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# Process Evaluation of BJA's Firearm Lock Distribution and Safe Storage Program

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## Abstract

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Approximately 1.4 million homes, with 2.6 million children, have firearms improperly stored, “in a manner most accessible to children” (Schuster, Franke, Bastian, Sor, & Halfon, 2000, p. 588). A number of studies have examined the effects of actual storage practices and their association with firearm injury and death, and found that in households where a gun was used in a suicide or unintentional injury, the guns were less likely to be stored unloaded, locked, or separately from ammunition, and those households were less likely to have ammunition locked (Anglemyer et al., 2014; Brent et al., 1993; GAO, 2017; Grossman et al. 2005). Research suggests that efforts to reduce firearm deaths should not focus just on guns used in the commission of a crime, but on the broader issues related to gun access, including suicides and accidental deaths (Miller et al. 2012).

In response to this issue, The Bureau of Justice Assistance’s (BJA) established the safe storage campaign and, in 2015, BJA selected the team of National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) / APCO Worldwide to distribute firearm locks and conduct safety education activities under its Firearm Locks Distribution and Safe Storage Program (FLD/SSP). The tasks of the BJA-funded campaign were to distribute firearm locks and safety materials, create Public Service Announcements and other media promotion (e.g., print ads, social media), create website materials, and establish partnerships. The central element of the campaign was to develop local partnerships, enable these partners to create other local partnerships, and disseminate gun safety information in conjunction with cable-style gun locks.

The National Institute of Justice funded the RAND Corporation to conduct an extensive process and implementation evaluation of the FLD/SSP. NSSF titled their effort Project ChildSafe Communities, a community-focused effort that was developed using the framework of their national Project ChildSafe initiative. The main research objectives were to:

- Monitor and document the PCS Communities program’s design;
- Assess areas of success and strengths in the implementation process, including the effectiveness of partnerships;
- Identify challenges to implementation of the program with fidelity to the planned design.

## Methods and Data Collection

Three main methods were used to collect the necessary information for the program evaluation. First, we engaged in site visits for both the planning meetings and the launch events in each project location. Next, we conducted 24 semi-structured interviews with project partners to gain

insight into their activities and roles, interactions with NSSF, and overall satisfaction with the program. In developing our interview protocol, we focused on four main components: background, involvement, need, and partnerships. Last, we obtained relevant administrative and programmatic data from the FLD/SSP team at NSSF and APCO. We also collected state administrative data to establish external context, which includes sociodemographic data from the Census and the 2016 American Community Survey, crime rates from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), background checks from the National Instant Criminal Background Check System from the FBI, state hunting licenses from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and firearms metrics (e.g., number of Federal Firearms Licensees per state) from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms.

Our analytic plan has three main purposes: (1) to understand the context for the implementation of the FLD/SSP; (2) to carefully and systematically document and describe the specific elements of the implementation in each site, including similarities and differences across sites; and (3) to identify and document characteristics most closely associated with the likelihood of success. The analysis is descriptive in nature, assessing the initiatives as implemented and the fidelity to the planned program design. We conducted cross-site analyses in order to assess the program as a whole. We also looked across sites at the implementation strategies, barriers and facilitators to implementation, costs of different strategies, the degree to which in-kind services were provided, and changes in common outcome measures.

## Overview of Findings

After providing detail about the PCS Communities campaign and the sites, we provide campaign site summaries which allows for a cross-site comparison across the domains of community need; launch/implementation; partner involvement; partnerships; successes and challenges. Overall, the PCS Communities project was able to create city-specific firearm safety campaigns that reflected the voice and culture of each community, and involved people who would champion the campaign by incorporating the message into what they were already doing. A key to success was having existing national partnerships that helped the PCS Communities team gain early traction in building local coalitions, which they leveraged to seek out other relevant local partners. Two major challenges were the ability and desire of local stakeholders to maintain and sustain the campaign after the PCS Communities staff and resources are no longer available; and the challenge of dealing with firearm safe storage, separate from the existing highly divisive political and policy conversations around gun ownership.

Lastly, we discuss lessons learned and highlight key components of the PCS Communities campaign that were instrumental for success or require more attention in future versions of this program. These lessons learned are centered around:

- Team-Building

- Messaging
- Sustainability
- Replicability

Project ChildSafe is well-positioned to continue its efforts in safe storage. The PCS Communities team was confident in their ability to assist local communities that are interested in implementing an approach similar to PCS Communities. Additionally, according to a recent GAO (2017) report that scanned the safe storage programming landscape, Project ChildSafe is the only program that offers freely available gun locks at a national level. This makes PCS noteworthy component of national efforts to improve safe storage.

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## Abbreviations

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NSSF	National Shooting Sports Foundation
APCO	APCO Worldwide
BJA	Bureau of Justice Assistance
FFL	Federal Firearms Licensee
PCS	Project ChildSafe
PCS Communities	Project ChildSafe Communities



# Introduction

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Approximately 1.4 million homes, with 2.6 million children, have firearms improperly stored, “in a manner most accessible to children” (Schuster, Franke, Bastian, Sor, & Halfon, 2000, p. 588). A number of studies have examined the effects of actual storage practices and their association with firearm injury and death, and found that in households where a gun was used in a suicide or unintentional injury, the guns were less likely to be stored unloaded, locked, or separately from ammunition, and those households were less likely to have ammunition locked (Anglemyer et al., 2014; Brent et al., 1993; GAO, 2017; Grossman et al. 2005).

According to the CDC, more than 38,000 people were killed by firearms in 2017 (including homicides, suicides, and accidental discharges); slightly more than 20 percent of those were under the age of 25. Nearly 42 percent of those under the age of 25 killed by firearms were killed by either accidental discharge or suicide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). A significant body of work exists regarding the increased odds of death by suicide (Anglemyer et al. 2014; Miller et al. 2012; Miller et al. 2007; Miller et al. 2002) and homicide (Hepburn & Hemenway, 2004; Anglemyer et al. 2014; Miller et al. 2007) when firearms are available in the household. In addition, the risk of unintentional firearm deaths in households with firearms are nearly four times as likely as those living in households with no firearms (Wiebe 2003). Research suggests that efforts to reduce firearm deaths should not focus just on guns used in the commission of a crime, but on the broader issues related to gun access, including suicides and accidental deaths (Miller et al. 2012).

