

Crime Gun Intelligence Center **Sustainability** **Toolkit**

Building Success for the Future



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Why Sustainability is Important in a Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC)

A CGIC brings together ballistic evidence, intelligence analysis, and strong partnerships to identify violent offenders, connect related shootings, and move investigations forward faster. The goal is simple: get the right information to investigators as quickly as possible to mitigate future acts of violence.

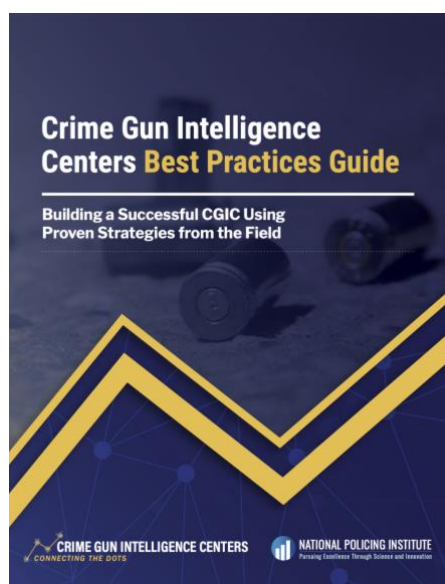
Establishing a CGIC is a major accomplishment but sustaining it and maintaining its efficiency over time is an equally meaningful endeavor. Establishing a CGIC takes time, training, equipment, and trust between various stakeholders. Neglecting those relationships or allowing processes to break down means losing capabilities that took years to develop. Focusing on CGIC sustainability protects the investment already made in establishing and operating the program.

Gun violence does not stop because a grant ends, a supervisor retires, or a detective transfers to another unit. This is why a CGIC should not be a short-term project that depends entirely on a few motivated individuals or temporary funding; rather, it should become ingrained in the gun violence investigation process.

Successful and sustainable CGICs are built on strong foundations with measurable results and outcomes that ensure they continue to function regardless of who fills a particular position.

This toolkit complements the **CGIC Best Practices Guide**, which outlines best practices for each step of the CGIC model and showcases agencies that have successfully implemented them.

Figure 1: CGIC Best Practices Guide



Key Elements of Sustainability

Building a CGIC is about putting the pieces in place: technology, equipment, policies, training, and partnerships. Sustainability is making sure those elements continue to work together long after the initial excitement of implementation wears off.

One of the most important elements of sustainability is that leadership must set the tone. Executives, commanders, and supervisors need to consistently support the CGIC, and reinforce that crime gun intelligence is part of how the agency investigates violent crime and is not optional. To reinforce this, agencies should have written policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) that clearly define how the CGIC operates.

A sustainable CGIC also develops people instead of relying on a handful of subject matter experts to ensure that everyone understands the process and can fill gaps when needed.

Partnerships require just as much attention. A CGIC is most effective when investigators, prosecutors, forensic laboratories, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), neighboring agencies, and crime analysts communicate and share information quickly. Those relationships cannot be built only when a major case happens.

Finally, agencies should not assume the CGIC can run on autopilot. Violent crime changes, offenders adapt, and technology continues to evolve. It is important to review the program regularly, identifying gaps, and adjusting when necessary are essential.

Understanding Sustainability Challenges and Risks

Sustaining a CGIC is often more challenging than establishing one. Most agencies can launch a CGIC with funding, equipment, and motivated personnel. The real challenge is keeping it effective after leadership changes, key personnel leave, funding sources end, or the CGIC culture is lost.

Leadership Turnover and Transitions

One of the biggest threats to long-term success is leadership turnover. A new chief, sheriff, command staff member, prosecutor, or CGIC supervisor may have different priorities or may not fully understand the value of crime gun intelligence. Without continued leadership support, staffing, training, technology, and partnerships can quickly decline.

Indicators of Sustainability Risk:

- New command staff showing little interest in CGIC operations.
- Violence reduction priorities shifting away from intelligence-driven investigations.
- New personnel receiving little CGIC training.

Policies and Procedures

If procedures exist only through experience instead of written guidance, the CGIC program can become vulnerable.

Indicators of Sustainability Risk:

- Cases are handled differently depending on who is assigned.
- Routine delays in National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) entries, firearm traces, or lead dissemination.
- Outdated SOPs.
- Inconsistent evidence submission practices.

Staffing and Single Points of Failure

Another common challenge is relying on people instead of processes. If critical knowledge exists only with a few investigators, analysts, or supervisors, the program becomes vulnerable every time someone transfers, retires, or is promoted. Every critical function should have a backup.

