

CASE STUDY

SALISBURY, NORTH CAROLINA

Establishing collaboration to address violent crime



The National Public Safety Partnership (PSP) provides an innovative framework for the US Department of Justice (DOJ) to support state, local, and tribal law enforcement and prosecution authorities as they aggressively investigate and prosecute violent criminals, especially those involved in gun crime, drug trafficking, and gang violence. PSP enables cities to consult with and receive coordinated training and technical assistance (TTA) and an array of resources from DOJ to support violence reduction strategies. The PSP facilitates the development of data-driven, evidence-based strategies tailored to the unique local needs of participating cities to address serious violent crime challenges. After undergoing an engagement with the Office of Justice Programs Diagnostic Center, Salisbury, North Carolina, participated in the DOJ Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) PSP from October 2018 to March 2020.



ABOUT SALISBURY

The city of Salisbury, North Carolina, encompasses approximately 22 square miles with a reported population of approximately 33,600.¹ Salisbury is the largest city in Rowan County.

The Salisbury Police Department (SPD) is responsible for law enforcement within the city of Salisbury. SPD has 72 sworn officers. In the early 2010s, the city of Salisbury experienced increases in violent crime. Before SPD joined the PSP, SPD data showed a consistent and significant increase in homicides, from 1 in 2012 to 10 in 2016 and increases in assaults with dangerous weapons (guns) and shootings into occupied dwellings. Analysis by the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Diagnostic Center found that property crimes, drugs, and interpersonal violent crime historically drove incidents and calls for service in Salisbury.

PSP PARTICIPATION

Upon joining the OJP Diagnostic Center initiative, Salisbury sought TTA to improve overall public safety and reduce violent crime by identifying and implementing data-driven strategies that target factors contributing to violence. Salisbury identified four primary focus areas for the TTA engagement. These included enhancing data management and utilization, developing violent crime reduction strategies, improving investigative processes, and improving internal and external communications. The PSP helped establish the foundational capacities and skills for Salisbury to better address and prevent violence.

The following local and federal partners participated in the Salisbury PSP:

- Salisbury Police Department
- Rowan County Sheriff's Office
- Rowan County District Attorney's Office
- Rowan County Department of Social Services

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

Strategic Communication Assistance

Grants Landscape Review

Crime Analysis and Technology Assistance

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Peer Exchange

New Orleans, Louisiana, Peer Exchange

West Memphis, Arkansas, Peer Exchange

Department Inventory

¹ https://data.census.gov/cedsci/all?q=Salisbury%20city,%20North%20Carolina&g=1600000US3758860&hidePreview=false&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP05&layer=VT_2018_160_00_PY_D1&cid=DP05_0001E&vintage=2018

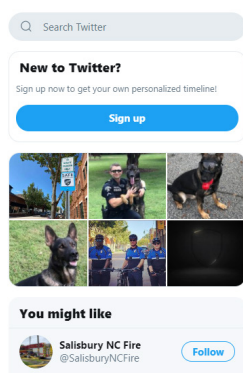
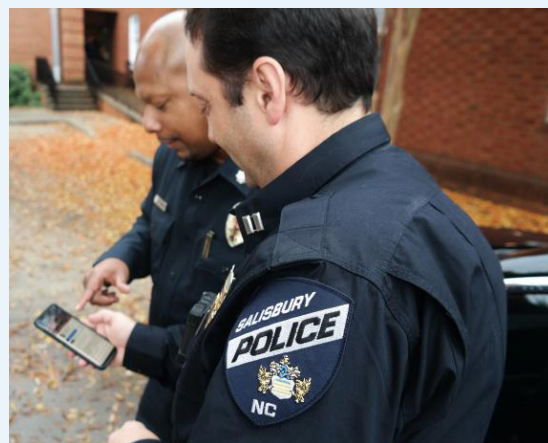
- Livingstone College
- Rowan-Salisbury School System
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF)
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- US Marshals Service (USMS)
- US Attorney's Office for the Middle District of North Carolina (USAO—MDNC)

BUILDING COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Upon engaging with the OJP Diagnostic Center, Salisbury identified enhancing citizen engagement efforts to reduce violent crime as a priority area. As part of this initiative, SPD sought to improve its strategic communication plans and social media presence. In February 2019, Salisbury received strategic communications technical assistance to expand the department's community engagement by establishing a social media team and improving the Public Information Office (PIO) efforts. A PSP communications subject matter expert provided recommendations to Salisbury on increasing Facebook and Twitter usage and developing proactive stories for external media engagement.

The communications expert recommended that SPD implement a decentralized social media team with clear, unified objectives. These objectives include promoting an exchange of ideas with community members who may not normally communicate with law enforcement, informing community members of department activities, assisting investigations, and preventing crime through safety messages.