In response to this issue, The Bureau of Justice Assistance’s (BJA) established the safe storage campaign and, in 2015, BJA selected the team of National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) / APCO Worldwide to distribute firearm locks and conduct safety education activities under its Firearm Locks Distribution and Safe Storage Program (FLD/SSP). The NSSF/APCO team decided to provide these resources and expand their already established Project ChildSafe (PCS) campaign<sup>1</sup>, which is national in scope. Project ChildSafe and its website [projectchildsafe.org](http://projectchildsafe.org) provide resources (e.g., videos, infographics, educational materials, tips, checklists, and guides) and support to individuals and organizations interested in firearm safety and firearm safety programming. Currently, this includes versions of materials adapted to suit the needs of law enforcement, educators, parents and gun owners in general, gun industry professionals, and hunters. The campaign’s slogan is “Own It? Respect It. Secure It,” which is

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<sup>1</sup>We refer to the national program as PCS and the subject of this evaluation as PCS Communities throughout the report. PCS is not the subject of this evaluation, although the two are linked since the Project ChildSafe resources and materials apply to both PCS and PCS Communities.

branded across most of their materials. A majority of the existing activity through the national PCS campaign includes law enforcement partnerships and partnerships with national organizations (e.g., Delta Waterfowl, National 4-H Shooting Sports, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention). The materials and partnerships from this larger national campaign provided a foundation for the activities of the FLD/SSP funded program, which was implemented as Project ChildSafe Communities (hereafter PCS Communities).

The tasks of the BJA-funded campaign were to distribute firearm locks and safety materials, create Public Service Announcements and other media promotion (e.g., print ads, social media), create website materials, and establish partnerships. The central element of the PCS Communities model is that it attempts to develop local partnerships, enable these partners to create other local partnerships, and disseminate gun safety information in conjunction with cable-style gun locks. The project was to create a successful campaign in at least three sites by ensuring the campaign 1) reflected the voice and culture of each community and 2) involved people who would champion the campaign by incorporating the message into what they were already doing. Chapter 2 of this report provides detail about the campaign.

The National Institute of Justice funded the RAND Corporation to conduct an extensive process and implementation evaluation of the BJA Firearm Locks Distribution and Safe Storage Program (FLD/SSP), implemented as PCS Communities. The main research objectives were to:

- Monitor and document the PCS Communities program's design;
- Assess areas of success and strengths in the implementation process, including the effectiveness of partnerships;
- Identify challenges to implementation of the program with fidelity to the planned design.

To be clear, RAND did not conduct an outcome evaluation. The purpose of this evaluation was not to measure program effects or assess the progress in the outcomes that the program was aiming to achieve. At a later date, the detailed information on the implementation provided in this report could inform any subsequent outcome evaluation.

The objectives of this summary report are to address the themes of planning, implementation, fidelity, and lessons learned. After providing an overview of the three sites that implemented the campaign and a description of the campaign overall, the current publication provides a broad overview of all major study findings, as well as lesson learned.

## Methods

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Three main methods were used to collect the necessary information for the evaluation. First, we engaged in site visits for both the planning meetings and the launch events in Oklahoma City, OK, Memphis, TN, and Cleveland, OH. Next, we conducted semi-structured interviews with project partners to gain insight into their activities and roles, interactions with NSSF, and overall satisfaction with the program. Last, we obtained relevant administrative and programmatic data from the FLD/SSP team at NSSF and APCO. We provide our methodology for each of these components below, followed by a discussion of our analytic plan.

### Data Collection

#### Site Visits

The RAND research team conducted site visits at each site for both the initial planning meeting and the launch event. The goals of the site visits were to document details about program implementation and characteristics of partnering organizations in each site as well as to make observations of distribution methods, devices provided, and educational materials available.

#### Semi-Structured Interviews

We collected partner information from the NSSF/APCO team, which included contact information for people that they had contacted to be partners in the campaign. There was a variety of level of involvement of the contacts that they provided. The types of representatives included law enforcement, other public safety (e.g., fire, ambulance), outdoor sports, firearms and shooting clubs, public health organizations (e.g., suicide prevention), clergy, and media. We performed 24 semi-structured interviews with project partners to assess various aspects of the Project ChildSafe Communities (PCS Communities) program implementation. In developing our interview protocol, we focused on four main components: background, involvement, need, and partnerships. We also asked a follow-up question of the interviewees, asking them if they had any tips or advice for implementing this program in other locations.

We created a slightly different interview protocol for the implementation team at NSSF and APCO. The first part of the interview protocol focused on understanding the history and development of the PCS Communities program. This includes the development of the campaign, the goals of the campaign, and the development and progression of the partnership between NSSF and APCO. The rest of the interview protocol is focused on each aspect of the program,

including site selection, developing partnerships, campaign planning, campaign goals, campaign materials and trainings, data collection, progress and perceived successes in each site, and successes and challenges for the project overall.

#### Administrative/Programmatic Data

Administrative and programmatic data were used to understand the contexts in which the program was implemented and to document program outputs. We collected information on the external contexts for implementation that may affect both more macro-level decisions—such as those made by BJA and the national program provider, including site selection—as well as more micro-level processes such as those present in implementation sites, including prevailing attitudes towards firearms, existing firearms laws, potential indicators of firearm ownership and use, and state-level indicators of firearm-related injuries and fatalities.

In our reporting of existing state firearm laws, we chose to focus on laws that seemed most relevant to personal firearm acquisition, firearm use, and firearm storage, with an interest in laws that either have been or could be theoretically linked to key outcomes of violence, suicide, and unintentional injury (particularly injury involving minors). We also identified laws that varied across the three sites for comparative purposes. To the extent that firearm laws reflect the attitudes of the citizens of each state, we might consider the existing laws to be a barometer of gun control and storage attitudes.

The last form of state administrative data we used to establish external context is sociodemographic data from the Census and the 2016 American Community Survey, crime rates from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), background checks from the National Instant Criminal Background Check System from the FBI, state hunting licenses from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and firearms metrics (e.g., number of FFLs per state) from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms.

To get an understanding of PCS Communities program activity, we requested information directly from the team at NSSF and APCO, and primarily reflect the metrics required in their regular BJA grant reporting. The types of data collected here include the number of locks distributed, Public Service Announcement runs and views on social media platforms, other media promotion (e.g., print ads), PCS website visits, partnerships established, and partner activity (e.g., new partnerships, media exposure). All of the above activities are part of the PCS Communities model that attempts to develop local partnerships, enables these partners to create other local partnerships, and disseminate gun safety information in conjunction with cable-style gun locks.

