



National Network for Safe Communities: An approach to reducing larceny in Los Angeles

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I. About the National Network for Safe Communities

The National Network for Safe Communities, a project of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, was launched in 2009 under the direction of David M. Kennedy and John Jay College President Jeremy Travis. The National Network supports cities implementing proven strategic interventions to reduce violence and improve public safety, minimize arrest and incarceration, strengthen communities, and improve relationships between law enforcement and the communities it serves.

The National Network is committed to building a community of practice that operates along a set of guiding principles.

- First do no harm
- Strengthen communities' capacity to prevent violence
- Enhance legitimacy
- Offer help to those who want it
- Get deterrence right
- Use enforcement strategically

The interventions based on these principles have been successfully implemented in cities across the country. The Group Violence Intervention, first developed as “Operation Ceasefire” in Boston, MA, has been successfully applied in cities as diverse as Chicago, IL, Cincinnati, OH, and Stockton, CA. The intervention for eliminating neighborhood overt drug markets, first developed in High Point, NC, has been successfully applied in cities as diverse as Providence, RI, Hempstead, NY, and Nashville, TN.

In addition to providing technical advising to jurisdictions implementing these strategic interventions, the National Network facilitates peer support and collaborative learning opportunities to help cities learn from one another; address common issues; provide a supportive community of practice for new jurisdictions; and make these interventions standard practice across the United States.

II. Executive summary

Under this proposal, the National Network for Safe Communities seeks funding for a one-year action research project to conduct strategic planning and pilot implementation activities for a larceny reduction intervention in the city of Los Angeles.¹

Real progress has been made in addressing serious crime using the National Network’s approach. That change has been driven by a very deliberate set of ideas: that serious violent crime is driven by small numbers of exceptional offenders; that such offenders are responsive to clear signals from law enforcement; that some want to change their lives and will accept help in doing so; and that they will

¹ For the purposes of this proposal, “larceny” refers to all non-violent thefts of property, e.g.: shoplifting, burglary, auto theft, etc.

respect and comply with strong and clear community norms against violence. We have seen reductions in serious crime in city after city that applies this set of ideas to violence driven by street groups and the violence and chaos inherent in overt drug markets. We have long believed that these same principles can work when applied to the sphere of other less serious, but still damaging, crimes such as larceny. Using the approach that has effectively reduced violence and eliminated overt drug markets—and drawing upon the promising indications of a larceny intervention in High Point, NC—the National Network will adapt and design a new intervention to address larceny in the city of Los Angeles.

The National Network will research, design, implement, and assess the progress of the pilot intervention in close coordination with on-the-ground practitioners. The project team will

- Conduct a workshop on the National Network approach for key site practitioners: police departments, prosecutors' offices, social service providers, community groups, and others;
- Conduct research to determine the nature of the larceny problem in Los Angeles;
- Design an intervention strategy adapted to the particular circumstances of Los Angeles;
- Assist in implementing, modifying, and assessing the results of the intervention.

The process and outcome of this pilot project will lead to possible next steps for addressing larceny statewide.

III. Background

The state of California is parsing the effects of two sweeping criminal justice changes implemented in the last five years. Both measures, the “public safety realignment” (2011) and Proposition 47 (2014), have demonstrably reduced incarceration in the state, fulfilling a stated objective to use jails and prisons less often and for less time (Figure 1). Current crime data demonstrates mixed trends. On the one hand, medium-term top level trends show crime reductions across the board. From 2009 to 2014, the total violent crime rate decreased 16.5 percent and total property crime rate decreased 9.4 percent.² Since realignment, however, the reduction in *property crime* did not keep pace with reductions in other comparison states (Figure 2).

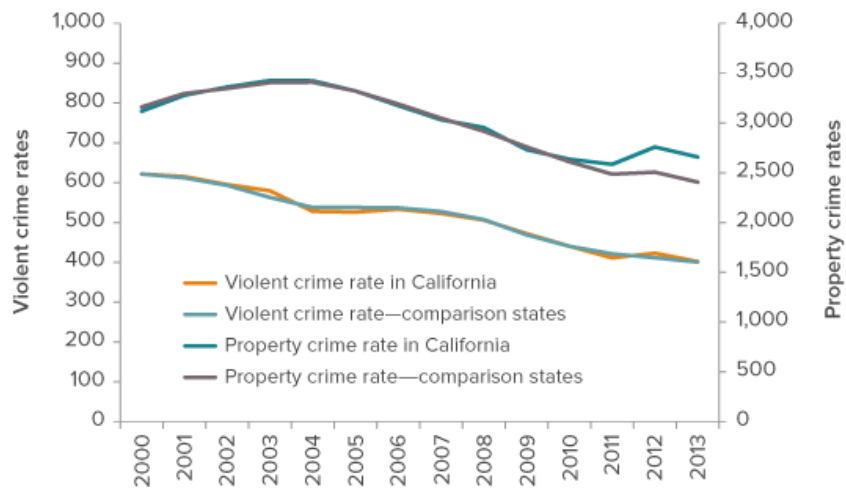
Figure 1: Incarceration and justice reforms (Public Policy Institute of California, 2015)³

