juvenile delinquency. The comprehensive plan includes prevention, intervention, and support. The program is being built from the ground up; thus, it is being implemented in three phases. First, it will address individuals involved in the tribal criminal justice system, then expand to include those involved in the state system, and finally encompass those in the federal system.

Process

Participants described the steps that the Pueblo Justice Healing Circle staff is taking to build this program. Since reentry is a new component of PSN and this particular program is new, we have included a description of the process the staff has engaged in to develop the program. Note that some of these activities are ongoing and occurred contemporaneously.

Hired staff

Isleta Pueblo hired a coordinator who is responsible for developing the program, along with two case managers to assist. They originally had two interns who were ultimately not able to continue working. While this reportedly slowed the progress of implementation, it did provide time for the coordinator to construct a reentry plan.

Developed mission statement and key program components

Program staff developed a mission statement that describes how they will address reentry and the program's purpose. Participants report that this includes how the program will incorporate its objectives within the existing tribal system, focusing on how these are congruous. It also addresses who the program is intended to impact.

While developing their approach, Isleta began by having conversations about how to define reentry and what they could do about the recidivism they have observed. A key objective is to approach reentry in a holistic way. Thus, the plan includes prevention, intervention, and post-release components. Important to their approach is that recidivism includes not only those who return to the community after incarceration, but also those who continue to commit crimes even if they have not been incarcerated. Further, they intend to target those who are at risk. For example, case managers are working on creating a curriculum targeted to those who may be diverted from the court or who are displaying behaviors that put them at risk in order to boost the necessary skills to help them get on the right path. Thus, their program is aimed at both curbing repeat offending and early intervention.

Further, because criminal offending impacts not only the offenders but also their families and the community, the plan includes components like restorative justice as well as strategies to help individuals reintegrate into the community. For example, they intend to educate the families of those who are returning from incarceration about what restrictions are placed on probationers and parolees, and to help them develop realistic expectations.

Created resource book

The team has considered the various barriers that people face when returning, such as the need for employment, housing, counseling, etc. To that end, the coordinator created a resource book intended to help individuals find assistance in a wide variety of areas:

“So they have developed a resource catalog of resources for individuals who are returning, and we’re talking a very extensive one. I think it’s probably the most extensive one in the state that they have compiled. And we’re talking about housing, basic needs, employment, counseling, those type of services that are

available in the normal environment of like the metro area, that really have not been, I think, successfully either, or made accessible to those individuals in the tribal lands.”

Developed partnerships

The staff has carefully considered whom their partners should be, including identifying existing resources, and are working on strengthening those relationships:

“You’ve got to establish, and really develop that collaboration with your core providers, and then branch off from there, and then also with other entities, outside of the pueblo. Meaning like, federal probation, state probation, JPPOs, etc., bringing them all into this collaborative. And, that was kind of already occurring, but it needed more groundwork. So, that’s kind of like where we really strengthened the tribal PSN.”

They have established a multi-disciplinary team that includes representatives from law enforcement, tribal court, behavioral health, social services, and various community programs as well as representatives from the USAO. One participant described this as functioning as a “steering committee,” which oversees the process.

Use of informed decision-making

Participants also spoke about using informed decision-making to guide the process. For instance, they have been screening risk/needs assessment tools. Their goal is to find or create one that is culturally and linguistically appropriate for their population, and that will help them to identify the needs of the individuals they assist. Further, they have been actively seeking data to help them to better understand and address the needs in their community. For example, it would be useful to them to know what types of cases the tribal court hears most often.

Sustainment

The team has been working on protocols and policies for the reentry efforts, documenting the focus, intent, and mission of the program, as well as creating the curriculum for group work. Participants described actively documenting the staff’s efforts and any agreements made in order to ensure that regardless of who is involved, the program itself can continue:

“[H]ow do you sustain that part of it? Is it through your agreements that you have in place? Because everybody has to retire eventually. So, you need to have someone to carry on that side of what you’re working on. And, whether it’s through policies, whether it’s through protocols, somewhere in there, that there’s a guide that’s built, that’s going to carry on that side of what you’re working on.”

They have also actively pursued avenues for funding after current funds run out. Isleta has collaborated with others to write grants that would result in some funding for the reentry program. They are also seeking other sources of funding, but recognize that they need to show how this program achieves a cost savings in the long run in order to secure funding.

Other activities

Proposed

Besides the activities noted above, the strategy includes other activities that support the overall efforts. *Research and strategic planning*, which include the incorporation of data, are key components of this PSN effort. Research efforts are to include various analyses such as: the establishment of baseline indicators; research and analyze crime patterns, drivers, trends, and problems; determine hot spots for violence; identify the most violent individuals; document services provided; and measure program success. These analyses are intended to support all PSN activities. Strategic planning is infused throughout the project tasks. Some specific tasks related to strategic planning include: identifying credible resources and tools to support place-based solutions; creating an inventory of ongoing viable core resources; and coordinating place-based solutions for collective impact. Finally, the *media* is to be used to send a deterrent message to would-be criminals stressing “hard time for gun and gang-related crime.”

Current activities

Research and strategic planning

All of the primary activities within the PSN initiative are meant to be data-driven. To that end, soon after the project was awarded to the New Mexico Department of Public Safety (DPS), the research partner met with the law enforcement coordinator and DPS representatives to discuss research support. It was determined that the research efforts would include three things. First, a

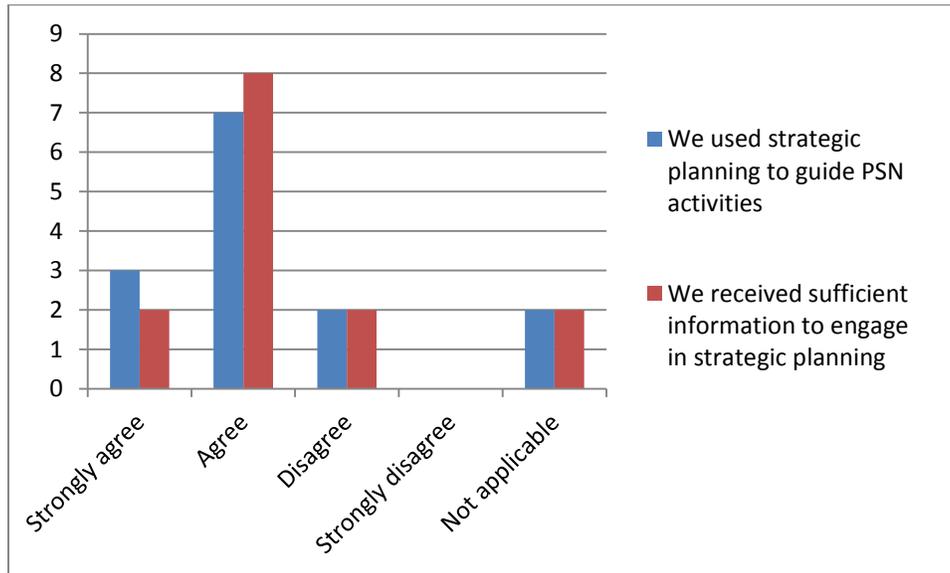
baseline assessment of violent crime in the target area with an emphasis on the Native American population would be completed. Second, a report detailing the socio-economic context of the target areas was to be completed; the report would emphasize those factors that may be correlated with violent crime. Finally, a process evaluation detailing project activities, perceived outcomes, success, and barriers was to be completed. The first two items were completed at the beginning of the project (October 2014 and January 2015, respectively), and the current report represents the third. One limitation of the initial reports was a lack of detailed crime data from tribal partners. Thus, in-depth analyses, including place and person-based assessments, were not completed for those locations. However, detailed analyses for violent gun and gang crimes were completed for the Bernalillo County metropolitan area. This included both place-based and person-based analyses, and established baseline data and trends. Further, overall violent crime trends for the tribal areas were included in the second report.

Besides the analyses provided by the research partner, participants indicated that local law enforcement also provided information. The details of these analyses are not known to us, but do involve threat assessment which likely includes assessment of persons and places that are of the greatest concern.

Perceptions of strategic planning

We asked survey participants to indicate the extent to which strategic planning was incorporated into PSN activities. Nearly all of the respondents agreed (N=7) or strongly agreed (N=3) that strategic planning was used to guide PSN efforts (see Figure 2 below). Further, most agreed (N=8) or strongly agreed (N=2) that they received sufficient information to engage in strategic planning.

Figure 2: Use of strategic planning



Media

The media partner provided billboards for this PSN project. Strategically placed billboards were located within the Albuquerque metropolitan area as well as outside of the city. These billboards sent the message that firearm crimes would result in serving time in federal prisons.

In addition, Camp Triumph was publicized through various media outlets. A local television news station ran a story about Camp Triumph in July 2014. It was also advertised on social media, including multiple Facebook pages (Bernalillo County Sherriff’s Department, the New Mexico National Guard, and Isleta Behavioral Health Prevention Program) and on Flickr.

Collaboration

Proposed

Collaboration is the cornerstone of this PSN effort. Indeed, the initiative was designed with collaboration at the forefront. The project features include developing collaborative partnerships, engaging in collaborative strategic planning, and supporting collaborative training, outreach, and accountability, and incorporating data-driven efforts. The first activity listed in the

project Task Plan aims to address collaborative partnerships by identifying stakeholders who can commit resources to reduce gun and gang violence, as well as form and sustain partnerships among a variety of groups including public safety, public health, education, businesses, and others. In addition, this PSN effort was intended to form and sustain collaborative partnerships with tribal stakeholders to address urban Native American off-reservation violent offending and victimization.