Indicators of Sustainability Risk:

- Critical positions remain vacant.
- One employee handles essential tasks with no backup.
- One employee operates NIBIN equipment.
- One analyst produces intelligence products.
- One supervisor manages partnerships.
- Critical files or passwords are controlled by one person.
- Operations slow down when one employee is absent.

“A CGIC can have the right technology, the right people, and the right processes, but without a culture that believes in the mission and people who buy into it, none of those pieces will reach their full potential.”

Lt. Josh May – Chattanooga, Tennessee, Police Department

Organizational Culture and Buy-In

A CGIC loses effectiveness when personnel stop sharing information or stop believing the process adds value. Building and maintaining buy-in at all levels of the agency is equally important. A CGIC requires patrol officers, investigators, analysts, forensic personnel, supervisors, and prosecutors to work together and use crime gun intelligence to drive investigations.

Indicators of Sustainability Risk:

- Patrol treating shell casing recovery as someone else's responsibility.
- Investigators ignoring NIBIN leads.
- Analysts brought in only after investigations stall.
- Units working independently instead of sharing information.
- Personnel viewing the CGIC as extra work instead of normal operations.

“Building partnerships is only the beginning—sustaining them requires ongoing engagement. As a regional site, we provide NIBIN certification training to agencies across the state, bringing regional partners and prosecutors together quarterly to share updates, discuss cross-jurisdictional investigations, and improve processes. We’ve built a collaborative network that strengthens crime gun intelligence throughout Arizona.”

Jessica Davis – Phoenix, Arizona, Police Department Crime Gun Intelligence Unit

Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement

A CGIC only works with the active participation of all involved criminal justice stakeholders. If participation dwindles, the CGIC's effectiveness will be at risk, which will likely result in further disengagement and ultimately jeopardize its future. Regional partnerships also require attention. Many CGICs operate as a regional hub where surrounding agencies submit firearms and ballistic evidence. Those partnerships only work if expectations are clearly established and their participation drives success.

Indicators of Sustainability Risk:

- Poorly attended or less frequent case review meetings.
- Less involvement from prosecutors.
- Fewer referrals from patrol or investigators.
- Partner agencies become less responsive.
- Successes are not being collectively celebrated and shared.

Funding

Funding is another long-term concern. Although grants are an excellent way to establish a CGIC, successful CGICs do not rely on external funding sources for sustainability.

Indicators of Sustainability Risk:

- No plan to secure critical positions or infrastructure outside of grant funding.
- Shift in current grant funding allocations toward other functions outside of the CGIC.
- Leadership no longer requests financial updates.

Overcoming Sustainability Challenges and Risks

Even well-established CGICs experience setbacks and most CGICs that fail do not do so overnight. Instead, they gradually lose momentum as leadership changes, personnel leave, priorities shift, established processes stop being followed, or partners disengage. The key is to recognize those warning signs early and correct them before they affect investigations or program performance.

The strategies below can help prevent problems, address them when they appear, and ultimately help sustain the program in the long term.

Leadership Turnover and Transitions

Leadership changes can quickly affect program support and jeopardize the CGIC's future. To counter this risk and ensure that incoming leadership and decision-makers are well informed to make good decisions, they should be briefed early on the CGIC process and how crime gun intelligence has connected shootings, identified offenders, recovered firearms, and supported prosecutions. Agencies should leverage current performance data to show how the CGIC supports their violence reduction strategy. To further mitigate sustainability risks associated with leadership transitions, it is also important to build support throughout the organization so the program is not dependent on a single champion. The collection of resources below can help inform incoming leadership about what a CGIC is and why it works.

**CGIC Leadership
Engagement Resources →**

Policies and Procedures

Successful CGICs rely on documented workflows, not institutional memory. It is crucial to document and formalize all procedures related to CGIC operations to enhance sustainability success, including evidence submission, NIBIN processing, intelligence development, lead dissemination, case reviews, investigative follow-up, and information sharing. Responsibilities should also be clearly defined in policy. Policies and procedures should be reviewed regularly to keep them current, practical, and aligned with daily operations as things adjust and evolve. Agencies should ensure that if one or more roles are removed from the CGIC workflow, there is clear guidance indicating what a replacement must do. Below are some examples of comprehensive CGIC SOPs.

**Phoenix, Arizona, Police
Department SOP →**

**Chattanooga, Tennessee,
Police Department SOP →**

Staffing and Single Points of Failure

Personnel changes are inevitable. Chiefs retire, supervisors promote, analysts transfer, and investigators move to other assignments. That is why CGICs should prepare for turnover before it happens. A sound strategy is to cross-train investigators, analysts, supervisors, and forensic personnel, by using mentoring, job shadowing, and on-the-job training to transfer knowledge. It is also important to maintain reference guides, case examples, and lessons learned so new personnel can quickly assume key responsibilities. The resource below can help ensure that a comprehensive succession plan is in place for different CGIC positions.