## Analysis Plan

Our analytic plan has three main purposes: (1) to understand the context for the implementation of the FLD/SSP; (2) to carefully and systematically document and describe the specific elements of the implementation in each site, including similarities and differences across sites; and (3) to identify and document characteristics most closely associated with the likelihood of success. First, we manually coded the qualitative data by key dimensions. This coding scheme formed the basis of an analytic matrix that allows us to organize the qualitative data into manageable units. The matrix has rows representing the key domains and columns representing sites. This matrix was used as an organizing tool to facilitate documentation of the basic features of the FLD/SSP program as implemented in the three sites

The analysis is descriptive in nature, assessing the initiatives as implemented and their fidelity to the planned program design. The core goals for each site were to strengthen and expand the lock distribution network, increase availability of firearm locks for existing owners, expand the safety information and education network, provide an online firearm safety resource center, and expand the audience receiving the safety message (i.e., reach nontraditional firearm owners). To understand what factors were important preconditions for successful implementation, we assessed organizational and community characteristics, the extent of implementation (e.g., devices distributed, media campaigns launched), the quality of implementation (e.g., the extent to which activities reflect best practices or plans). For actual implementation, we attempted to identify the strategies and activities that were successful in achieving intended outputs; summarize the factors that facilitated or hindered implementation; strategies used to overcome the identified barriers; and identify the important factors needed for replicating the reform efforts in other communities.

Lastly, we conducted cross-site analyses in order to assess the program as a whole. To ensure consistency, accuracy, and reliability in the extrapolation of patterns and themes from the site findings, two project team members reviewed all site findings for patterns and themes in findings and lessons learned that emerge in multiple sites. Cross-site analyses provide greater external validity, which allows more generalizability of findings, by reducing the likelihood that alternative explanations or rival hypotheses could have resulted in outcomes (i.e., because the same findings were determined across sites, they are more likely to be valid) (Yin, 1984).

We also looked across sites at the implementation strategies, barriers and facilitators to implementation, costs of different strategies, the degree to which in-kind services were provided, and changes in common outcome measures. The cross-site analyses examine what lessons may be drawn that will be informative for other states considering similar interventions. Finally, we

drew on the research literature and national trend data regarding firearm safety and access restriction methods to help place the results of the cross-site analyses in context.

## Overview of Sites and Campaign

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Before providing the findings from the evaluation, this chapter provides the context of the campaign and further information about the locations of the three campaigns.

### Project ChildSafe Communities Campaign

As we mentioned earlier, the PCS Communities campaign was an expansion of work that NSSF was already doing. Their work began in 1999 in five cities and then Governor George W. Bush asked them to implement in the state of Texas funded by a state grant. In 2002, they received a federal grant to implement their work nationwide but the funding and work slowly decreased, with a 2008 federal grant being the last until they received this BJA funding in 2015. The PCS Communities campaign worked to establish community partnerships in three sites, equip local partners with Project ChildSafe Communities messaging, and coordinated with them to promote these messages through their local channels. Table 1 provides information on the activities of the overall PCS campaign from July 1, 2016-December 31, 2018, which includes activities from PCS Communities. Specifically, the campaign focused on:

- Providing free firearm safety kits that include a gun lock and a safety brochure. Local partners request locks from NSSF/APCO, who then ship the locks;
- Amplifying Project ChildSafe messages and reach through increased lock distribution efforts and new partnerships;
- Digital, broadcast and outdoor paid media campaigns.

**Table 1. Project ChildSafe Goals and Outputs**

Logic Model Program Goals	Activities
Expanded Lock Distribution and Safety Education Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 177 new partnerships</li><li>• 171 new FFL partners</li></ul>
Increased Availability of Firearm Locks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 628,903 gun locks and safety materials distributed</li></ul>
Online Firearm Safety Resource Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 543,085 website visits</li></ul>
Expanded Audience Receiving Safety Message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3,271 PSA airings on television</li><li>• 1,107 PSA airings on radio</li><li>• 66,458 PSA views on Facebook</li><li>• 34,996 PSA views on Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram</li><li>• Digital Advertisements</li></ul>

Collectively, through partnerships in the priority communities and across the country, From January 2017 to December 2018, a total of 628,903 gun locks and accompanying educational materials were distributed by the overall PCS effort. So far, the number of gun locks and safety materials requested by and distributed to site partners per PCS Communities site is as follows:

- 6,000 firearm safety locks and safety kits have been sent to partners in Oklahoma City
- 17,500 firearm safety locks and safety kits have been sent to partners in Memphis
- 11,00 firearm safety locks and safety kits have been sent to partners in Cleveland

Program promotional materials were developed and distributed in all three sites. These materials included pre-event media advisories, event press releases, flyers and fact sheets, digital ads for webpages and Facebook, and billboards. In addition, in Oklahoma, the Governor issued a proclamation for Project ChildSafe appreciation week and supported a high school essay scholarship contest.

To amplify the Project ChildSafe messages and reach, 6 PSAs were created and shown on television, radio, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Across the sites, these PSAs ran a total of 3,271 times on television, and 1,107 times on radio. There were 66,458 views across the 30-second and 60-second videos that were posted on Project ChildSafe's Facebook page. Additionally, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube combined for a total of 34,996 views. This does not include views that occurred when partners shared a PSA on their own social media platforms. One of these PSAs featured local partners from Oklahoma City and another featured partners in Memphis.

The campaign also tracked website visits. In general, website visits do not increase as a steady rate, instead there are periodic spikes due to launch events, current affairs, new partnerships and media coverage. Overall, the campaign saw 543,085 visits to the [Project ChildSafe website](#) during the grant period.

Based on discussions with local stakeholders in the three jurisdictions, a key component of the campaign was to engage in extensive media targeting and outreach to help amplify safety messages to gun owners and reinforce the culture of genuine firearms safety. News media and print coverage is typically highest after a launch event. Overall, news coverage of PCS Communities launch events happened 66 times, and there were 78 total mentions of PCS Communities by news outlets across the three sites.



Another component of the campaign was the work in digital advertising and social media. These efforts enabled new gun owners who were not part of the existing network or traditional firearms-owning communities to be reached. Project ChildSafe produced digital display, search, Facebook and Twitter advertisements that were primarily designed to inform new audiences of Project ChildSafe Communities about the program’s mission and drive increased traffic, likes and follows to the website and social media channels. Throughout this period, search ads and display retargeting ensured community members seeking information about Project ChildSafe and PCS Communities were exposed to messaging and materials.