Collaborative *training* is another component of the grant proposal. Specifically, the Assistant United States Attorneys are to work with the New Mexico Gang Task Force to support training to assist partners to successfully implement PSN. The training would address gun and gang crime investigation as well as strategic problem solving. The program narrative defines a variety of more specific topics to be addressed. These include investigation, prosecution, and reentry related to firearms, violent crime, and gang-related criminal activity; education on federal firearm statutes; as well as youth-focused strategies.

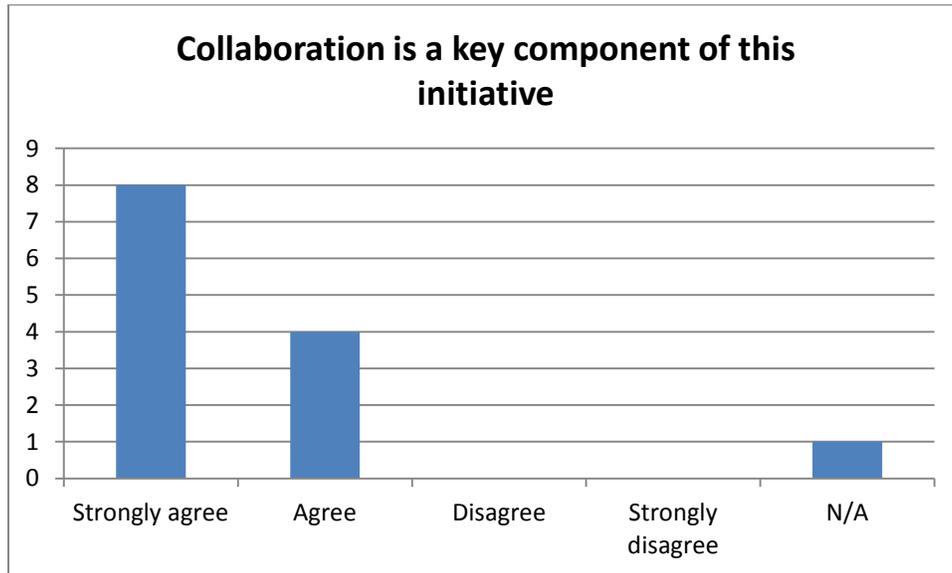
Current activities

Perceptions of significance of collaboration

“Anything that you’re going to do beyond yourself requires collaboration.”

As illustrated with the quote above, all PSN activities require some degree of collaboration. Indeed, effective collaboration across stakeholder agencies and partners is crucial to the success of PSN. The vast majority of both interviewees and survey respondents concurred that collaboration is central to PSN. We asked survey respondents to rank how much they agreed with the statement “Collaboration is a key component of this PSN initiative.” Eight (67%) strongly agreed with the statement and the four remaining respondents agreed with it.

Figure 3: Perceptions about collaboration



Nearly all of the interviewees also indicated that collaboration occurred, both during Task Force meetings as well as outside of them, in order to implement the tasks. There was, however, one exception. This participant indicated that while there was sharing of information during Task Force meetings, he never had contact or collaborated with anyone outside of Task Force meetings:

Interviewer: “Did you establish any formal or informal data-sharing protocols, or information sharing with other agencies?”

Interviewee: “As it relates to PSN? No.”

Interviewer: “Okay, and not even—not even as it necessarily relates to PSN, but maybe [you] met people or agencies that you didn't work with previously through PSN, that maybe now you work with?”

Interviewee: “No.”

Interviewer: “Okay. So no new connections made?”

Interviewee: “No. Other than at that meeting.”

Interviewer: “Okay. So you never talked to anybody outside of the meetings?”

Interviewee: “No.”

Who collaborates

As anticipated in the grant proposal, a variety of individuals representing diverse agencies and organizations participated in PSN. While most people joined the Task Force due to the outreach efforts of USAO's law enforcement coordinator, other people became involved with PSN through outreach conducted by Task Force partners.

Based on attendance at Task Force meetings, PSN members include law enforcement from all levels (tribal, municipal, county, state, and federal); representatives from prosecutors' offices at the tribal, state, and federal level; representatives from tribal courts; juvenile and adult state probation and parole; and adult federal parole. Besides these criminal justice-related agencies, community health representatives from municipal, tribal, and county agencies attended meetings, as did representatives from the Armed Forces; the outreach provider; youth, family, and community service providers; the fiscal agent; the media partner; and a research partner.

While not all agencies were represented at each meeting, a core group of members regularly and actively engaged in implementing the initiative, as reflected in the Progress Reports submitted to DOJ and by attendance at Task Force meetings. We did note some attrition in attendance at the meetings over time; however, the agencies with primary responsibility for implementing specific tasks continued to meet. Further, while the individuals who represent each core agency may have changed over time, the agency or organization itself typically continued to be represented.

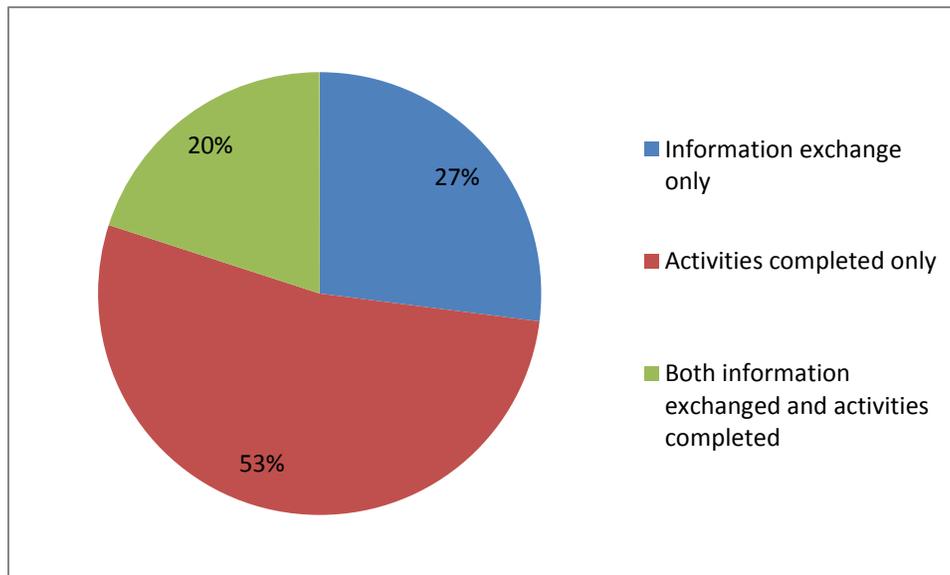
Importantly, partnerships were not limited to those who attended Task Force meetings. Instead, individuals relied on resources from their own agencies and their existing partnerships, and actively sought additional collaborative relationships in order to implement PSN tasks. This included a wide variety of agencies, groups, and individuals.

Most of the partners listed in the original grant proposal participated in PSN. There were some differences (e.g., Sandia Pueblo was originally listed but did not participate), and some may have had less participation than originally conceptualized, but the vast majority of agencies listed did participate.

Nature and scope of collaboration

We asked both survey respondents and interviewees to describe the nature of the collaboration that occurred. Their responses primarily fell into two categories: collaboration to complete activities and information exchange (including intelligence, data, contacts, and general information). We coded the information from both the surveys and the interviews and summarized these in the pie chart below. As can be seen there, 53% (N=8) of participants described collaboration as occurring as a result of the activities completed; 27% (N=4) described collaboration as information sharing or intelligence exchange; while 20% (N=3) described it as both. In this section, we describe the nature of the collaboration that occurred.

Figure 4: Nature of collaboration



Completion of activities

While all activities required some degree of collaboration, the extent of collaboration and number of partnerships was greatest for Camp Triumph. Planning and operating the camps required coordination of effort and assistance from a multitude of individuals and agencies. Law enforcement officers from the county, tribal, state, and federal levels participated in the camps, as did individuals from the Armed Forces and the USAO, among others. Besides those staffing the camps, other resources were secured. Coordinators solicited assistance from schools,

community health providers, community volunteers, tribal government (e.g., tribal council members, the governor, and various divisions), social services, and businesses. Planning the event required anticipating and attending to students' needs, such as ensuring the children had food and water each day, providing transportation if needed, and general safety concerns besides planning and staffing activities and education. The contributions from the various partners ranged from donations of food/snacks, preparing and serving food, allowing the use of facilities to host the event or for specific activities, facilitating promotion of the event, education, mentoring, transportation, and monetary support to cover those things not covered with PSN funds.

As indicated in the previous sections, other educational and intervention activities required collaboration across agencies. Provision of anti-gun and gang education within the schools required developing a partnership with schools in order to provide that service within the schools. In addition, the prevention specialist sometimes conducts the presentations with others (e.g., the USAO). OPT OUT involved collaboration between law enforcement, probation and parole, and service providers. Service providers met with the youth and offered assistance to them and their families, including providing pro-social activities in the community.

Law enforcement activities involved collaboration across agencies. For example, municipal police worked with federal and state agencies to conduct operations targeted at gangs and guns. Besides maximizing resources, effective collaboration is crucial to ensure the success of the operation and the safety of all those involved:

“If you’re working on an operation, there’s a whole mechanism of deconfliction, so that you have to know who all the players are, the timing, when things are going to take place, so that [your] objective is met, whatever the objective of that operation might be. And you have safety for everybody involved. You have officer safety, you have community safety. You’ve got to make sure that you’re collaborating, and what collaboration at a more top management level is that how you can align your strategic objectives, how you can save resources.”

