

CASE STUDY

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

Building foundational capacities and partnerships to fight violent crime



In October 2016, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) invited Jackson, Mississippi, to participate in the National Public Safety Partnership (PSP). The PSP is a DOJ-wide program that helps participating cities address serious violent crime challenges over a three-year engagement by facilitating the development of data-driven, evidence-based strategies tailored to each city's unique local needs.



ABOUT JACKSON

The city of Jackson encompasses approximately 115 square miles with a reported population of approximately 175,000. The population increases during the work week to about 300,000 during the day. Although the population of the city has been declining, the population of the Jackson Metropolitan Area has grown over the years to approximately 580,000. This makes the Jackson Metropolitan Area the largest metropolitan area in Mississippi.

The Jackson Police Department (JPD) is responsible for law enforcement within the city and the city limit portion of the Pearl River. JPD has staffing positions for 500 sworn officers who are supported by 264 civilians. In the early 2010s, the city of Jackson experienced increases in violent crime. Upon joining the PSP in 2016, homicides, aggravated assaults with firearms, and armed robberies were significant problems. JPD reported that its most prevalent violent crime issues were gun-related crimes, including homicide and aggravated assault.

PSP PARTICIPATION

Upon joining the PSP initiative, Jackson identified three primary focus areas for the engagement. These included building crime analysis capacities, enhancing technology, and improving investigative capabilities. The PSP helped establish the foundational capacities and skills for Jackson to better address and prevent violence. PSP focused on helping the city establish strategic and effective partnerships to comprehensively respond to violent crime.

The following agencies were part of the Jackson PSP partnership:

- Hinds County District Attorney's Office
- Jackson Police Department
- Jackson State University (JSU)
- Mississippi Department of Public Safety (MS DPS)
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- US Marshals Service (USMS)
- US Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Mississippi (USAO—SDM)



BUILDING CRIME ANALYSIS CAPACITIES

Upon joining the PSP, the JPD did not have any crime analysts or a crime analysis unit. The department's analysis activities focused on records management personnel and crime coders who developed basic crime reports for CompStat and an intelligence analyst who gathered information on wanted persons or suspects. With support from the PSP, the Jackson PSP site team identified a need to improve its crime analysis capacities and understanding to inform police responses and operations.

The JPD pursued an abundance of training and technical assistance (TTA) in crime analysis. Over their three years in the PSP, Jackson attended the Los Angeles Crime Fighters Conference multiple times, the Naval Postgraduate Social Network Analysis Symposium, the Bureau of Justice Assistance's (BJA) Crime Analysis for Executives Training, and the International Association of Crime Analysts Conference. Jackson also participated in a peer exchange with St. Louis and its crime analysis personnel to discuss ways to integrate analysis into operations. JPD learned multiple best practices from these TTA opportunities, including enhancing violent crime data tracking and predictive policing, increasing tracking of hot spots (e.g., making sure to maintain a stronghold in a hot spot after it is cleaned up), enhancing interactions with offenders (from probation and parole) through knock and talks and sharing resources with offenders, ensuring that commanders are more engaged, keeping police accountable for issues raised by community members, and working harder to involve community members in the violent crime fight.

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

Peer Exchange with Milwaukee to observe CompStat (January 2017)

Los Angeles Crime Fighters Conference (February 2017)

Violence and Crime Analysis Technical Assistance (February 2017)

Social Network Analysis Training (May 2017)

Crime Analysis for Executive Training (November 2017)

Los Angeles Crime Fighters Conference (February 2018)

PSP SSL Site Visit for Embedded Analyst Kick Off (November 2018)

FBI Criminal Intelligence (November 2018)

Embedded Analyst and Crime Analysis TTA (2018–2019)

Peer exchange to St. Louis to learn about crime analysis strategies (2019)



JPD also received subject matter expert assistance to expand its crime analysis resources and capacities through an analyst program with Jackson State University. This student internship program began in 2018 and aims to further enhance JPD's analysis capacities, knowledge, and use. JSU students help investigators solve crimes by identifying crime trends and also collaborate with the Mississippi Analysis and Information Center. Student interns will be helping JPD each year, and the police department also plans to work with other universities to expand its analytic support.

In summer 2019, JPD also began restructuring staff into a formal crime analysis section. Six staff members who had worked in the Uniform Crime Reporting certification unit or in records now report to the crime analysis supervisor. The section also includes four graduate students (interns) from JSU. At the conclusion of its PSP engagement,

JPD requested technical assistance to improve its crime reporting and analysis strategies. This final TTA aimed to improve JPD's crime reporting accuracy, its crime analysis capacity, as well as the information needed for JPD operation decisions. The TTA

involved observing the crime reporting process, reviewing samples of Part 1 reports, noting trends in errors and omissions, and evaluating and reporting changes or improvements to help leadership develop crime reporting strategies.

ENHANCING TECHNOLOGY

JPD stated that more technology was available to its patrol officers 10 years ago than at the beginning of its PSP engagement. JPD previously had working mobile data terminals (MDTs) with the ability to run National Crime Information Center (NCIC) queries, automatic vehicle location (AVL), mobile computer-aided dispatch (CAD), and mobile report writing. Due to various implementation challenges, training limitations, and shifting priorities, limited progress was made with these technology investments.