The PCS Communities campaign was implemented in three sites: Oklahoma City, OK; Memphis, TN; and Cleveland, OH. The external context for each site is important for understanding site selection, program implementation, and indicators of program success, and for making cross-site comparisons. Below, we detail a variety of key features of each city and state, where city-level data are unavailable. We provide information on state-level firearm-related homicides, suicides, and accidents, the involvement of firearms in crimes, firearm laws, attitudes towards firearms, firearm ownership, and city-level sociodemographic and crime characteristics. We also present information about the campaign in each site.

## Site Information

### Sociodemographic and Crime Characteristics

Table 2 provides sociodemographic and crime characteristics in each site. Oklahoma City and Memphis are comparable in population size, while Cleveland has over 200,000 fewer residents. The city-level sociodemographic data show that Oklahoma City is has a higher proportion of white residents (67.1 %) relative to the other two sites, as well as a higher proportion of Hispanic residents (18.5%). Educational and economic indicators also distinguish Oklahoma City from the other two sites, with a lower proportion of residents under the poverty level and a higher median income. Additionally, crime indicators suggest Oklahoma City experiences less crime than Memphis and Cleveland, with lower rates of homicide, violent crime, and burglary. As of 2016, sellers in Oklahoma City had 130 federal firearms licensees (FFLs) (i.e., licensed to sell firearms), compared to 52 in Memphis and 13 in Cleveland.

**Table 2. Sociodemographic, Crime, and Firearm Characteristics (2016)**

<b>Sociodemographics</b>	<b>Oklahoma City</b>	<b>Memphis</b>	<b>Cleveland</b>
Population	620,015	655,857	389,165
Percent White	67.7	29.6	40.3
Percent Black	14.3	63.6	50.8
Percent Hispanic	18.5	6.8	10.8

Percent Under Age 18	25.8	25.3	23.0
Percent High School Degree	85.3	84.0	78.4
Median Income (Dollars)	\$50,070	\$36,975	\$26,583
Percent Below Poverty Level	17.8	27.6	36.0
Veteran Population	42,000	33,175	20,906
<b>UCR Crime Rates per 100,000 persons</b>	<b>Oklahoma City</b>	<b>Memphis</b>	<b>Cleveland</b>
Homicide Rate	10.9	29.9	35.0
Violent Crime Rate	783.4	1,820.0	1,630.9
Burglary Rate	864.1	1,393.9	1,639.7
Larceny-Theft Rate	2,584.2	3,748.1	2,589.4

### Firearm-Related Outcomes and Firearm Ownership

Next, we examine the prevalence of firearm-related outcomes and indicators of firearm prevalence for the states of Oklahoma, Tennessee and Ohio (see Table 3). Using the CDC Wonder Multiple Cause of Death (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, 2018) files for the years 2010-2016, we find that fatalities from the accidental discharge of a firearm occur at a rate of 0.4 per 100,000 residents in Oklahoma, for an average of 37.4 incidents per year. This is slightly lower than in Tennessee and Ohio, which average 79.6 and 49.9 incidents per year, respectively. Suicides were committed with a firearm at a rate of 11.4 per 100,000 persons from 2010-2016 in Oklahoma, for a yearly average of 440. This is higher than the rate experienced in Tennessee (9.8 per 100,000) and Ohio (6.9 per 100,000). Firearm homicides occurred at a rate of 4.8 per 100,000 residents, for an average of 182.7 per year. For comparison, firearm homicides in Tennessee occurred at a rate of 5.2 per 100,00 (335.7 per year) while firearm homicides in Ohio occurred at a rate of 3.9 per 100,000 (456.6 per year).

**Table 3. Rates per 100,000 Residents of Firearm-Related Outcomes and Firearm Ownership, 2010-2016 (Yearly Avg. Count of Incidents)**

	<b>Oklahoma</b>	<b>Tennessee</b>	<b>Ohio</b>
Number of Federal Firearm Licensees (FFLs)	130	52	13
Accidental Discharge Rate (Avg. # of Incidents/Year)	0.4 (37.4)	0.5 (79.6)	0.2 (49.9)
Firearm Suicides Rate (Avg. # of Incidents/Year)	11.4 (440.0)	9.8 (633.6)	6.9 (795.0)
Non-Firearm Suicides Rate (Avg. # of Incidents/Year)	7.1 (273.4)	5.8 (378.1)	6.5 (750.7)
Firearm Homicides Rate (Avg. # of Incidents/Year)	4.8 (182.7)	5.2 (335.7)	3.9 (456.6)
2016 NICS Background Checks Rate	9,407.3	10,915.9	7,557.9
2016 Paid Hunting License Holders Rate	10,880.4	11,220.7	3,487.4

Unfortunately, there are no direct measures of firearm ownership, but several proxy measures provide estimates of ownership at the state level. State-level indicators of firearm ownership show that Oklahoma potentially has a slightly lower rate of firearm ownership than Tennessee, but substantially more than Ohio. The percent of suicides committed with a gun is an oft-used proxy for gun ownership. A slightly higher proportion of suicides are committed with a gun in

Tennessee (63%) than in Oklahoma (62%), but the proportion is substantially lower in Ohio (51%). Using state-level National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) background checks for 2016 as another indicator, Oklahoma had a background check rate of 9,407 background checks per 100,000 residents while Tennessee had a rate of 10,916, and Ohio had a rate of 7,558 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2018). FFLs use the NICS to check whether an individual attempting to purchase a firearm is not prohibited from doing so under the law. This provides a proxy of new firearm purchases within a state in a given year. Likewise, using state-level paid hunting license holders from 2016 as an indicator of active firearm owners, Oklahoma also ranks second, with a rate of 10,880 licensees per 100,000 compared to 11,221 and 3,487 in Tennessee and Ohio, respectively. State-level variation in hunting restrictions and gun purchase regulations likely affect both indicators of firearm ownership; however, for comparative purposes, the relative rank across the three states is consistent. Additionally, the other proxies of firearm ownership, particularly the percent of suicides committed with a gun, indicate that Oklahoma and Tennessee likely have more gun owners per capita than Ohio.

### Firearm Laws and Regulations

Next, we compare existing firearm laws and regulations in each state (see Table 4). In addition to estimating the relative levels of gun ownership, this helps understand the context for regulation of gun ownership, gun sales, and other factors relevant to firearm locks (e.g., having firearms in a vehicle) or to negative outcomes (e.g., firearm accidents). For each category where there is no existing state statute, federal law still applies. Importantly, each of the states included here do not allow regulation of firearms by local governments, making legislative considerations a state issue. Looking across these three states in Table 4, there are several notable similarities and differences.