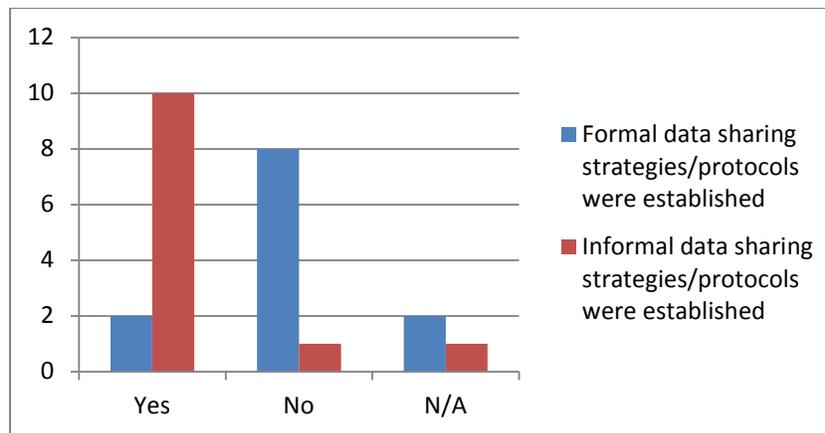
Reentry efforts also involve collaboration and partnerships. As noted previously, Isleta’s Pueblo Justice Healing Circle staff actively identified partners and is working with multiple partners. One participant summed up Isleta’s progress as follows:

“Right now, it’s in the planning and almost execution phase, the tribe’s multidisciplinary team that is overseeing this reentry project has formed kind of an oversight steering kind of group headed up by the Isleta Police Department, which is doing an excellent job, they’re working with, collaborating with the tribal court, and all the various other community agencies, intra-tribal agencies like behavioral health, social services, Department of Education, and so forth.”

Information exchanged

This PSN project was intended to facilitate information and intelligence sharing protocols. We asked survey respondents whether they/their agencies established formal or informal data-sharing protocols due to PSN. As displayed in the chart below, we found that while formal data sharing was reported by only two respondents, most respondents (N=10) indicated that they shared data or information informally.

Figure 5: Establishment of formal and informal data sharing protocols



Further, interviewees reported, and observations of meetings indicate, that informal information exchange occurred both during and outside of Task Force meetings. The type of information exchanged varied, but can be grouped into three categories: information directly related to PSN, information that addresses criminal justice topics more broadly, and general information. This is primarily based on our observations of the Task Force meetings, but is also drawn from the information provided by participants. Note, then, that information exchanged outside of Task Force meetings that was not shared with us would not be included here.

Information directly related to PSN

During Task Force meetings, we noted that individuals shared information that was directly relevant to the foci of PSN. For example, at several meetings law enforcement and other partners spoke with one another both during and after the meeting to compare information about topics such as crime trends involving gangs, drugs, and guns, and to exchange intelligence on gangs and gang members. The information exchanged during one meeting even led to the arrest of an offender.

These meetings also served as a venue for illuminating and remedying any PSN implementation challenges. For example, at one meeting a member explained the challenges his agency faced in trying to provide staff for Camp Triumph; another agency offered staff members and the law enforcement coordinator offered to assist with coordination.

Other types of PSN-relevant information exchanged included a discussion about GangNet, including who is allowed to use it and how to get training to use it. In addition, the USAO's focus on the "worst of the worst" prosecution efforts was mentioned a number of times, as noted earlier.

Communication about PSN activities often occurred outside of Task Force meetings, through email, at PSN and non-PSN related meetings, and in preparation for joint Task Force operations and activities. One respondent described the collaboration amongst law enforcement as follows:

"[T]he units that are responsible for suppressing gang activity, suppressing special crimes like drug-related and firearm crimes, those units do actively participate in our Task Force, they contribute to the cross knowledge during those times and then they communicate on their own and collaborate together on joint Task Force operations."

Likewise, those responsible for other PSN activities met both outside of Task Force meetings and exchanged information during Task Force meetings.

Criminal justice more broadly

The information exchanged sometimes also included topics that were not specific to PSN but were related to criminal justice. For example, during one meeting, a Task Force member shared that the juvenile probation and parole department had compiled a community resource book; another member asked for a copy. Some of the other topics were more general, such as who to call to get rid of graffiti, and the extent of down and out calls received followed by a discussion of possible solutions to the problem. Eligible Task Force members were encouraged to become a part of Law Enforcement Information Exchange (LInX), and members shared information on other databases available to law enforcement, as well as trainings available in the community. Members raised other issues as well, such as law enforcement response to emergency calls.

This type of information exchange was not limited to Task Force meetings. For example, one participant explained that due to her agency's connections with PSN, they were provided with the opportunity to participate in a training provided by the United States Probation and Parole Office; she reported that her agency found this very useful.

General information

During Task Force meetings, individuals had an opportunity to describe problems they see in their areas or communities which may not have been criminal justice related but provided information that would be helpful to the Task Force. For example, members described community health-related concerns, and upcoming events of interest to law enforcement or that members of the Task Force could assist with.

Collaborative training

As described in the grant proposal, one aspect of collaboration was to include collaborative training efforts. PSN provided funds for individuals from various law enforcement and criminal justice agencies to attend training offered by the New Mexico Gang Task Force (NMGTF). The NMGTF provides this training annually, though the content varies each year. The training provides law enforcement with the most up to date and comprehensive information about gangs

and violence. There is also a community member training that does not include law enforcement sensitive information. One participant described the purpose of the training as follows:

“So by training, we’re increasing law enforcement capacity to address gang issues. So we partnered with the New Mexico [Gang] Task Force to do their training. We’ve been very active in sitting on their planning committees to identify what type of training we want conducted.”

However, many people did not utilize PSN funds to attend the Gang Task Force training, even though they were able to do so and did, in fact, attend the training. In addition, the majority of survey respondents indicated that they did not engage in cooperative training in conjunction with PSN. Just four of the eleven individuals who responded to this question indicated that they did.

Figure 6: Cooperative training



Some agencies regularly attend the Gang Task Force training and may not have made a connection between PSN and the training. As one respondent explained:

“I just knew that it happens every year, and when we find out, we try to send as many folks as we can. Because it's actually good stuff, really good stuff.”

Besides the Gang Task Force training, other trainings occurred in conjunction with PSN as well, as recorded during Task Force meetings, in progress reports or in interviews. For example, the

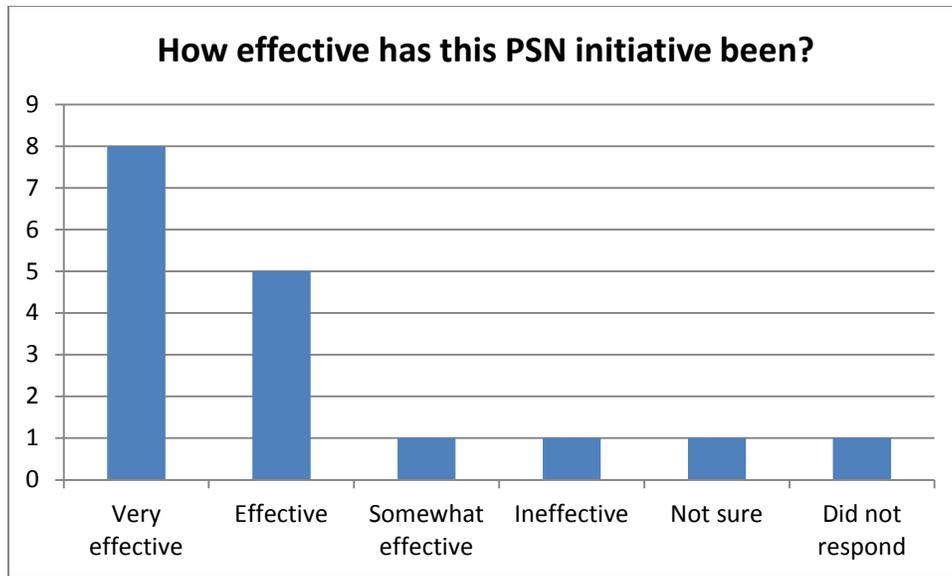
Department of Homeland Security provided training on school violence reduction. Another related training on school safety and preparedness was offered to school faculty and staff as well as law enforcement. Both of these were funded at least in part by PSN. In addition, individuals from the PSN Task Force provided a training session to build communications skills to tribal partners. Participants indicated this training was considered very helpful in reducing barriers to communication, and participants felt that these trainings would be useful in other contexts as well.

Finally, one participant noted that due to his agency's participation in PSN, he and his colleagues have engaged in intra-agency training. This agency has focused on teaching law enforcement staff about community policing, which is intended to help reduce the crime rate.

V. Perceptions of success

We asked survey respondents and interviewees how effective they thought this PSN initiative has been. The vast majority of participants indicated that PSN has been effective.¹ These results are summarized in Figure 7 below. As can be seen there, eight participants indicated it has been very effective, while five said it has been effective. One participant indicated that it has been somewhat effective, and another said it was not effective at all. Two others did not provide information about the degree of PSN’s effectiveness.

Figure 7: Perceptions of PSN’s effectiveness



We asked both survey respondents and interviewees to describe the ways in which this PSN effort has been successful. Participants provided a variety of responses. Besides direct responses to this question, many of those who were interviewed described PSN’s success

¹ We coded interview responses as “very effective” if participants used words like “very,” “extremely,” etc. If participants did not use these adjectives but indicated the project was successful, we coded it as “effective.” We coded “ineffective” responses using the same criteria.

throughout the interview. The responses indicate that PSN has been successful in the following ways: implementation of tasks; building relationships within the community; encouraging and promoting collaboration across agencies; building on existing resources and strategies; and the incorporation of local concerns and culture. We describe these in detail below.

