



BJA Fact Sheet

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BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE • OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

JAMES H. BURCH, II, ACTING DIRECTOR

Smart Policing Initiative

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Offering tools and knowledge that will assist state and local law enforcement in providing quality police services is an important and fundamental responsibility of the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). In the current economy, many law enforcement agencies are facing personnel layoffs and resource reductions while struggling with chronic crime. Developing tactics and strategies that are effective, efficient, and economical—as measured by reduced crime and higher case closure rates—would be of great benefit to law enforcement agencies in this era of budget constraints and limited staffing. The goal of the Smart Policing Initiative (SPI) is to identify those tactics, practices, and strategies.

To do so, SPI seeks either to build on the concepts of offender-based and place-based (“hotspot”) policing by replicating evidence-based practices or to encourage exploration of new, unique solutions to public safety problems and criminogenic circumstances. Several authoritative longitudinal projects, in the United States¹ and the United Kingdom,² have demonstrated that a small number of offenders commit a disproportionate amount of crime. It is also well-documented³ that crime reports and calls for service often cluster predominantly at specific locations or in narrow, easily defined areas. While demonstrating that random patrol and rapid response do not measurably reduce crime, substantial research also demonstrates that place-based policing can reduce violent crime and neighborhood disorder. These findings reveal that effective policing requires a tightly focused, collaborative approach that is measurable; based on sound, detailed analysis; and includes policies and procedures that promote and support accountability.

Under a national competitive solicitation, BJA awarded SPI grants to 10 law enforcement agencies throughout the United States (see table). These agencies were selected to create a sampling that is diverse in the size of its agencies and in the type of crime problem or criminogenic circumstances under consideration. BJA required applicants to enlist a research partner, demonstrate the ability to collect and analyze data, and incorporate realistic and meaningful performance measures to assess the effectiveness of their efforts.

¹Wolfgang, M.E., Figlio, R.M., and Sellin, T. 1972. *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

²Home Office. 1989. *Criminal and Custodial Careers of Those Born in 1951, 1958 and 1963*. Statistical Bulletin. London: Home Office.

³Weisburd, D., Bushway, S., Lum, C., and Yang, S. 2004. Trajectories of crime at places: A longitudinal study of street segments in the City of Seattle. *Criminology* 42(2):283–321; Sherman, L.W. and Weisburd, D. 1995. General deterrent effects of police patrol in crime hot-spots: A randomized, controlled trial. *Justice Quarterly* 12(4):625–648.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

With awards totaling nearly \$4 million, BJA is pleased to announce the Smart Policing Initiative. BJA hopes these awards, which were given to 10 law enforcement agencies, will encourage the use of evidence-based practices to address contemporary public safety problems without sacrificing innovation at the local level. BJA will publish the lessons learned from this effort for use by other law enforcement agencies confronted with similar crime problems and seeking evidence-based approaches to resolve them.

KEY POINTS

- The goal of the Smart Policing Initiative (SPI) is to identify law enforcement tactics and strategies that are effective, efficient, and economical.
- SPI seeks to build on offender-based and place-based policing by replicating evidence-based practices or to encourage exploration of new, unique solutions to public safety problems.
- Grantees described a process to identify crime problems they will address and will enlist a research partner to assess the effectiveness of their SPI efforts.

Smart Policing Initiative Grantees	
Agency (Research Partner)	Crime Problem and Police Response
Police Department, Boston, MA (Harvard University)	Robbery, burglary: Place- and offender-based policing
Police Department, Glendale, AZ (Arizona State University)	Crime-prone neighborhoods: Problem-oriented policing
Police Department, Lansing, MI (Michigan State University)	Neighborhood drug markets: Pulling Levers strategy
Police Department, Los Angeles, CA (Justice and Security Strategies)	Gun violence: Place- and offender-based policing
Police Department, Memphis, TN (University of Memphis)	Robbery, burglary: Place- and offender-based policing
Sheriff's Office, Palm Beach, FL (Florida State University)	Robbery: Victim-based (Hispanic) policing
Police Department, Philadelphia, PA (Temple University)	Violent crime: Place-, offender-, and holistic-based policing
Police Department, Reno, NV (University of Nevada)	Juvenile prescription drug abuse: Victim- and offender-based policing
Police Department, Savannah, GA (Savannah State University)	Violent, repeat offenders: Offender-based policing
Police Department, Winston-Salem, NC (Winston-Salem University)	Violence, drug markets: Intelligence-led policing

BJA believes that the experiences of these 10 agencies will add to the body of knowledge of effective police tactics and strategies. To support the SPI grantees with training and technical assistance, BJA also awarded a grant to the CNA Corporation, which has extensive experience in law enforcement operations and evaluation. CNA will assist SPI agencies in developing and implementing strategies and, based on the availability of funds, will provide training and technical assistance to other law enforcement agencies in coordination with BJA.

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