For instance, Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws are used to define when a parent, guardian, or adult can be held criminally liable for the harm caused by the actions of a child who has obtained possession of their gun, whether the harm is intentional or accidental. The “intentional, reckless, or knowing” criminal liability standard for the CAP law in Tennessee and Oklahoma (and 12 other states), means one of those factors would have to be evident in order to convict someone. In addition, there are other provisions regarding liability that vary across states. In Tennessee, there is a lesser standard of proof for parents or guardians, owing to whether the parent/guardian knows there is “substantial risk” that the minor will use the firearm to commit a crime (Cherney, Morral, and Schell, 2018). CAP laws have direct implications for firearm storage, with the expectation that stricter laws encourage more attention to safe storage, which may include more incentive to use firearm locks. We note that Ohio does not have any form of CAP law.

Table 4 presents other various firearm statutes or regulations that are plausibly related to the ways in which people are allowed to use or access firearms, which may have implications for key outcomes (unintentional injuries, suicides, firearms violence). All three states are “shall issue” states, meaning the state sets the objective criteria used for issuing concealed carry permits and removes the discretion of law enforcement in granting concealed carry permits. Permits are required for concealed carrying of a weapon (CCW). All states are also similar in their laws regarding background checks for private sales and the use of gun locks. There are some slight differences across a variety of other state laws, including Tennessee’s use of state records in addition to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) for background checks, which is considered more thorough. Additionally, Ohio is slightly different from Oklahoma and Tennessee for the requirement that lost or stolen firearms must be reported “forthwith,” and for the requirement that a firearm lock must be offered with all sales. This is similar to federal law, but is slightly less prescriptive. Lastly, Ohio does not report individuals who have been adjudicated as mentally defective or involuntarily committed to any mental institution (and therefore prohibited from possessing a firearm under federal law) to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), but to a state agency.

**Table 4. Firearm Laws and Regulations by State**

State Law	Oklahoma	Tennessee	Ohio
Child Access Prevention	Intentional, reckless, or knowing – Under 18 and risk of criminal offense <sup>1</sup>	Intentional, reckless, or knowing – Handguns <sup>9</sup>	No law exists
Carrying Concealed Weapon (CCW)	No Discretion-Shall Issue <sup>2</sup>	No Discretion-Shall Issue <sup>10</sup>	No Discretion-Shall Issue <sup>16</sup>
Loaded firearm in vehicle allowed?	Long guns allowed in trunk <sup>3</sup>	Yes <sup>11</sup>	No <sup>17</sup>
Minimum age for youth possession	Long guns allowed at 18 (certain activities allowed for under 18) <sup>4</sup>	Handguns allowed at 18; No minimum for long guns <sup>12</sup>	No minimum <sup>18</sup>
Minimum purchase and sale age restrictions	All restricted under 18 <sup>5</sup>	All restricted under 18; Handguns under 21 <sup>13</sup>	All restricted under 18; Handguns under 21 <sup>19</sup>
Law requiring report of lost or stolen firearms?	No	No	Yes <sup>20</sup>
Background checks required for private sales?	No; “may not transfer to anyone who is a convicted felon, adjudicated delinquent, under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or is mentally or emotionally disturbed” <sup>6</sup>	No; “May not knowingly transfer to anyone prohibited from possession” <sup>14</sup>	No; “may not recklessly sell, lend, give, or furnish to a person prohibited by state law from acquiring a firearm” <sup>21</sup>

Background checks from dealers	Federal <sup>7</sup>	State & Federal <sup>7</sup>	Federal <sup>7</sup>
Lock required with sale?	No; No	No; No	Yes (offer); No <sup>22</sup>
Lock use required?			
Mental Health Reporting	NICS & State Agency <sup>8</sup>	NICS & State Agency <sup>15</sup>	State Agency <sup>23</sup>

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**Oklahoma:** Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 21, § 1273(B)<sup>1</sup>; Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 21, § 1289.12<sup>2</sup>; Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 21, § 1289.13<sup>3</sup>; Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 21, §§ 1273 (C), (E), 1283(D)<sup>4</sup>; Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 21, § 1273(A), (E)<sup>5</sup>; Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 21, §§ 1290.1—1290.26<sup>6</sup>; Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 21, § 1290.12(A)(13)<sup>6</sup>; <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/nics/general-information/participation-map><sup>7</sup>; Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 21, § 1290.27(A)<sup>8</sup>

**Tennessee:** Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-17-1320(b)<sup>9</sup>; Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-17-1351<sup>10</sup>; Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 39-17-1307(e)<sup>11</sup>; Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-17-1319 (a)(b)<sup>12</sup>; Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-17-1303(a)(1)<sup>13</sup>; Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-17-1316(q)(1)<sup>14</sup>; Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 16-10-213(b), (c), 16-11-206(b), (c), 16-15-303(g)(2), 16-16-120(b)<sup>15</sup>

**Ohio:** Ohio Rev. Code § 2923.11(C)<sup>16</sup>; Ohio Rev. Code § 2923.16(B),(C)<sup>17</sup>; Ohio Rev. Code § 2923.21(A)(1)-(3)<sup>18</sup>; Ohio Rev. Code § 2923.211(A),(B)<sup>19</sup>; Ohio Rev. Code § 2923.20(A)(5), (B)<sup>20</sup>; Ohio Rev. Code § 2923.20(A)(1)<sup>21</sup>; Ohio Rev. Code § 2923.25<sup>22</sup>; Ohio Rev. Code § 5122.311<sup>23</sup>

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## Findings

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In this section, we discuss the successes achieved for the overall PCS Communities campaign and highlight unique successes achieved within particular sites. We do this by comparing campaign implementation and activities across sites. Then, we discuss challenges for the overall campaign and note unique within-site challenges where they exist. Lastly, we discuss lessons learned and highlight key components of the PCS Communities campaign that were instrumental for success or require more attention in future versions of this program.

### Cross Site Findings

Two operational goals of the PCS Communities program were to create a campaign in each site that 1) reflected the voice and culture of each community and 2) involved people who would champion the campaign by incorporating the message into what they were already doing.