Successful implementation of activities

We asked survey respondents whether their agency was responsible for completing specific tasks for this PSN initiative: nine agreed that they were responsible for specific tasks, two disagreed, and three indicated that this question was not applicable to them. Among those who did agree that their agency was responsible for specific tasks, seven said they were able to implement all tasks assigned. Although two respondents reported they did not complete all assigned tasks, all nine indicated that the activities they engaged in were successfully implemented. Many interviewees also indicated that PSN has been successful because the tasks were implemented well.

For example, *Camp Triumph* was considered a successful aspect of the PSN effort by multiple individuals. The immediate impact is that the children were doing something enjoyable while learning about how to avoid guns and gangs. The camp was available to children who may not typically participate in these types of activities, due to either lack of availability or because the families cannot afford to send their kids to a camp. This is important because:

“Being in that type of community there’s really nothing going on for the students in the summer. Kids are like sponges. They want to absorb information. They want friendships. They want to be doing something so having the camp and them learning and having fun...They enjoy it.”

Participants reported that the youth really liked Camp Triumph and many have asked when it will happen again. For example, the camp has become so popular in Isleta, that last year they could not accommodate all of the children who signed up. Thus, they sent some to Albuquerque’s Camp Triumph.

Participants also indicated that *reentry efforts* have been successful. Although this component of PSN began slowly, Isleta has made a lot of progress towards establishing a comprehensive

reentry strategy in a short amount of time; recent reports indicate that they are now beginning to see clients. Participants reported that Isleta has a well thought out plan that addresses the needs in their community. They are working to promote their efforts within their community, secure the support of key groups, and use informed decision-making, as well as developing a long-term sustainability plan.

Finally, respondents felt that other activities, such as OPT OUT and the law enforcement operations, were implemented well.

Building community relationships

PSN activities fostered the building of relationships. In particular, a number of different types of relationships were built among those who participated in Camp Triumph. Respondents noted that the camp encourages *team-building skills among the youth*. Beyond that, the camps were an opportunity for building trust between *law enforcement and youth*. During the camp, law enforcement officers were able to interact with the youth in a fun way, in addition to serving as mentors. Participants explained that through camp activities, youth see officers from a different perspective: as real people who are willing to do fun things with them. For example, at one camp, a Zumba instructor taught the children how to dance and:

“Even all the officers came and participated. I got pictures. I got proof.”

Another participant explained that the camps helped build relationships between youth and law enforcement, and that this provides the foundation for long-term support:

“[I]t’s a lot of interaction with the youth and the officers, building that trust...let them know that you know, we’re not just here to take people away and arrest them, and put them away, and all that. We’re here to help you—so, they bond and they build on that, it’s like a mentorship, I guess you could say, and they get close with the officers, and the officers let them know that we’re here beyond the camp as well, that if they’re ever in a situation, or need help, to call upon them if they need some sort of direction, or guidance, or something. So, it’s not just a four day thing, but it’s a thing that carries on throughout the years.”

Reiterating this point, one participant shared that the camp can even be a turning point in a young person’s life. This participant explained that one youth had been heading down the wrong road.

Through Camp Triumph, he began to engage in positive activities which continued after his participation in the camp. His attitude towards school improved, and he continues to engage with law enforcement in a positive way. While not all children may have such life-changing experiences, this anecdote exemplifies how the camp can make a difference in the lives of at-risk youth through the relationships built between youth and law enforcement.

Participants also said that due to Camp Triumph and the other ongoing educational activities provided by PSN, there are *increased ties between community members and the youth*. The camp and the Sentry outreach allow children to meet and foster relationships with trusted adults. This opens the door to having conversations about difficult subjects, and allows adults to learn what is happening in the community:

“...being able to gain the trust of the kids and to let them know you’re really there to listen to them and not to judge them.”

Finally, one participant explained that due to Camp Triumph, *community members learned more about law enforcement* and appreciated seeing them in the community. Community members were able to learn more about cross-jurisdictional boundaries, and how that limits what law enforcement is able to do. This is important because it improves understanding, and may encourage positive feelings towards law enforcement, including building trust.

Successful multi-agency collaboration

Respondents indicated that all of the activities promoted inter-agency collaboration. As one participant explained, PSN:

“...creates an environment for the collaboration of our organizations, all the participating organizations and agencies [are] enhanced by having that communication, working together, not at cross purposes, actually agreeing to pursue certain goals and objectives collaboratively. And that’s the only way that we’re going to get a handle, or get an upper hand on some of the crime objectives that we have, and are hoping to achieve.”

The collaboration that occurred due to PSN activities was considered successful by nearly all of those with whom we spoke and surveyed. We asked survey respondents to indicate how much they agreed with the statement, “Collaboration within this PSN initiative has been successful.”

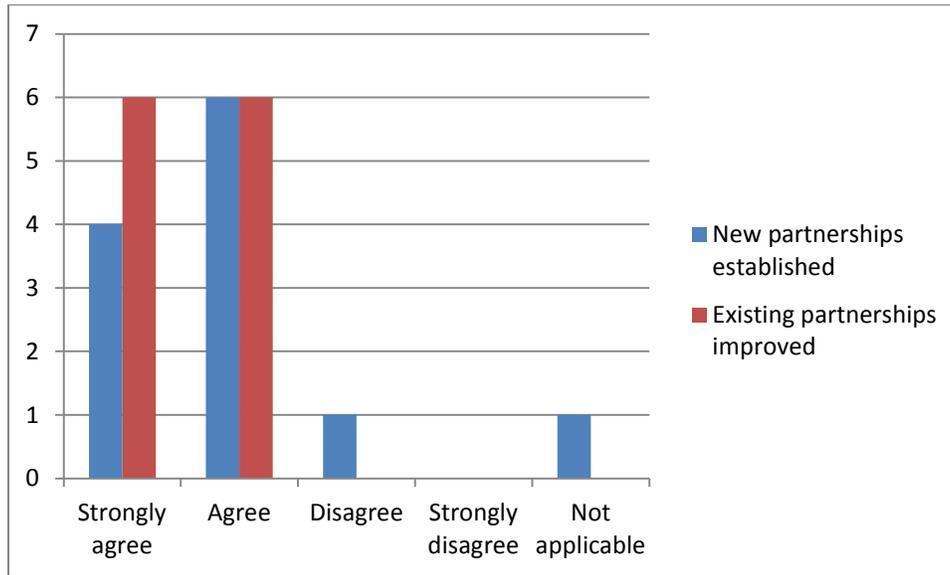
All of the survey respondents either agreed (N=7) or strongly agreed (N=5) with this statement, indicating that they view the collaboration as successful. Further, nearly all of the individuals we spoke with indicated that the collaboration has been successful; just one did not. That individual indicated that he has never been a part of the collaboration within PSN.

For the remaining interviewees and survey respondents, though, the collaboration was viewed as successful. Importantly, some of the individuals who responded have been involved with Weed & Seed or PSN for years, so attributing collaborative success to the current effort was not always possible. Instead, this was seen as the latest phase of years of effort. Despite this, participants explained many ways in which collaborations built through PSN have been successful. We describe these below.

[New partnerships established and existing partnerships strengthened](#)

Nearly all of the participants indicated that they made *new connections* due to PSN. Just one of the survey respondents reported he did not develop new collaborative relationships, and one reported N/A (see Figure 8 below). All of the interviewees indicated they made new connections through PSN, and for most, interactions occurred both within and outside of PSN meetings though for one person, interactions were limited to the meetings. The new connections were viewed as enhancing the success of activities, and in other ways. For example, several respondents noted that they now have access to the support of other agencies, and that was initiated through PSN.

Figure 8: Partnerships established and strengthened



Survey respondents and interviewees indicated that *existing* relationships were bolstered due to PSN. We asked survey respondents to rank how much they agreed with the statement, “The nature of existing partnerships/collaborations has improved as a result of this PSN initiative.” As illustrated in Figure 8 above, all of those who responded to the question either agreed (50%) or strongly agreed (50%).

Some (though not all) interview respondents also noted that the nature of existing relationships has changed. Importantly, due to their work with PSN, respondents reported that relationships have been strengthened and communication flows more freely:

“Before, things were much more structured, and now we call each other up frequently.”

And:

Interviewer: “So would you say there was a change with the pre-existing partnership with [organization] as a result of PSN?”

Interviewee: “Yeah, I believe there was a change. It was a positive change.”

Further, respondents who engaged in PSN tasks indicated the activities promoted inter-agency collaboration. Some respondents also described the trust built between agencies. By working

together in law enforcement operations, OPT OUT, or educational activities, agencies begin to rely on one another. As one participant explained:

“So when you gather everybody together and you team up to put on, say, a youth camp, well, yes, the immediate objective is the youth camp, but really what’s taking place is you’re building trust amongst agencies.”

Collaboration leads to more collaboration/resources

Importantly, collaboration was not limited by the grant or to PSN activities. This was explained most clearly by one participant who said:

“I think one of the main things that Project Safe Neighborhoods has been able to accomplish over the years is that we’ve brought different agencies together. We meet on a regular basis, but I think what has happened is that we’ve been successful in creating partnerships outside of the PSN structure.”

Indeed, we found many examples of these partnerships. For instance, due to the partnerships made through PSN, CYFD learned about Isleta’s reentry program. Their interest in supporting juvenile reentry led to additional funding for Isleta. These funds allowed Isleta to expand the efforts begun with PSN to include a focus on youth that extends beyond gun and gang involvement; therefore, this partnership enhanced the PSN efforts.