PSP subject matter experts assisted JPD with improving its technology capacities. JPD had a significant need for an MDT equipped with basic NCIC and mobile CAD/records management system software. JPD did not have the ability to run NCIC queries from police cars, interact with the mobile CAD, or do true mobile reporting. All of these deficiencies created inefficient practices, duplicative work, and potential officer safety issues. The agency also relied on dispatch via the radio systems to run NCIC, which was responsible for radio traffic overload, inconsistent dispatch responses, and a severe lack of situational awareness. Another big obstacle for JPD was its lack of integration between disparate systems. The department identified a need to share and query data to assist in information gathering and crime solving.

JPD identified and prioritized its technology needs and, as a result, the PSP was able to better support Jackson with needed technology assistance. JPD also coordinated this effort with grants personnel to identify grants that can help address its technology gaps. In 2019, JPD's grant manager began collaborating with information services and command staff on technology needs.

JPD applied to over 20 grants in FY 2019, many of which incorporate technology enhancements. In 2019 JPD received a Hot Spot Policing Grant through the Mississippi Department of Public Safety and a Body-Worn Camera grant from BJA. Using these grants, JPD has begun enhancing technology in one hot spot (precinct 1). JPD identified target locations in the precinct to put up cameras and installed 22 cameras, and it outfitted three DUI units with in-car cameras and laptops. This pilot will demonstrate how JPD can implement such technology (laptops and in-car cameras) to all police units and establish a Real-Time Crime Center. JPD is also planning to implement the MILO system in the academy (a range system to allow officers to do active shooting and crisis intervention training).

IMPROVING INVESTIGATIVE CAPABILITIES

JPD sought to improve its investigative capabilities through the PSP. During its engagement, the department sought a plethora of training on investigations, including interview and interrogation, courtroom testimony, evidence and property management, narcotics investigations, and basic and advanced homicide investigations. The USAO also provided JPD with training on improving investigations and cases for prosecution.

Federal law enforcement partners played a significant role in helping JPD improve its investigative strategies and operations. In 2017, the USAO–SDM established a federal law enforcement task force under the Project Safe Neighborhoods collaborative called Project EJECT (Empower Jackson Expel Crime Together). Through Project EJECT, law enforcement and members of the Jackson community and businesses take a holistic, multidisciplinary approach to fighting and reducing violent crime in Jackson through prosecution, prevention, reentry, and awareness. Since the inception of Project EJECT, more than 130 individuals have been indicted for committing federal crimes such as carjacking, drug possession, and illegal firearm possession as of 2019. Of those, 75 had been convicted. The average sentence for those convicted and sentenced is more than six years in federal prison. Project EJECT and the PSP helped enhance the relationship between the USAO–SDMS and the Hinds County District Attorney’s Office. Prior to the involvement of the PSP, local cases were not being routinely transferred to the USAO for prosecution. PSP’s fostering of this relationship led to a dramatic increase in federal prosecutions.



In 2017–2018, Jackson saw a spike in sexual assault crimes, and PSP pivoted its investigative TTA to provide opportunities for JPD to improve its response to sexual assault cases. After discussions with SMEs during the 2017 PSP Summit, the Jackson PSP site requested assistance to address the increase in sexual assault crime. Through support from RTI International, a TTA provider through BJA’s Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) TTA program, JPD received (and continues to receive) support in obtaining an evidence-based understanding of the nature of sexual assaults in Jackson. JPD is also developing a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to respond to, investigate, and prosecute sexual assaults, while supporting victims of sexual assault in a trauma-informed manner.

PROJECT EJECT PARTNERS

- US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms
- US Drug Enforcement Agency
- US Marshalls Service
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- City of Jackson, Mayor’s Office
- Hinds County District Attorney’s Office
- Jackson Public Schools Police
- Jackson Police Department
- Jackson State University
- Jackson State University Police
- Mississippi Analysis and Information Center
- Mississippi Department of Public Safety
- Office of Capital Police

CONCLUSION

JPD is a model example of how to overcome the budgetary limitations of a police department when building crime analysis or technical capacities. By partnering with local organizations, such as universities, agencies can access an intern candidate pool for crime analyst positions. Fostering an evolving partnership with universities can also lead to recommendations to improve agencies’ analytical capacity. JPD has also leveraged its grant writers to focus on technology to improve their technical capacity, and they have successfully received awards such as a BWC TTA Grant and a Hot Spot Policing Grant. Additionally, Jackson’s Project EJECT provides a model of how a local-federal partnership can get all the right agencies in the room to address the reduction of violent crime. With over 130 indictments and 75 convictions with an average of 6 years sentences under their belt, Project EJECT has achieved measurable outcomes in getting violent criminals off the streets and making the community safer. JPD also received assistance from the FBI on crime analysis and fingerprint analysis and from the ATF on crime gun intelligence capabilities. The federal partners have a wide breath of resources that can help aid local police departments, and local agencies should work with their federal partners to help address challenges.