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**Table 5. Site Summaries and Comparisons**

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	Oklahoma City	Memphis	Cleveland
<b>Community Need</b>	High gun-ownership and accidents involving children. Funding for gun locks used to exist, but is needed recently.	High crime, accidental deaths involving children, and high level of unregistered guns.	High crime, and a need to educate women and non-traditional gun owners.
<b>Launch/Implementation</b>	Press release style launch at the State Capitol with Governor Fallin's participation.	Mayor's Office led. Launch was at six different locations around city (churches, community centers). Important due to lack of community trust in law enforcement. Media present at each site.	Press release style launch led by Attorney General. Substantial outreach after the launch led to more community partnerships.
<b>Partner Involvement</b>	Project ChildSafe integrated into existing activities.	Project ChildSafe integrated into existing activities. A lot of work around the initial launch, not much follow-up except for	Substantial involvement from the health system partner, with other partners using locks and campaign materials in regular activities. Less media involvement.

passing out locks at events.

<b>Partnerships</b>	Government, outdoor sports organizations, and local representatives of national partners at the beginning. Developing more community partners over time.	Mayor's Office brought in the partners. Good representation from wide array of partners, especially media partners.	Lacked government participation, but developed partnership with large local health system, local representatives of national organizations, and a couple of community partners.
<b>Successes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media partnership</li> <li>• Safety message delivery following accidental firearm death</li> <li>• Partner efforts to expand to community groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media partnership</li> <li>• Getting the community involved (churches, community centers)</li> <li>• Mayor's office leading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Law enforcement/health system partnership led to substantial distribution of locks</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spanish language materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapting materials and PSAs to match an urban audience</li> <li>• Lack of sustained leadership</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local government involvement</li> <li>• Media involvement</li> <li>• Negative perception of being associated with NRA</li> </ul>

## Key Similarities

According to the stakeholders who participated in interviews, the PCS Communities approach was well-received across sites. These stakeholders reported being able to integrate the PCS Communities firearm safety kits and educational materials into their normal operations fairly easily, and several partners reported expanding their existing firearm safety activities. Another similarity across sites involved broad stakeholder interest and participation, which was bolstered by pre-existing NSSF or PCS partnerships in each city. As might be expected, there were several outdoor sports/gun shops and shooting club organizations that participated in each site. Other partners included law enforcement, suicide prevention organizations, media partners, faith-based organizations, and occasional other community partners. Lastly, the PCS Communities media strategy was also fairly consistent across sites, with coverage at launch

events followed by media stories and PSAs involving local partners (with the exception of Cleveland).

## Key Differences

One of the main differences across the sites is the extent of urbanization, and how that is reflected in population demographics and the nature of gun ownership. Gun ownership in urban areas is more likely to be for self-defense, as compared to rural areas where the purpose of gun ownership is likely more for a mixture of hunting and self-defense. Unregistered guns, stolen guns, and gun violence are a much larger concern in urban areas. In addition, urban areas tend to have higher proportions of minority populations, which has implications for message delivery and partner selection. For instance, discussions NSSF/APCO had with community members in Memphis and Cleveland exploring optimal ways to communicate the PCS Communities message indicated that distrust of police in minority communities might reduce willingness to go to a law enforcement agency for firearm locks. Additionally, some of the PCS Communities campaign materials required adaptation to reflect non-suburban and diverse areas.

These rural and urban differences meant the Oklahoma City campaign, which is more rural, was slightly different in partnerships and messaging than Memphis and Cleveland. As such, partnerships in Memphis and Cleveland included less traditional partners like churches, community centers, the Boy Scouts, and a rescue professionals (e.g., EMT) union.

Another key difference in each site was the extent to which government agencies and other stakeholders were willing to provide the necessary early leadership in the site—to initiate the planning and execution of the campaign. In Oklahoma City, the Governor’s office led the campaign and hosted the launch event. In Memphis, the Mayor’s Office contacted stakeholders and media for their participation. In Cleveland, the Attorney General was on board, but local law enforcement were not initially interested in participating. This highlights another pattern in leadership across sites: throughout the lengthy implementation period, more agencies and stakeholders became integrally involved and, in late 2018, were continuing the work of the campaign. In most cases, however, an apparent *local* leadership organization in each site did not emerge before the end of the evaluation.

## Successes

Having a media strategy worked well for each of the sites. Oklahoma City provided the clearest example of media success, given that the media partnership between KFOR and PCS Communities there generated a substantial amount of free publicity. Memphis benefitted from having a city-wide launch event, since it attracted substantial media attention and occurred at multiple local community organizations. Local media station WATN also partnered with Project ChildSafe Communities in Memphis, following the launch. The media outlet produced its own



version of the initiative's PSA. In fact, between July and December 2018, WATN and its sister station WLMT ran the PSA a total of 414 times. Cleveland's effort received increasing radio and television coverage after the launch. In general, the PCS Communities approach was successful for bringing attention to the launch and to the PCS Communities effort following any subsequent noteworthy events, including disseminating the safety message following firearm accidents involving children.

Overall, appropriate key stakeholders were engaged with the PCS campaign at each location. This was evident from interviews with stakeholders, who were generally very welcoming of the campaign and the PCS Communities staff. Some concerns about engagement were evident. For example, one stakeholder reported ending their activities due to other organizational obligations (e.g., fundraising), and one stakeholder was confused about the campaign plan and whether the materials were sufficient for engagement with community members. These two concerns may be internal organizational issues rather than reflect broader issues with partnerships. The majority of stakeholders reported being engaged, and we note these concerns as potential things to keep in mind or explore further.

Another success involved the team implementing the campaign. Every stakeholder we interviewed had positive perceptions of the NSSF/APCO team that coordinated the PCS Communities campaign in each site. They were perceived to be organized, responsive, and helpful for achieving the goals of the project and the goals of the local partners. Most interviewees noted that the NSSF/APCO team communicated well (e.g., answered emails/calls, responded to questions, and explained project goals) and were quick to respond to partner needs (e.g., sending locks soon after the request).

The PCS Communities materials and overall campaign appear appropriate for "off-the-shelf" use. Although several stakeholders commented that minor changes could be made to the campaign materials (e.g., more Spanish language documents), most thought no changes were necessary. The campaign materials were seen as most helpful for organizations that lack the time and resources to build their own curricula and/or materials. As one law enforcement official stated, "I found it very useful that we had information sheets. There wasn't a whole lot that I had to re-create. You'll have more departments ready to be on board when it's a ready-to-eat meal. Then we're good to go and give us the locks. Most departments are overwhelmed and that's the only reason they would say no. I think they managed our time well." Similarly, a representative from a gun club noted, "The great part about this is it's not really a lot of work on the part of the person who wants to support it...it's not like you're getting paid for it so you want it to be as easy as possible. It's set up now to access information and receive information, and there's a strong line of communication." While most feedback from stakeholders was positive, at least one stakeholder noted that the materials were insufficient for adequate engagement. This comment was focused on a perceived need for other engagement materials (e.g., Spanish language) or

training to improve engagement between those handing out locks and lock recipients, during the in-person process of handing out firearm locks.