We noted during Task Force meetings that partners appeared comfortable requesting assistance from other partners, and that typically those requests were honored; these requests occurred outside of Task Force meetings as well. For instance, due to their participation in Camp Triumph, the National Guard has become a resource for other community events in tribal areas. Similarly, law enforcement agencies have engaged with their PSN partners to complete joint operations outside of the scope of PSN. Task Force members have shared physical resources as well. For example, county law enforcement shared air support resources with one of the tribal partners.

The partnerships that have been formed also result in shared information. As one participant explained:

“And, being able to have somebody that you can contact, even if it’s on a one-to-one basis, to provide some information, and say hey, we can work with your officers, or your investigators...But, it’s just being able to have those resources, that really make it easier for your job, to do something, whether it’s investigating, whether it’s some sort of crime prevention program, that you have all that there. And, that’s something that we take hold of, and said, you know what? It’s available, so let’s make it useful, as much as we can.”

Respondents said that through the connections they made, they were able to obtain data, learn how other agencies operate, and gain knowledge that was useful to them in their work. In addition, PSN provided the opportunity for intra-agency education. For example, one participant noted that due to PSN, his agency was able to educate law enforcement officers about gun and gang crime.

However, the sharing of information is not limited to PSN partners. For example, agencies not involved in PSN have learned about PSN and have reached out to Task Force members to learn how to implement those efforts in their own communities. In particular, respondents explained that other tribes have expressed interest in implementing Camp Triumph in their own communities. Thus, there is a ripple effect: people see the success of Camp Triumph and want to bring it to their own communities. This is important because it provides an opportunity for the creation of new partnerships between PSN and non-PSN partners, and for others to emulate the success of PSN and build their own local collaborations.

Successfully built on existing strategies and knowledge

Several participants noted that this PSN effort built on lessons learned from earlier efforts and incorporated strategies known to work. Several participants connected this PSN initiative to earlier Weed & Seed efforts, as illustrated by the quote below:

“I think PSN really is the stage two of the Weed & Seed program, and Weed & Seed was a strategy that looked at weeding out crime and seeding positive growth. And so it incorporated the law enforcement efforts, it incorporates community oriented policing, it incorporates prevention, intervention, and treatment, and then it also is neighborhood restoration...And so what PSN did is it took those components...It wasn’t just about doing the prosecutions, it was involved in, and of course it’s always done law enforcement coordination, but it was really moving out toward building partnerships, those collaborations,

working on combined strategic efforts, accountability, training, so it brought in all of those things, all of those same components that Weed & Seed was really all about.”

This PSN initiative also incorporated the G.R.E.A.T. program and Project Exile. Moreover, in some cases, not only were existing strategies used, they were expanded. For example, law enforcement officers who typically operate undercover were able to work in a marked capacity. Another respondent noted that she and others expanded OPT OUT under PSN. While OPT OUT is something that county law enforcement provides regularly, under PSN, the partners were able to successfully build on that program:

“We worked together to bring a new twist to the OPT OUT program, working with community agencies as well as private organizations to reach out to at-risk youth.”

Similarly, Isleta’s Pueblo Justice Healing Circle intends to build on existing community resources and other PSN efforts. For example, they intend to utilize former Camp Triumph youth as leaders in youth groups as part of their prevention efforts. Participants explained that the organization aims to incorporate this into services currently provided:

“The whole idea is [for the Pueblo Justice Healing Circle] to work collaboratively with Isleta Behavioral Health, with their youth prevention worker. Why have two youth groups when you can have one strong one?”

Respondents suggested that PSN was successful in reducing duplicative efforts, aligning objectives to save resources, and working collaboratively to strengthen existing resources.

Successful incorporation of community needs and culture

One of the features of PSN generally is that it is intended to be flexible enough to reflect the needs of the community in which it is being implemented. Participants described various ways in which this PSN effort reflects the needs of each community it works in and incorporates the existing culture.

One example is Camp Triumph. Participants’ descriptions of Camp Triumph included not only the key components of anti-gang and gun messages, it also included discussions of cultural

values as described previously. Thus, Camp Triumph can be tailored to reflect community needs, values, and culture.

Likewise, when a reentry program was initially considered for piloting in Isleta, participants indicated that the program was intended to be adapted to fit the community. As one respondent explained:

“We’re not saying, ‘Oh, this’ll work for you.’ We’re saying, ‘Well, let’s look at the principles that are working there and let’s look at what your court system has and see whether or not we can pilot a reentry program.’”

Respondents indicate that the reentry efforts in Isleta reflect not only Isleta’s needs, but also integrate their court system and their cultural values. Importantly, the Pueblo Justice Healing Circle staff intend to draw on Isleta’s cultural norms and values to assist and motivate offenders to change, and include families in the process, emphasizing their communal-based society. The name of the program, Pueblo Justice Healing Circle, reflects the holistic nature of the program as it encompasses more than “reentry” as typically conceived:

“And then, like I said, the reason [the name was changed] is because [the program is] covering more than reentry. Because when you heard reentry, it’s, ‘Why are you asking about truancy? Why are you asking about behavioral health?’ Well, it covers that. Most importantly, I think when you’re dealing with reentry, you’re not just dealing with one individual, you’re dealing with the whole family.”

VI. Success facilitators

Throughout the interviews, participants described those things that facilitated the success of PSN, including collaboration. Importantly, the facilitators we list below are not always mutually exclusive, and indeed, may build on one another.

Task Force meetings

Although planning for operations and other activities generally did not occur during Task Force meetings, many people indicated that Task Force meetings did facilitate collaboration. For example:

Interviewer: “You said that the PSN meetings helped to facilitate coordination? Could you elaborate on that?”

Interviewee: “Well, I think that's where I made more of a relationship with [agency 1] where we actually were able to get out with them. I actually was able to meet some of the folks from [agency 2] and we have an upcoming plan to get together and do some operations with them, so—and [agency 3] too.”

Many respondents reiterated that the Task Force meetings are an important networking venue; these meetings allow people to meet each other, learn about resources, solicit assistance, and facilitate the development of relationships:

“I know that when we have our Task Force meetings, the individuals that are in attendance get to know each other better. And they, I think the points of contact, the contact information is improved, people find out at these Task Force meetings where they need to go with perhaps issues that they're dealing with, and didn't know exactly where to turn, or that there was indeed even somebody that they could be able to work with on particular issues. So the networking is very valuable, and that, and then once that happens...they can on their own, and usually do, develop their own relationships, and collaborations. So that's one of, I think, the most valuable aspects of our Task Force.”

One participant felt that the Task Force is no longer necessary:

“We're at that point where we...don't need this Task Force. The Task Force has done its job. Now people are coming together on their own and programs are being sustained, and that is wonderful....”

While other participants did indicate that people are indeed working together on their own, many participants felt the Task Force meetings were very helpful. Further, among survey respondents, when asked what helped to facilitate collaboration, attending the Task Force meetings was the most common response. Therefore, these meetings are important for maintaining and strengthening those relationships.

Willingness to seek, provide, and accept assistance

While not directly stated by respondents, it was clear that collaboration was facilitated by individuals proactively reaching out to others. For example, one respondent explained his willingness to attend meetings, even traveling long distances, to find others to assist with PSN activities. Other respondents engaged in similar activities, as well as calling people and approaching individuals to request assistance.

In addition, a willingness to provide assistance is key to facilitating success. For example, at one of the camps, organizers discovered they did not have enough water for the day. The tribal police loaded up with bottles of water and brought them to the camp. Others described how partners provided resources, material and human, when others could not assist or to supplement available resources. In addition, some respondents expressed their keen interest in sharing what they have learned with others who could benefit, which facilitates the success of the project overall.

Besides soliciting and offering assistance, agencies must be willing to take advantage of the opportunities available. As one participant explained, organizations must understand that PSN and those involved in it are there to help:

“They’re not here to take over, they’re here to help. They’re here to give you what they can; you don’t know that until you ask. I think that’s one of the positive things, because I’ve seen, in nothing but the PSN, I was like, how can we help you? Or, how can you help us?”

Understanding other agencies and communities

The interviews also illustrated that it is important to understand each agency. Each agency has strengths, priorities, and limitations that may influence what they are able to provide in terms of collaboration. For example, one respondent explained:

“And it also helps people to understand the, what’s important to each organization, because then they bring that to the table. They bring what their priorities are...Maybe they’re answering to a commission or to city council or another board, so they’re bringing that to the table as you’re collaborating. And they do have a better understanding as to, oh yeah, they can do it or they can’t do it or their hands are tied in a particular area, and then you don’t say, ‘Well, they just don’t want to play ball.’ You have a better understanding.”

Having a good understanding of the agencies encourages trust between organizations, helps people to be responsive to the needs of the other agencies/organizations, and facilitates collaboration. This insight may be facilitated by the Task Force meetings as individuals become more familiar with each other’s agencies.

Besides understanding organizational perspectives, others shared that it is also important to be sensitive and knowledgeable about the communities PSN is working in. For example, when preparing for Camp Triumph, participants needed to know everything from the options available for hosting the camp to how to solicit volunteers effectively:

“A lot of times with native small communities in order to build relationships with them you have to be visual. You have to be interactive and you have to go above...sometimes above and beyond what you want to do. You have to...it’s really about commitment; being committed and spending extra time.”

It is also important to understand whether a particular community or area has the resources and infrastructure available to support the proposed activities. Knowing what is and is not available allows people to plan and implement accordingly.