² <http://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/cjsc/publications/candd/cd14/cd14.pdf?>

³ http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_quick.asp?i=1164



Figure 2: Crime rates (Public Policy Institute of <REPLACE>, 2015)⁴



Local effects of these changes have been mixed. Since 2014, Los Angeles has seen a 17.5% increase in total property crime. According to the Los Angeles Police Department, Personal/Other Theft, the most common incident type, has risen by 5.1% in that time. Motor Vehicle Theft, though half as common as Personal/Other Theft, has risen by 36.7% in two years. Burglary (8.6%) and Burglary Theft From Vehicle (27.6%) are also currently showing an upward trend.⁵ Though, on face, these data points seem to present a consistent upward trend, more analysis is needed understand the nature of larceny dynamics in the city. In addition to determining the significance of recent data, further research should demonstrate the geographic, demographic, and criminological nuances to the present context.

IV. Applying the National Network framework to larceny

⁴ http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_quick.asp?i=1164

⁵ <http://assets.lapdonline.org/assets/pdf/cityprof.pdf>

The National Network uses an innovative framework that has been successfully applied to a number of serious and chronic crime problems, including gang violence,⁶ gun crime,⁷ and overt drug markets.⁸ Known formally as “focused deterrence” or “pulling levers,”⁹ the National Network’s intervention process addresses this by working in cities to identify a particular serious crime problem; conducting analysis to identify the core group driving it; and assembling a partnership of law enforcement, community leaders, and social service providers to engage with those high-risk people in a focused way. The partnership then communicates directly and repeatedly with the core group, giving them a moral message from the community against offending, prior notice of the legal consequences for further offending, and a genuine offer of help. The explicit aim of this process is to strengthen community norms against offending to enhance public safety working in ways that do not cause harm.

David Kennedy and the National Network team work in an established “action research” tradition to achieve these ends.¹⁰ We have a long history of working in real-time partnerships developing innovative solutions, and promulgating them nationally. Our process in a long history of successful pilot implementations has included a real-time, collaborative, iterative relationship with pilot sites: we conducted field research to understand the problem, develop a strategic operational approach, and work hand-in-hand to enhance the approach developed it until a threshold of effectiveness had been attained. Those pilot approaches are then available for adoption and adaptation elsewhere.

This framework has seen preliminary and promising application to the field of larceny in High Point, NC, and the National Network believes it holds great promise as a way forward to reduce larceny offending while also reducing the impact of the criminal justice system.

V. Project description

This proposal outlines a one-year initial partnership between the National Network and the City of Los Angeles to implement and evaluate a larceny intervention in a pilot site suffering from high rates of larceny. Modeled on the National Network’s proven strategic model, the intervention will aim to produce rapid, significant, and sustainable reductions in offending. Under the direction of David Kennedy, the National Network will serve as the primary technical advisor to the site and will guide the intervention through regular site visits, distance support, and collaborative problem solving.

⁶ See, for example, Braga, Anthony A., David M. Kennedy, Elin J. Waring, and Anne M. Piehl, (2001) “Problem-oriented Policing, Deterrence, and Youth Violence: An Evaluation of Boston’s Operation Ceasefire” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*

⁷ Papachristos, Andrew V., Tracey Meares, and Jeffrey Fagan (2005) “Attention Felons: Evaluating Project Safe Neighborhoods in Chicago” The Law School, The University of Chicago, available at http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=860685

⁸ <http://www.publicpolicy.umd.edu/news/Kleiman%20Reuter%20WSJ.pdf>

⁹ See Kennedy, David M. (1997) “Pulling Levers: Chronic Offenders, High-Crime Settings, and a Theory of Prevention” *Valparaiso University Law Review*

¹⁰ Reason, Peter and Hillary Bradbury-Huang (November 2007). *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*. SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Under this proposal, the National Network will collaborate with stakeholders in the City of Los Angeles to determine the appropriate scale for the intervention (citywide, bureau, division, neighborhood); select the appropriate pilot site (citywide or specific area); design a larceny intervention specific to the pilot site; focus intensive, scheduled technical advising on each; build a support structure and resources for the site implementing the intervention; and convene working sessions for practitioners to focus on innovative practices and the development of the larceny intervention.