**Succession Planning
Checklist →**

Organizational Culture and Buy-In

Generating buy-in is often harder than buying equipment and a strong culture requires continual reinforcement. Cultural change happens organically and is the result of coordinated efforts sustained over time. In addition to the steps discussed previously, agencies can foster buy-in and reinforce cultural change by training personnel on how crime gun intelligence works and how it can improve investigations. Sharing successful cases and recognizing personnel who follow CGIC processes and share information can further increase buy-in for the CGIC program because people tend to support what they see working. It is important to reinforce that crime gun intelligence is part of everyday police work and not a special assignment. In turn, this collective understanding will propel lasting cultural change. The resources below can help build awareness for the CGIC model from the ground up.

**CGIC Patrol Engagement
Resources →**

Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement

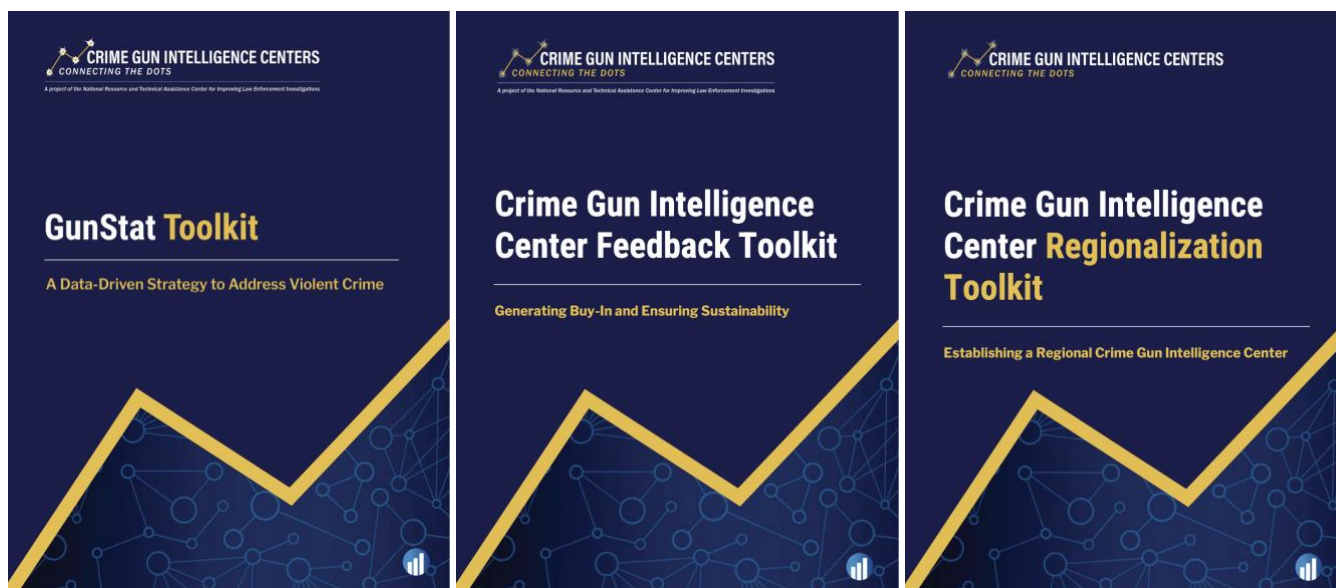
Maintaining stakeholder engagement is an ongoing challenge that affects all CGICs. Stakeholders remain engaged when their priorities align with those of the CGIC. In the same manner that it is crucial to close the feedback loop to recognize the work of individuals who contributed to successful investigations, stakeholders should also be recognized for their contributions in fulfilling common goals.

It is also important to develop opportunities for the various stakeholders to be active participants. Periodically sharing operational metrics, holding regular partner meetings to discuss successes and

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lessons learned, and asking for feedback when improving workflows are some ways that personnel can be engaged and motivated. Structured, data-driven accountability meetings, such as GunStat, are one effective way to keep leadership and partners engaged. The resources below provide guidance on strategies for securing and sustaining stakeholder engagement.

Figure 2: CGIC Toolkits



“Once NIBIN leads are received within 8-48 hours by investigators, the culture and investigative buy-in for the program will change forever. The keys to sustainability are a quality SOP fostered by continued stakeholder involvement. Whether you are a department having regular NIBIN meetings or having informal case conversations, having all stakeholders working collectively together on violent crime is essential to longevity.”