Leadership

Participants described the importance of having people who take the lead to move each component of the project forward. For example, one respondent described that they:

“...found that driver; I guess you could say, to drive the program. And, it’s not gonna go anywhere. So, that’s a real important key to have, is that person who’s gonna be that driver for you to make it happen.”

These “drivers” have the ability and background necessary to complete the tasks assigned, and typically have connections that they can draw from to complete the PSN work. Additionally, respondents explained that having someone who really cares about the issues, particularly as they pertain to each community, is key. Similarly, some participants explained that it is very helpful to have individuals from each community who assist with the initiative; these people show their commitment both to PSN and to their communities. As one participant explained, individuals from the community carry more weight than those from the outside.

Besides having someone responsible for implementation, participants also said that it is important that the leadership within each partner agency is supportive of the project, as illustrated by the exchange below:

Interviewer: “What has helped to implement the initiative?”

Interviewee: “The leadership of our partner agencies. I feel like everybody believes in the strategy of what PSN’s objectives are, they put forth tons of resources, because PSN only funds a portion of what we do. This really is the organizations that do all the heavy lifting, and so their willingness to commit human resources, physical resources, financial resources, everything.”

Finally, several people noted that it was helpful to have a single organization (the USAO) take the lead and/or that the law enforcement coordinator from the USAO was an important project facilitator. Participants explained that among other things, the law enforcement coordinator acted as a “liaison” with other agencies/organizations to coordinate activities and identify individuals who could be the drivers described above.

Other

In addition to these facilitators, participants indicated that other things helped to facilitate the initiative. One is the importance of funding, particularly for Camp Triumph. In addition, others noted that a need for information or a desire to help facilitated collaboration, as did the structure of working as a team.

VII. Project challenges

Although PSN has been successful in a number of ways, there are some challenges that impede the implementation of project activities, or limit the collaboration and impact of the program.

Although these challenges are often outside the control of those who are working on the initiative, it is important to understand the framework within which people are operating. Here we describe the barriers to collaboration as expressed by interviewees and survey respondents.

Communication

Although communication has been very successful in a variety of ways during this PSN project, there are still areas where communication could be strengthened. Communication barriers were noted both within agencies and across agencies.

Within-agency communication barriers

Some participants explained that communication within organizations needed to be improved. For at least one participant, this resulted in a lack of knowledge of PSN-related activities occurring within his agency:

“I couldn't tell you what PSN was doing...there was no communication sharing, even within our own department.”

He further explained that if there were any PSN-funded activities, he was not aware of it. Instead, he only observed “*business as usual.*”

Although Task Force members do report on their activities during meetings, it was not always clear which of those activities were PSN-funded or backed.

Across agency communication

Respondents also indicated that communication between some agencies is more formal than it has been in the past due to inter-agency constraints. Rather than having the ability to freely communicate, there are additional steps or protocols that must be followed:

“I do believe that the collaboration is there. It’s not as fluid, just like you can’t just say, ‘Oh, I’m just going to call up,’ you know. But it’s definitely there. And I think it’s because that foundation is there.”

Despite that hurdle, as explained above, the communication between agencies is still occurring but it can make communication slightly more difficult. Thus, this is less of a barrier than a challenge that must be navigated.

Lack of inter-agency communication may have limited the participation of some agencies in PSN activities. For example, one participant suggested that his agency may not have participated in particular PSN activities due to lack of communication between agencies:

“I would say it would be a lack of maybe communication between the two because I think if we maybe were able to communicate with each other or if we did just communicate with each other more and we knew more about it, maybe we would participate.”

Note, however, that there may have been other issues at play that inhibited full participation.

Finally, one participant noted that due to inadequate communication, sometimes people did not follow through with PSN activities they were assigned to complete. This respondent explained that while tasks were assigned, no one followed up with each person/agency to ensure each was prepared and that all was going as planned. This required others to step in at the last minute to complete these tasks. This can also limit continued collaboration, as such agencies may not be perceived as reliable partners.

Need additional partners

Respondents noted that it would be helpful to have additional partners represented at the Task Force meetings. For example, while the Outreach Coordinator from the District Attorney’s office was present at the meetings, it would be beneficial to have an attorney attend or at least to meet with PSN law enforcement partners:

“—if you really want to make it work, we have to have buy-in from the District Attorney’s office...So if there’s grant money, they should be part of that too because they struggle with having the bodies, committing people to handle those

types of cases...So I mean if you really want to be successful on this, you have to have a commitment from the ones who are putting these people away.”

Others suggested that there may be other individuals or organizations that should be part of the Task Force, but did not identify specifically who those partners would be.

Limited time

Some participants noted that time is a barrier. First, the short-term nature of the grant creates challenges to implementation. The original grant period was only two years, but grant activities did not begin in earnest until several months after the award was made. This is a limited window for engaging all of the agencies, creating subcontracts or MOUs, and implementation. Some activities are especially impacted by the length of the grant. For example, reentry was a new component of PSN and was built from “the ground up.” Law enforcement operations may also be impacted. As was explained to us, the success of some operations may vary depending on the season of the year in which they are implemented; delays in receiving funding can result in missed opportunities. Further, because the grant is short-term, it requires staff who have the experience and/or skills required to implement the activities quickly.

Second, it is especially important to be cognizant of the nature of establishing a formal relationship between tribal and non-tribal communities. Even though the tribal entities may be interested in participating in PSN, it takes time to develop MOUs or other formal agreements as these typically must be approved by the tribal council. Time can prevent tribal partners from fully participating in PSN; establishing this government-to-government relationship is much more complex than creating an agency-to-agency agreement.

Resource constraints

Participants described a number of resource constraints. Note that these do not impede the implementation of the initiative, but do limit the program in some ways. These include program capacity, human resource and job constraints, community resource limitations, and funding.

Capacity

One of these constraints is capacity, particularly as it relates to the educational activities. For example, one participant explained:

“[T]he only thing that I think is a downfall is, you have to limit the amount of kids that are participating in this camp.”

This speaks to the success of the camps, as the concerns about capacity occurred after the first year the camp was held. However, this does indicate that PSN may have been able to reach more children if the resources (both human and financial) were available to do so.

Human resources and job constraints

PSN activities are often completed in addition to participants’ typical job duties, which sets some limits on the time these partners can devote to PSN and may limit collaboration. For example, one respondent noted that he was not always able to attend Task Force meetings and felt that this was a barrier to collaboration. Similarly, one participant explained that he was not always able to go out and make the contacts needed:

“[C]ollaboration was difficult because I wasn’t always able to have permission to travel to an event or to provide information to an event from our program.”

Human resources and job constraints can also limit the extent to which members can participate in PSN activities. For example, a participant relayed that one agency was not able to participate in Camp Triumph due to other obligations. Fortunately, another agency was able to step in. In another instance, one law enforcement agency was never able to participate in Camp Triumph, at least in part due to resource limitations. While this is understandable, it is unfortunate given the current negative press that law enforcement has received. Law enforcement engagement in activities like Camp Triumph can build community relationships and improve perceptions of officers. Lack of sufficient staff and other limited resources to work on PSN has created challenges that make it difficult to complete the activities, though participants report that they have been able to work within those constraints.

Limited human resources can minimize the impact of activities. For instance, one of the important components of PSN's Camp Triumph is the relationship that is formed between law enforcement and the youth in the community. In some locations, that relationship continues after Camp Triumph. However, in other locations, this is limited because there are so few police officers available, though the youth do connect with other adults in the community:

“But the other law enforcement officers that are able to help, they only see them maybe once or twice throughout the whole year because they’re...[agency] police because I said earlier they are so spread out so they don’t really see them at all that often throughout the year so they really just identify with familiar faces that they see.”

Community resources

One participant explained that the lack of resources in the community can also inhibit the success of PSN activities. For example, while OPT OUT partners provide some options for at-risk students for some time, there are not long-term aftercare opportunities. The respondent explained that the students need something to keep them away from the gang atmosphere and keep them engaged once they have been able to begin the process.

Funding

While there was funding available in the PSN grant for program activities, that funding did not cover all of the costs associated with activities. For example, while PSN paid for overtime for the officers to participate in Camp Triumph, respondents noted that they received donations from various organizations, agencies, and individuals to implement it. This included not only those from the community who volunteered to provide funds and goods, but also those agencies involved with PSN who ended up paying some of the costs. This can create a burden on the agencies participating in PSN.

At the same time, some agencies did not use the funding available to them. For example, there were funds available for qualified individuals to attend training by the NMGTF. While it appears those people did attend the Gang Task Force training, the agency did not request reimbursement for the cost.

Finally, one participant explained that the funds may not be reaching all of the people within agencies that could use it:

“[T]he carrot is that money. And when that money is attached to equipment, training, and overtime, you're going to get results. Because those are things that we need and we want. But how that money gets to where it needs to go so people can actually use it, maybe that's a breakdown.”

Turnover

While some turnover within agencies is expected, it can limit collaboration and hinder project activities. First, turnover in administration/leadership is a barrier:

“...as far as barriers to communication, if you want to nail it down, it's usually administration or leadership changes, reestablishing relationships when you have a new sheriff that's elected, a new tribal council that comes onboard, or [a] new Pueblo governor, or....”

When that occurs, the relationship with that agency may have to be reestablished. Moreover, it can directly impede progress or impair the implementation of planned PSN activities:

“[M]ost recently there was such a change in leadership with a lot of our partners, critical partners, like with the [agency]...so it has created a huge void on that piece, and a lot of our operations were going to be managed through the [agency], and the training as well that is managed through [agency]...I think that that has created a huge void in our ability to move forward on our gang activities...but now we're going to see what we need to do to make sure that we don't fall short of our objectives.”