### *Individual Site Successes*

Oklahoma City was a clear example of media success and government participation. The media success came in the form of the local media partner providing free airplay, and further media coverage included governmental partners who wrote op-eds and participated in interviews. The government partners were also proactive about reaching out to local community groups after the launch. This helped the PCS Communities program partners engage the community and continue their efforts over time.

The Memphis campaign was very successful with the launch event and the local government support for community outreach. The involvement of churches, community centers, and the media contributed to a successful city-wide launch that was appropriate for reaching a more urban population than in Oklahoma City. Memphis also received the most locks from the PCS Communities team, with 17,700 locks sent to Memphis partners through late 2018. Oklahoma City and Cleveland partners received 10,700 and 11,800 locks, respectively, over the same period.

Cleveland's main success was the PCS Communities team's effort to build the campaign despite the lack of pre-launch law enforcement participation and hesitation by potential government partners. The Cleveland campaign used the launch event and early lock distribution efforts to educate potential partners about PCS and lay the foundation for new partnerships later. A key partner in the early lock distribution efforts was the Cleveland MetroHealth Police Department.

### *Challenges*

The key challenge that presented slightly differently across each site was the importance of understanding the local population and local politics. In Oklahoma City, the existing PCS Communities campaign was already well-suited to the population and local politicians were supportive of the program, with buy-in from the governor and several governmental representatives. In Memphis, as learned from discussions with community members, certain elements of the campaign (e.g., the PSA) were not well-suited to the local population, but local politicians were supportive, with buy-in from the mayor and other governmental representatives. In Cleveland, the campaign was aimed at a population similar to that of Memphis, making the existing PSA less appropriate, and political dynamics presented a challenge for the campaign. Both of these elements shaped the composition of the community partners that were involved (e.g., less emphasis on police in urban areas and less emphasis on government in Cleveland), but not necessarily the number of locks distributed or the total number of partners. Part of what

makes the PCS Communities campaign appealing is this flexibility in team building—but this flexibility can also present challenges for setting goals or defining metrics of success across sites.

## Lessons Learned

Projects involving coordination across multiple sites and with multiple stakeholders are likely to offer lessons for process improvement along the way. In general, implementing a community-driven program in a new community can be difficult, but a personalized approach that incorporates knowledge about the local population can improve that population's receptiveness. NSSF's national scope helped build several local partnerships early-on for each site, allowing the project team to focus on building new partnerships. Additionally, discussions with community members helped NSSF modify their campaign messaging for local audiences, including urban gun owners, who are not their traditional consumer.

As one member of the NSSF/APCO PCS Communities team summarized, it was important to be open with on-the-ground partners, especially when the plan faced some challenges, "being strategic of who and how we involved partners in each site. It's about being resourceful and the entire city isn't probably going to turn its back, so it's about continuing to chip away and figure out where the break through is going to be." Below, we discuss some of the key issues that the PCS Communities team encountered that may be of concern if the PCS Communities approach is implemented in other locations. These issues focus on topics of team-building, messaging, sustainability and external validity. We also include some useful advice from the PCS Communities team and the community stakeholders at each site.

### Team-Building

Overall, NSSF's existing national partnerships and the ability of the NSSF/APCO PCS Communities staff to plan and organize PCS Communities launches in each city were invaluable in building groups of local stakeholder participants. Several stakeholders noted being surprised by the organizations participating in the planning and launch events, suggesting the project teams might have lacked certain elements (e.g., religious community, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention) had they not attempted to be comprehensive. As one stakeholder noted, "The funny part was that I probably knew half the people in the room, but the other half were really interesting. I love that police and fire were there. As they started to talk about their role, it seemed perfect. So, somebody was pretty well-rounded." NSSF's reputation in the gun industry was valuable for recruiting firearms dealers and outdoor sports organizations. Similarly, the fact that PCS Communities was affiliated with a nationally-recognized entity that has been doing similar work since the early 2000s seemed beneficial for building partnerships in each community.

Not surprisingly, the implementation process presented plenty of lessons learned for how to approach team building in this context. The PCS Communities team was successful in dealing with these issues during the project, but their varying nature across sites presented a slightly different challenge that had to be understood and worked around through different approaches. These lessons generally fall into three categories: the overall team building approach, representativeness of the implementing partners, and political issues. First, it is important to consider partners carefully, and to not rush the process of building a partnership of implementing stakeholders. Another general team building lesson is to approach potential partners in an appropriate manner. Several stakeholders noted how the PCS Communities team did things the right way in this regard, as one explained, “Give it time, be thoughtful about who you partner with and meet in person to explain to them what you’re doing.” The simple act of meeting in person can go a long way in developing rapport and trust, and communicates the importance of the project to potential team members. It also helps clarify any questions or issues.

A related team building consideration is that it is important to understand the focal population, and whether they might be more receptive to certain messengers. For instance, urban populations might not be trusting enough to go to the police for gun locks. This makes it important to include community groups who serve urban populations. As one stakeholder mentioned, “Not every community is the same so making sure we get partners outside of law enforcement involved [is important].” Another said, “One thing I would think would benefit, it’s probably not my wheelhouse but it would be to reach out to organizations who are in the absolute worst crime ridden areas and say what can we do there; there’s churches, shelters, if we’re dealing with places where women go and leave, are they supplied with locks? Just a big bowl to make them available; that’s kind of a passive way to get them out there.”

## Messaging

The PCS Communities team noted that two keys to messaging success are making sure the right people are delivering the message: “if you want to motivate people to take action, it needs to come from people they trust;” and getting the message out there as much as possible: “To change behavior, it’s a constant reminder.” Both of these keys are likely related and may be related to the quality of materials available to messengers. Overall, the stakeholder interviews revealed that the PCS Communities messaging materials were clear and useful to the stakeholders. The slogan “Own it? Respect it. Secure it.” seemed to fit with stakeholders’ existing beliefs about firearm safety and effective storage practices. The PSAs and social media strategies were also apparently useful to stakeholders.