Lt. Kevin Armbruster (Ret.) – Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Police Department

Funding

If the CGIC program was established through a grant, the sustainability of the program is inherently at risk because maintaining a CGIC requires funding. Agencies should plan early to transition critical positions, equipment, software, and training that may have been funded through grants into their regular operating budget whenever possible.

Administrators should have a plan to absorb operating costs into the regular budget or identify additional funding sources before external funding sources end. Securing funding is an ongoing challenge that requires a meticulous approach to collect performance metrics that help justify the existence of the program and ensure it remains funded. This should be a consideration from the very beginning.

Agencies should proactively plan for the replacement of critical technology, like BrassTrax terminals, and associated maintenance contracts. Because budgeting and procurement processes often take significant time, sometimes years to complete, replacement planning should begin well before equipment reaches end-of-life to ensure uninterrupted operations. The resource below can help plan for sustaining CGIC funding beyond the life of a grant.

**CGIC Funding Sustainment
Planner →**

Measuring and Evaluating the CGIC for Sustainability

A CGIC is only as good as its ability to keep producing results over time. The only way to know if an agency's CGIC is staying on track is to measure it. Regularly evaluating the program helps identify challenges early, shows leadership where improvements are needed, and relays the value of the CGIC to agency executives, prosecutors, funding partners, and the community. One way a CGIC can do this is to partner with researchers or a local university. They can help analyze data, evaluate trends, and provide an independent view of program performance. Their findings can identify strengths, uncover gaps, and provide solid evidence to support funding requests or changes to CGIC operations. [CGIC: Reviewing the Evidence](#) examines available research on CGICs and offers information on the different methodologies that have been used to evaluate CGIC performance and impact.

Tracking how many cartridge cases are entered into NIBIN, how quickly leads are generated, how long it takes investigators to act on those leads, and whether firearm traces are being completed tell you whether day-to-day CGIC processes are operating in compliance with best practices. It is also just as important to evaluate the outcomes of the agency's CGIC investigations, such as shooting clearance rates, successful prosecutions, and trends in shootings and firearm homicides.

One number will never tell the whole story, but when they are evaluated together, they can show whether the CGIC is having an impact. The CGIC Metrics Guide and the CGIC Dashboard Demo provide detailed information on CGIC metrics that should be tracked and why, as well as other resources to monitor performance over time.

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Figure 3: CGIC Metrics Guide

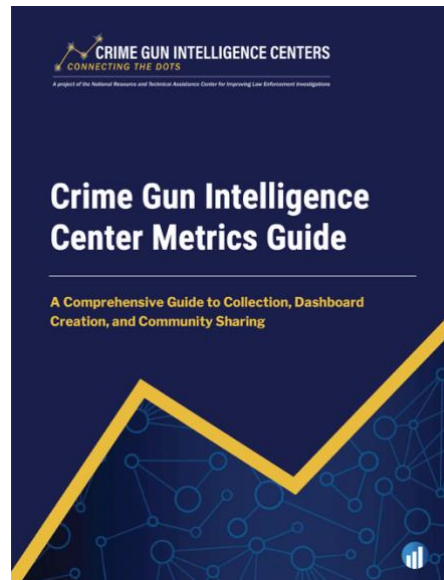
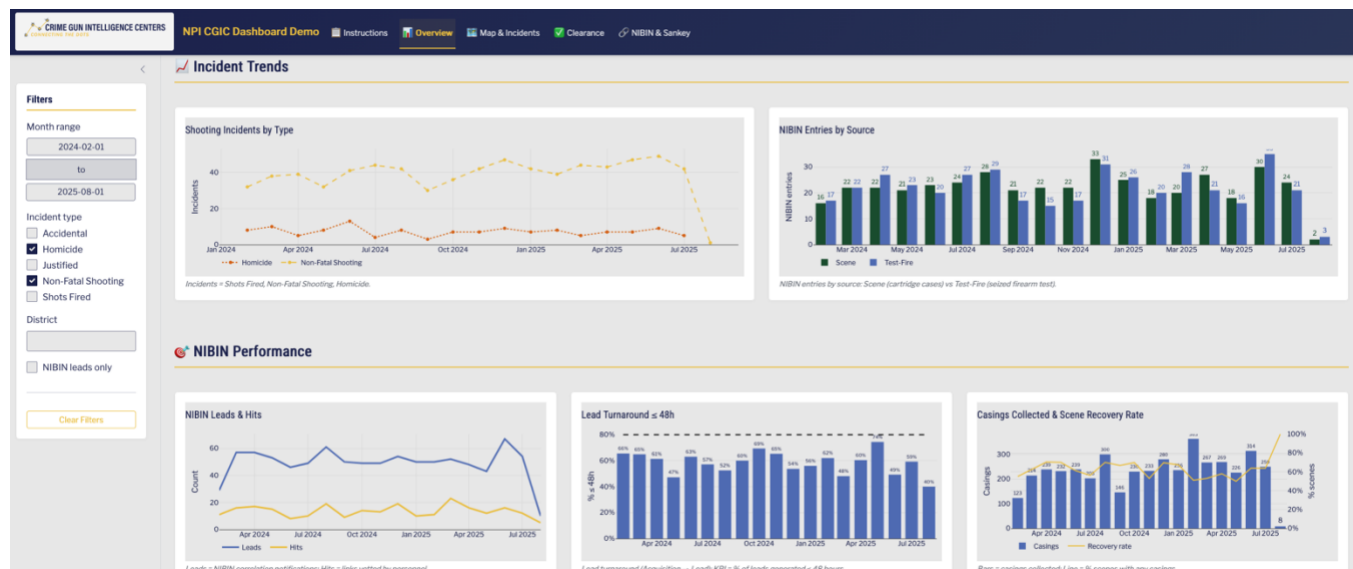