Staff turnover has other ramifications as well. Although the agencies continue to be represented, new representatives may not be fully aware of PSN activities. In addition, due to turnover at another agency, data that was once available widely is no longer available. However, in one case, turnover actually resulted in more representation by that agency at Task Force meetings.

Constraints on information sharing

Participants noted that there are limitations to the intelligence and data that can be shared. These limitations can influence the project in a variety of ways. First, although the Task Force meetings are a venue for the sharing of information, there are limitations regarding the type and

amount of information that can be shared there. As one participant explained, any sensitive information or information that only can be released by someone at a higher level could not be shared in that venue. While sensitive information could be exchanged among select individuals outside of the meetings, this could potentially limit collaboration.

In addition to the sharing of intelligence, the sharing of data is also limited. Data is needed for planning purposes, assessment, and for securing additional funding. Often, obtaining data is challenging. In some cases, agencies that have the data are hesitant to share it:

“One of the challenges to that that we had, I think, is our data. Is trying to collect that data...It does get challenging at times, because working with other programs that don’t really understand what you’re trying to do, and where you’re going with the project. That I think is probably, just like how we could educate those programs more in letting them know, this is what we’re doing, and this is probably how we’re going to do it.”

Sometimes the barriers are due to the limitations of data systems:

“[D]ata sharing, it’s interesting because we have so many different organizations that keep records and data in their own fashion, in their own systems. It’s always been a challenge to extract relevant data for our Task Force purposes. That’s a continuing process, but at least we have that, raised that as an issue. We raise that as a topic for discussion during the meetings and I believe it’s been fruitful.”

In addition, the process to engage in data sharing with tribal agencies is much more complicated than typical agency-to-agency data sharing. For example, one participant explained that in order for tribal partners to use databases like GangNet or LInX:

“It takes negotiation based on their sovereignty requirements and their tribal law, laws and statutes. It’s not just a matter of, like most agencies the head of the agency can sign an agreement and it has to go through the whole legislative process, through the tribal council and the administrations.”

This places limits on the amount of information exchange that can occur.

Dosage is a barrier

Dosage, particularly of the law enforcement activities, is also a challenge. While there was a target area that was prioritized, participants suggested that not all operations occurred there.

Rather, locations were selected based on law enforcement threat assessment, so the activities could be anywhere in the Bernalillo County metropolitan area and surrounding communities. Further, the operations appeared to spread out over time. While this is appropriate within this grant, it may dilute the impact of these operations in terms of notable crime reduction in the short-term. Indeed, some respondents indicated that the law enforcement operations may have little to no impact on crime rates beyond what typical law enforcement activities would produce. As one respondent explained:

“And I think really when it’s all said and done, when you say, ‘Well, how many guns did you take off the street? How many gang crimes, violence, did you have an impact on?’ Well, those numbers aren’t so impressive, but it’s really, this is building up trust in your community. Community trust is huge, and trust amongst agencies, breaking down those silos between what is public safety and public health. I think we have done a wonderful job of doing that.”

At the same time, it is important to point out that it is not only law enforcement operations that can have an impact on the crime rate. McGarrell, Kroovand Hipple, Corsaro, Bynum, Perez, Zimmermann, and Garmo (2009) found that PSN sites with higher implementation dosage had lower rates of violent crime. Notably, they measured dosage using a combination of factors: federal prosecution, collaborative implementation, and research integration into strategic planning. They also examined crime rates by level of federal prosecution alone, and found the same inverse relationship. Thus, if other components of the PSN initiative are strong (e.g., increased federal prosecution rates), then we may expect to see a decline in violent crime rates.

Dosage was also noted as a limitation of the educational outreach as well, though to a lesser degree. For example, one participant explained that in order to be truly effective, there needs to be ongoing education beyond Camp Triumph. However, there have been additional educational presentations throughout the year in each community. Whether all of the same children who attended Camp Triumph also hear these messages is unknown, but we would expect there would be some overlap between those who attended Camp Triumph and those who attend the additional presentations. It is important for the children to hear the messages more than once in order to remember and potentially internalize them.

Lack of gang legislation

In addition to the limitations noted above, participants identified the lack of gang legislation as a challenge. This makes it difficult to combat gang crime as well as to report what has been accomplished:

“I the biggest thing in PSN for New Mexico is the fact that we don’t have gang legislation. So how we tackle or how we combat gang crime, gang violence, makes it difficult without that legislation. And so when we report, you know, it’s always that fuzzy area. It’s just like, ‘Well this is how we’re defining. This is how our partners have defined.’ And we use the definition that’s given by the Gang Task Force that they have developed. But again, throughout the state, each judicial district is approaching it differently. Each law enforcement organization will approach what is a gang crime or violation, how they look at that is different, so it makes it difficult.”

VIII. Conclusion and recommendations

The evidence indicates that, overall, each component of the PSN initiative has been implemented. Camp Triumph was successfully implemented in several locations (Isleta, To'hajiilee, and Albuquerque). It reached numerous children, included the Native American population, and incorporated aspects that reflected culture and concerns of areas. Further, participants unanimously agreed that children enjoyed the camp and it was even reported to be a turning point for at least one child. Law enforcement also reaped benefits. It was an opportunity for law enforcement to be viewed positively; for community members to learn more about law enforcement; and for law enforcement and children to engage in positive interactions, which may extend beyond the camp. Moreover, through Camp Triumph and additional Project Sentry outreach, children had the opportunity to interact with trusted adults (non-law enforcement). Children learn they can trust these adults and use them as a resource when needed; adults learn about what problems are going on in the community among the youth. Finally, it was an opportunity to build trust and networking among agencies.

Other PSN activities were also successfully implemented. Both OPT OUT and the law enforcement operations occurred. Both were able to incorporate elements that were outside of typical operations and include partners who had not worked together previously. Moreover, law enforcement is clearly aware of what is required to build a successful case for federal prosecution. Although this is likely an ongoing effort that began before this iteration of PSN was implemented, it was emphasized and continued during this grant period.

The reentry component of the initiative made substantial progress. Isleta's Pueblo Justice Healing Circle staff used informed decision-making to understand the problems surrounding recidivism and craft solutions, created a plan for the program, actively identified and engaged with potential partners, and created a resource manual for returning inmates. Recent reports indicate they have begun seeing clients, so the reentry component has moved from the planning stages to implementation.

In general, collaboration was a successful component of this initiative. Both the law enforcement coordinator and Task Force members identified and sought out partners. Most

participants formed new partnerships and/or strengthened existing partnerships, which were fostered at Task Force meetings, but agencies also collaborated on their own. The nature of the collaboration was centered on completing activities, which involved strategic planning, and exchange of information, which occurred during and outside of Task Force meetings. Some collaborative training occurred as well. Finally, the collaboration established as part of PSN is extending beyond PSN activities.

Some limitations and challenges were identified as well. These include communication barriers both within and between agencies, which can influence the outcomes of this PSN initiative. Other challenges include: time, resource constraints, turnover within agencies, limits on data/information sharing, dosage, lack of gang legislation, and the need for additional partners.

In this final section, we provide some recommendations for the project as it moves forward over the next few months, for future iterations, and for sustainment of the progress made.

Areas for improvement and suggestions for sustainability

We asked respondents how PSN could be improved. Many of their suggestions directly addressed the barriers listed previously. Other suggestions were also offered. Based on the feedback from Task Force members and other data, we have compiled a list of recommendations. Some of the recommendations are applicable to the remainder of the project; others are ways to improve the project should PSN be funded in the future. While we have separated recommendations into these two categories, there can be some overlap. Finally, we summarized suggestions that pertain to sustainability. These recommendations include the following and are described in more detail below:

- Recommendations for current project
 - Improve accessibility of Task Force meetings
 - Include/clarify subjects in Task Force meetings
 - Address follow-up
 - Offer communication training
- Recommendations for future projects

- Create a mission statement with partners
- Prepare for grant delays
- Increase dosage
- Increase assessment
- Sustainability
 - Continue to meet
 - Increase strategic planning
 - Consider avenues for funding

Recommendations for current project

Increase Task Force meeting accessibility

Many respondents indicated that the Task Force meetings are a valuable forum for the exchange of information and fostering relationships with other agencies. Some members offered suggestions to improve the accessibility of the meetings. Several respondents indicated that it would be helpful to have *more frequent meetings* and to have them in *different locations*. For example, one participant suggested both:

“I was just thinking that it seems like we meet so far and few between that I think that if we met more, I don't know, maybe people would be more vested in it and then I'm thinking just different spots in the city because, you know, every time I'm having to go downtown to meet there in this secure building that I have to check into and then go up. I mean, it sounds petty but why not meet in different locations and make it easier for different folks to show up and not so difficult?”

It may be helpful to poll the Task Force membership to ask how often they would like to meet. Another option would be to have more frequent meetings with specific groups, such as law enforcement, and larger group meetings less frequently, depending on what the Task Force members would find most useful. Although at least one respondent felt that it was no longer necessary for the USAO to continue to coordinate meetings, many others indicated that it has been beneficial to have the USAO lead these meetings. Thus, it would be beneficial for the USAO to continue supporting the Task Force meetings, and at the same time, intentionally

prepare other agencies to assume that role. In addition, multiple respondents suggested meeting in different locations. As illustrated with the quote above, this may encourage others to participate and increase commitment to the project. Two participants noted that they were not always able to attend meetings; one of those suggested that *meeting minutes be provided* to those who miss the meetings.

Task Force meeting topics

Participants also had suggestions for the content of the meetings. One suggested that it would be beneficial to use the meeting time to consider which individuals or agencies are not involved in PSN but would be helpful to include.