We observed two messaging lessons during this evaluation. The first is unrelated to the actual PCS Communities message, and pertains to the connection between PCS Communities and NSSF, NSSF’s role in the gun industry, and potential negative perceptions that can arise. One perception of PCS Communities that was detrimental to team building in Cleveland was the

perception that NSSF and, PCS Communities by extension, are affiliated with the NRA. Given the NRA's political stances and a recent lawsuit—filed by Ohioans for Concealed Carry, Inc. and supported by the NRA—which successfully challenged several gun control ordinances passed by the City of Cleveland, recruitment of Cleveland governmental representatives was challenging. We heard during our interviews that this affiliation also made other people skeptical of the program, and likely prevented other potential stakeholders from joining the campaign. NSSF acknowledges this was a challenge in Cleveland, and they note that they will not always be able to overcome such perceptions in a politically-charged environment. It's worth noting, however, that the perceived NRA affiliation could potentially increase participation in other cities or for certain segments of the population. The potential for both reactions suggested to the PCS Communities team that the most appropriate strategy for dealing with this perception is to advance the safety message clearly, pointing out that responsible gun ownership should be a universal goal, regardless of one's stance on gun control.

The second big messaging lesson is that the message should be tailored to the local community and should consider non-traditional gun owners. The PCS Communities team came to this realization after examining the results of discussions with community members in Memphis and Cleveland. These discussions results suggested that urban populations were less likely to identify with some of the messages and imagery used in their existing campaign materials. As one PCS Communities team member explained, "Messaging is so unique, and we've found some that works nationally and tends to be agreeable. Finding out that this PSA wasn't resonating, even though I think it's great... We could have spun our wheels if we didn't listen and people wouldn't have accepted it." Another said, "Unquestionably, if we'd had [information from community discussions] at the beginning, it would have helped our messaging and the creation of materials; that would be really big." The PCS Communities team is planning to release a new PSA soon that incorporates lessons learned from their discussions with community members.

### Sustainability

Every stakeholder was confident that, to sustain these efforts, there would need to be an external entity available to provide locks, at the very least. Most stakeholders were comfortable with the way they had been able to incorporate firearm locks distribution into their normal activities, so the primary concern was whether they would have a resource available to provide locks and to provide guidance on distribution should they need it. Additionally, certain elements of the city-level efforts would certainly seem to require a dedicated staff person, such as the media engagements and making coordinated responses to firearm accidents. It's also unclear whether the existing stakeholders would be able to recruit new partners without resources from the campaign. For instance, the Oklahoma City Police mentioned outreach to new community groups, but not as partners. The Cleveland MetroHealth Police reached out to Cleveland Police and the Cuyahoga Sheriff's Department later during implementation, although both

organizations were identified as potential partners at the beginning of the Cleveland project. Team building takes time and resources, and it may require dedicated ownership similar to the media strategy.

## Replicability

We next consider the external validity of our findings, or whether these results are generalizable to other locations and other stakeholders. We also consider here whether the PCS Communities model can stand alone without the support of NSSF or with a different entity organizing the project activities. Considering external validity is important for understanding whether the experiences reported here are due to factors associated with being selected for and participating in this version of PCS Communities (i.e., selection) or whether there were certain external factors at these locations that contributed to the observed results (i.e., history).

First, we note that only two regions of the country were represented—the South and the Midwest. Moreover, each city chosen was of similar size. Whether we could expect different outcomes in other regions is unclear.

The discussion of team-building and sustainability above highlights an important issue when thinking about whether this approach could work in other cities without a central locus of coordination. NSSF representatives noted that they plan to continue PCS Communities as part of their ongoing safety activities, and that they encourage any interested parties or cities to reach out to them for advice, as one NSSF representative explained, “Call us. We have tremendous experience now, and we can certainly help them with how to talk to gun owners. We also have a comprehensive library, and as long as they ran it in a straightforward safety manner, we’d be happy to help.”

There are several lessons learned that may make the PCS Communities model easier to replicate. Generally, many of the approaches taken by the PCS Communities team can be applied elsewhere. First, the team building approach began with core partners that were similar across sites, which was then expanded to reflect local variation. These core partners include law enforcement and other government agencies, national outdoor sports affiliates, and firearms dealers. Each of these stakeholders should be fairly well-known in each community. The next step of expansion requires a little more coordination and some help from the existing partners, but there are likely plenty of organizations in any given city who will opt-in.

## Wrap-up

Overall, the PCS Communities project was able to create city-specific firearm safety campaigns that reflected the voice and culture of each community, and involved people who would champion the campaign by incorporating the message into what they were already doing.

Having existing national partnerships helped the PCS Communities team gain early traction in building local coalitions, which they leveraged to seek out other relevant local partners.

Additionally, the PCS program has existed in some capacity since 1999. The PCS Communities team's experience in this space and NSSF's role in the gun industry give the program access and experience communicating to traditional gun owners, which supports the legitimacy of the message.

The desire to create local campaigns that reflected the voice and culture of each community required a flexible approach to coalition building and messaging. Being flexible and open to learning from the community helped PCS Communities create a more expansive and diverse group of stakeholders. Understanding the local population and the local nature of gun ownership will be important for any future iterations of the PCS Communities approach.

Despite the successes of the local campaigns and the resources available through the PCS Communities team and website, there are some questions about whether and how well this approach could be implemented elsewhere, particularly without the assistance of PCS Communities staff and resources. First, there is a question about the ability of local stakeholders to get the project started by organizing and building the local coalition network. Without the external nudging of the PCS Communities staff, it's not clear how this would have turned out. Stakeholder interviews seem to indicate that the participating organizations were effective at spreading the message, but not in recruiting other organizations to spread the message as well. The second area where local stakeholders might be limited is in their ability to engage the media and implement a media strategy for the project campaign. Smaller cities may not have local stakeholders who are experienced in working with the media.

The last concern that came up during the project involves the existing political and policy conversations around gun ownership, gun safety and safe storage, and gun control. Any future manifestations of PCS Communities may face similar claims about ulterior motives or affiliations with national groups on either side of the debate. It will be important for these local coalitions to effectively navigate this environment through appropriate partnerships and reliance on messaging that is focused on gun safety and safe storage.

Despite these potential limitations to the PCS Communities model, Project ChildSafe is well-positioned to continue its efforts in safe storage. The PCS Communities team was confident in their ability to assist local communities that are interested in implementing an approach similar to PCS Communities. Additionally, according to a recent GAO (2017) report that scanned the safe storage programming landscape, Project ChildSafe is the only program that offers freely available gun locks at a national level. This makes PCS a noteworthy component of national efforts to improve safe storage.

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