This proposal addresses the following core areas:

- Project design and technical advising
- Implementation activities
- Reporting to the field
- Budget narrative

To implement successfully, the pilot site will assemble a partnership of community members, law enforcement, and social service providers to engage effectively with larceny offenders.

The core of the proposed project is a partnership between the National Network, the City of Los Angeles, and the staff of the appropriate pilot site.

The development of the larceny intervention in Los Angeles will proceed along these lines. The partnership will work together to develop original research into larceny and related issues, using formal existing data (arrests, calls for service, sanctions, etc.) and through qualitative work with experienced front-line police officers and other practitioners; conversations within and among law enforcement, service providers, and community figures and groups about the larceny problem; qualitative research with larceny victims (businesses and individuals); qualitative research with larceny offenders; the selection of a particular segment of the larceny problem for particular attention (for example, those at high risk of chronic offending); the design of a clear protocol for identifying that high-risk population; based on agreed-upon criteria; if appropriate, the design of a special deterrence regime involving law enforcement resources for that population; the design of a special service and treatment regime for that population; the design of a special community “moral voice” regime for that population; the design of a strategic communication approach to that population; implementation of direct outreach to that population, involving direct communication about proscribed behavior, community standards, and opportunities and/or obligations regarding services; assessment and modification of the strategy.

Project design and technical advising

The National Network’s project design and technical advising structure will include the following activities:

- **Site selection.** The National Network, in partnership with the City of Los Angeles to identify the appropriate location for the intervention—whether citywide or in a particular geographic area--

and support the implementation and assessment of the larceny intervention in the site over a one-year period. Selection activities will include identifying sites that have demonstrated a willingness to participate, demonstrate the capacity to carry out the work, have data systems in place that can be adapted to collect the necessary data to track and report the progress of the implementation, present a strong possibility of positive treatment, and agree to dedicate the necessary staff to implementation. A meaningful and productive relationship between multiple agencies, including law enforcement, prosecutors, civil legal service providers, and community-based organizations and advocates is necessary for the successful implementation of the larceny intervention.

- **Problem analysis.** The National Network technical advising team will conduct a comprehensive problem analysis, including qualitative and quantitative analysis of larceny dynamics, at the site. This will include direct research with frontline law enforcement personnel to complete an incident review of several years' worth of larceny incidents. The purpose of the problem analysis is to identify local patterns and dynamics characterizing larceny and begin working with law enforcement to build its capacity to employ a larceny intervention framework to deter potential offenders and prevent larceny.
- **Develop site-specific interventions.** Based on the results of the problem analysis, the National Network will convene key stakeholder to design an implementation approach. This plan will outline a training curriculum, a timeline, and a set of implementation activities.

Implementation activities

- **Onsite and remote advising.** The National Network will provide regular strategic technical advising, including distance support through weekly technical advising conference calls; regular site visits; periodic convenings of site practitioners; peer support and collaborative learning opportunities; and advising from subject matter experts. The purpose of this technical advising structure will be to ensure fidelity to the implementation model, develop and spread innovations, and ensure sustainability.
- **Working Group.** The National Network will assist the pilot site to form an executive-level, interagency working group composed of law enforcement, community leaders, and service providers to inform the research and intervention design process and to manage the implementation of the strategy.
- **Project manager.** The National Network will oversee the work of one project manager in the pilot site. The project manager will facilitate implementation at the local level, taking the lead for the operational and administrative work. They will coordinate law enforcement, community, and social service partners. The project manager will be a person who has a preexisting and meaningful relationship with the key local stakeholders.

- **Peer support and collaborative learning opportunities.** The National Network will facilitate two peer working sessions for the participating site—one at launch and one at the conclusion of the project period—to share best practices and innovations with peers from High Point, NC. Site leaders will have direct access to subject matter experts with experience in implementing the larceny intervention.

Reporting to the field

- **Case study.** The National Network will produce a final written case study reflecting the factual findings regarding larceny in Los Angeles; the description of the larceny intervention design; a process account of the project; and assessment of the implementation.

This proposal covers a one-year period. The National Network expects that basic research, assessment, and strategy design will take up to six months. The resulting intervention will be implemented over the following six months.