SPD identified digital communications officers (DCOs) who assist the Chief of Police in operating the social media account. The social media team consists of eight officers, one from each squad and one from each investigations section, covering day and overnight shifts. SPD created a formal Social Media Guide for members of the social media team to use to avoid common mistakes, reach a larger audience, and make social media content engaging, informative and useful. The PSP communications subject expert provided guidance on selection of DCOs and creation of the Social Media Guide.



SPD has increased its communication with the community through social media. In about one year, from April 18, 2019, to May 20, 2019, SPD's Facebook page experienced a 200 percent increase in post engagements and a 167 percent increase in new page likes; page reach and page views also increased.

ESTABLISHING A CRIME ANALYSIS CAPACITY

In November 2018, SPD participated in a review of its crime analysis and technology capacity. The review offered recommendations for the department to build its capacity in the areas of crime analysis and technology, including hiring a crime analyst, improving data quality, and adding or upgrading technology.

Upon joining the PSP, SPD had no dedicated crime analysts or analysis unit. During its PSP engagement, Salisbury brought training and informational sessions to the department to introduce and reiterate strategies for understanding crime data, problem-oriented policing methodologies, and crime reduction practices such as hot spot policing. SPD implemented data-driven practices with the goal of better exchanging information between analysts and detectives and investigative and patrol divisions. SPD also hired its first civilian crime analyst. At the conclusion of its PSP engagement, SPD was working to fill a second civilian crime analyst position. SPD hopes to designate one crime analyst to conduct statistical analysis, while the other will work on gathering and disseminating intelligence, particularly related to gang violence.

Through PSP, SPD also adopted a modified CompStat model informed by the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and New Orleans, Louisiana, models. SPD hosts a report-out meeting each month, which provides an overarching review of crime trends and law enforcement initiatives over the previous month. The SPD crime analyst presents a comparison of recent crime trends with previous months and years. SPD patrol and investigation lieutenants report out on the results of recent initiatives, planned initiatives, and top offenders. SPD invites any department members at the level of sergeant and above to attend. Representatives from the East Spencer Police Department, Spencer Police Department, Rowan County Sheriff's Office, Rowan County 911 Center, Rowan County District Attorney's Office, and local parole and probation department also attend.

IMPROVING INVESTIGATIVE CAPACITIES

In fall 2019, Salisbury received funding through the BJA Strategies for Policing Innovation program to develop and implement the Rowan Regional Crime Intelligence Center (RRCIC). The center intends to enhance the region's ability to reduce violent crime by synthesizing technology, leading with analytics, and providing a centralized location for federal, state, and local agencies to share information and collaborate for case strategies and arrests. The RRCIC will provide a turnkey solution for an intelligence center, which will let the region engage with current intelligence-led practices. As of November 2020, SPD has identified a location for the RRCIC and is waiting on delivery of technology. SPD plans to implement the RRCIC by January 1, 2021. SPD has begun pushing information to surrounding agencies, with the hope that information-sharing will improve investigative capabilities. As of November 2020, this practice has successfully led to SPD recovering a vehicle in another town that was related to a death investigation.



The criminal investigations division hired an additional technician for the laboratory, which has drastically improved its capacity. The SPD tries to handle all of its own crime scene management. When this is not feasible, the SPD calls the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (NCSBI) or the Rowan County Sheriff's Office for backup.

ATF has initiated a task force in the City of Salisbury and Rowan County. ATF entered one year's worth of backlogged shell cases into the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN). This backlog cleared in November 2018. SPD has scheduled a department member to attend NIBIN training and hopes to collaborate with law enforcement agencies in Winston-Salem and Greensboro to access their NIBIN centers. ATF has provided SPD with a gun trap so that crime scene technicians can recover casings from recovered firearms for NIBIN. SPD allows any regional law enforcement agency to access this gun trap. Prior to PSP, SPD had no department members on the federal task force. As of June 2020, SPD has three designated federal task force officers.

SPD's special investigations division and the Rowan County Sheriff's Office narcotics division communicate on a regular basis. When SPD conducts hotspot patrols, it reaches out to other local and federal law enforcement agencies for their cooperation in saturation patrols and surveillance. SPD also offers assistance to other local law enforcement agencies in investigations and strategic operations.

SPD nearly doubled the number of detectives assigned to investigations in the department. Prior to the PSP engagement, four to five detectives conducted all investigations in the department, from homicide to burglary to sexual assault. SPD added four detectives and organized a violent crime investigations unit and general investigations unit. This specialization has allowed investigators to receive training that is more specialized and helped each unit focus on specific crimes. SPD notes that this transition has been successful in improving investigations and strengthening investigator morale.

SPD's homicide clearance rate has increased from 40 percent to 100 percent. SPD has cleared every homicide in the last three years.

CONCLUSION

Salisbury exemplifies how a site can transition from one program to another and effectively use federal resources and partners to reduce violent crime, increase department capacity, and improve community relations. Salisbury will continue to collaborate with surrounding agencies, introduce new technology to improve analytical and investigative processes, and engage with their community through social media.