In addition, respondents were not always clear about how grant money was being used and the immediate results of those efforts:

“I felt that we should be talking about more of hey, this is what we did and this is the area we hit and these are the results and this is where we're headed with this.”

As illustrated in the quote above, there are three pieces of information that would be helpful to clarify during Task Force meetings. First is to ensure that members describe the PSN activities completed, and make clear that they are PSN-backed or funded efforts. It must also be clear that when partners provide updates and information about activities that are not PSN-related, that it is clear that this is supplemental information. Note, though, that the format of the agenda from the most recent meeting does clearly differentiate between PSN-funded and non-PSN activities. We expect that this format will be beneficial to Task Force members. By specifying how grant money is being utilized, the limitations of within-agency communication with respect to PSN activities would be addressed. In addition, it may help to clarify how everyone fits together and each agency's role in PSN as it was apparent during the interviews that this was not always clear.

The second component is to provide information about the immediate results of each PSN activity. This would provide transparency about how each effort is going and what has been accomplished. In some cases, these discussions may be law enforcement sensitive, so including an option for periodic law enforcement only meetings is important. Over the project period, a

law enforcement only meeting occurred once after a regular Task Force meeting. It may be beneficial to incorporate this more often or at least provide the option on an as needed basis. In general, reports about activities that were not law enforcement sensitive did occur regularly.

The third piece of information is explaining what the next steps will be. Again, in some cases, this may involve law enforcement sensitive information. Partners did report on upcoming activities, though it may not have always been clear that these were PSN-related as describe previously.

Address follow-up

While not a pervasive problem, respondents did tell us that follow-up was a problem in a couple of ways. Therefore, it would be beneficial to ensure that after tasks are assigned, that someone follows up to ensure that everyone is prepared. Further, there must be a discussion about who will be responsible for following up with everyone after tasks are delegated.

In addition, two respondents explained that they had informed the Task Force about problems or upcoming events during meeting and expressed that they wanted assistance from PSN partners to address the issues. However, nothing came of it. We did note at one of the meetings that suggestions were offered to address the problem. As one respondent noted, though, it is incumbent upon the person raising the issue to follow up. It may be helpful simply to encourage partners to reach out to each other after the meetings if they want to discuss problems they see or get further assistance. Indeed, at least one respondent described how her agency actively pursues assistance from others, and other partners need to be aware that it is up to them to reach out after the meetings if they want additional help.

Offer communication training

A participant from one agency noted that they received training regarding effective communication techniques, and found this training very beneficial. He felt that the training might also be useful for other agencies, and given that other agencies indicated there were some intra-agency communication barriers, it is likely that it would be beneficial. However, we do

know that not all agencies would be receptive to this type of training; if possible, though, making it available to all may improve PSN and both intra- and inter-agency collaboration generally.

Recommendations for future PSN projects

Create a mission statement with partners

Two respondents felt it would be beneficial to create a mission statement for PSN. While there is a mission statement included at the top of the grant proposal's Task Plan, it is broad and was created before the partners convened. One suggestion is to have a mission statement that incorporates all of the components of PSN and emphasizes the goals of crime reduction and building trust in the community. The creation of this type of mission statement in conjunction with the partners may ensure that everyone is in agreement about the purpose of PSN.

Prepare for grant delays and other problems

Recognizing that the grant period is limited and that the grant activities did not begin immediately, one respondent offered suggestions to ensure that the project begins more quickly and is consistent with the project design. First, it is important to ensure that all key partners are consulted before the grant is submitted to ensure that what is being asked of each partner is feasible for the funds allotted, and to make sure there is a commitment from each agency beforehand.

“[I] think it starts at the very beginning of the process of getting the grant. Because then you know who all the players are, and you've already got commitments. And then once you actually get the money, then it's game on and then people can follow through with what they've said they are willing to do. That alone will create agencies working together.”

Second, since there is often a delay in receiving funds (due to processing contracts, MOUs, etc.), this participant suggested engaging in pre-planning so that once the funds are in place, the partners can proceed immediately.

Similarly, one of the challenges encountered during this PSN project was that the implementation of some project activities were hampered due to turnover at a key agency. While

this would not have been anticipated, this is an opportunity to consider how to prepare for such challenges in the future. For example, the law enforcement coordinator and the project associate (or others) could create protocols indicating that after a set amount of time if the situation has not been resolved, a change would need to be made to ensure that the tasks could continue using a different partner or different strategy that would still meet the project objectives. Note that this did happen during this grant period, but it would be helpful to consider whether there could be some pre-planning to address these types of problems earlier.

Increase dosage

Partners suggested that it would be helpful to increase the dosage of the PSN activities. For example, with respect to Camp Triumph, one respondent said:

“So it’s a good initiative. It’s a good project. But it would be more successful...if we could have more influence throughout...more than once a year. I think that would really benefit the community.”

Note that education activities are reportedly ongoing throughout the target area. Further, funding is a limitation to providing the extensive Camp Triumph throughout the year, but perhaps it would be possible to consider half-day or one-day camps a few times per year as a supplement.

Likewise, respondents indicated that law enforcement operations were spread out geographically and temporally. If feasible, the law enforcement operations may make more of an impact if they are concentrated in a few areas with operations occurring with greater frequency. It is important to note, however, that there is an emphasis on directing efforts towards priority areas and a focus on prosecuting the “worst of the worst” offenders, which may be associated with a reduction in crime.

Increase assessment

As noted above, several respondents felt it would be helpful if the partners, particularly those involved in law enforcement operations, provided information about their accomplishments and next steps after they complete operations. Note that the evaluation team will examine crime data in the metropolitan area to assess whether there have been any changes in gang-related incidents,

violent crime incidents with a weapon, and incidents involving Native Americans since PSN began. However, these respondents noted that they would like more immediate and specific operation-related results.

Another respondent suggested that it would be helpful to have more frequent, less formal assessments. This respondent stated that conducting interviews with partners (like those conducted for the current assessment) is helpful to determine what is actually occurring, but felt that it would be beneficial to do this throughout the program period. Finally, one participant noted that it would be helpful to the project to better understand crime in the tribal areas and how PSN may affect those locales.

Project sustainability

Continue meeting

We asked participants to describe how the PSN efforts could be sustained. Most often, participants emphasized the importance of continuing to meet with each other. In order to do so, participants explained that agency leaders must agree:

“Agency heads need to allow for the collaboration between both public and private agencies to continue. We need to continue to have open and free flowing communication to tackle crime problems within our community.”

This may require the creation of formal agreements or policies/protocols. For example, one respondent indicated that they would need a:

“...sustainability plan and a memorandum of agreement between all agencies to continue to collaborate and utilize each other’s resources.”

Participants did express some concern that without the USAO to pull all of the agencies together, PSN may not have the strength behind it that it currently does. In order to minimize that problem and prepare for the future, it would be beneficial to begin to shift responsibility for the meetings to partner agencies. These agencies could physically host the meetings. The Task Force may consider rotating the location and hosting agency in order to reduce the burden on any particular agency and to encourage active participation from all key partners.

Increase strategic planning

One of the suggestions made to improve PSN and ensure its sustainability is to examine each partner's tasks and strategies, and where they overlap:

“I think one of the things that [we] talk a lot about is that if we could align, if we could look at all partners and potential partners, all their strategies, okay? And then we started doing this, we developed a simple matrix where we're aligning the strategies, but to do that more comprehensively, so that everybody sees that what part of what I do is the same part of what you do. And so really there's more of a meeting of the minds and saying, 'Oh, this isn't something extra, we've got to do this anyway,' so really aligning of those strategies would improve PSN, it would get it more integrated, and again, you know, the sustainability of any of the initiatives will just be taken over because it's already been aligned with the organization's strategy.”

While this would be a time consuming process, one way to accomplish this would be for each of the key partners to meet together to discuss their priorities and the strategies they use to address those priorities. The law enforcement coordinator or someone else could provide a framework defining the types of tasks and strategies that could be included. This may be beneficial to complete during this final stage of the PSN initiative, while working towards sustainability of PSN.

Consider possible avenues for funding

Participants recognized that they would need to seek funding and/or support elsewhere in order to continue with the activities begun under this grant at current levels. For example, one interviewee noted that her agency could continue to offer Camp Triumph, but they would have to cut staffing in half so there would be less personal interactions with the children.

Some partners have begun to consider other options for funding. Isleta is actively pursuing different avenues for funding by applying for grants and considering presenting to the Tribal Council to explore whether there might be some funding available through the tribal government. There may be other ways to fund activities begun under PSN as well. It may be useful for the Task Force to brainstorm funding avenues and include newly established partners at the table, as they may be aware of funding streams that could be used to support these activities.

Conclusion

Overall, the partners who have participated in this PSN project have successfully executed the proposed activities. Particularly notable are the Camp Triumph and Sentry activities, especially in the tribal areas. These activities positively impact Native American and other children, increase ties between tribal and non-tribal areas, and include a wide variety of individuals, agencies, and organizations. Comprehensive reentry efforts are well under way in Isleta. OPT OUT and law enforcement activities have occurred; both efforts have encouraged multi-agency collaboration and have incorporated new approaches. While respondents indicate that not all tasks have been implemented, most tasks were completed and all who were charged with specific tasks agreed they were completed successfully. Multi-agency collaboration was very successful for the majority of partners. There are areas that could be strengthened over the next few months and in future iterations of the project. We expect that if these items are addressed, the initiative could accomplish even more.

References

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Appendix A: SMART Strategy Diagram