Figure 4: CGIC Dashboard Demo



A sustainable CGIC does not happen by accident. It requires leaders who pay attention to the numbers, look for problems before they become issues, and make adjustments as the program grows. Agencies that routinely measure performance, evaluate the engagement of their people and partnerships, and use data to improve operations are far more likely to sustain the CGIC, long after the initial excitement of implementation has worn off.

Agencies can use the resource below to self-evaluate and score the sustainability of the CGIC. It is recommended that newly established CGICs use it as a baseline to identify sustainability risks from the start and for already established CGICs to use it periodically to track risk factors and compare their sustainability score with prior reviews.

**CGIC Sustainability
Diagnostic Risk Register →**

Building a Sustainable CGIC

Building a CGIC is only half the job. Keeping it running and producing results year after year is what makes it successful. Every CGIC will face challenges—people retire or transfer, leaders change, grant funding ends, and priorities shift. The agencies that continue to see results are the ones that plan for those challenges before they happen.

Sustainability Steps for Agency Leaders

-  **Make the CGIC part of the agency's long-term violent crime strategy, not just a grant-funded project.**
-  **Show consistent support by providing the personnel, equipment, training, and time needed to keep the program effective.**
-  **Require regular updates on CGIC performance and use the information to guide operational decisions.**
-  **Ensure policies and procedures are documented so the program can withstand leadership and personnel changes.**
-  **Support succession planning by briefing incoming command staff and developing future supervisors, investigators, and analysts before vacancies occur.**
-  **Encourage collaboration across patrol, investigations, and forensic services, and formalize CGIC relationships with prosecutors and regional law enforcement partners.**

- ☐ **Plan for long-term funding by incorporating CGIC needs into the agency's regular budget whenever possible.**
- ☐ **Recognize and reinforce the value of crime gun intelligence across the organization to maintain buy-in at every level.**

Sustainability Steps for CGIC Supervisors

- ☐ **Keep policies, SOPs, and workflows updated and easy for new personnel to follow.**
- ☐ **Train new personnel on CGIC processes and cross-train investigators, analysts, supervisors, and forensic personnel so the program does not stop when someone leaves.**
- ☐ **Review NIBIN, firearm trace data, and investigative performance metrics regularly.**
- ☐ **Look for warning signs early, such as declining lead follow-up, delayed evidence processing, or reduced partner participation.**
- ☐ **Build strong working relationships with prosecutors, ATF, crime lab personnel, patrol, and neighboring agencies.**
- ☐ **Establish regular meetings in which CGIC stakeholders can actively participate in both the investigative and program implementation processes.**
- ☐ **Ensure that there are well-established feedback mechanisms to recognize personnel and stakeholders who contributed to CGIC successes.**
- ☐ **Capture lessons learned after major investigations and update procedures when needed.**
- ☐ **Keep leadership informed by regularly sharing results, successes, and challenges.**

A successful CGIC becomes part of the agency's culture. When everyone understands their role, follows the same process, and understands the value of crime gun intelligence, the program can continue producing results regardless of changes in personnel, leadership, or funding.

About the Authors

Alan Hughes joined the National Policing Institute (NPI) in September 2021 and currently serves as a Program Manager overseeing the CGIC Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) program. Since joining NPI, Alan has had the opportunity to assist over 50 agencies in implementing the CGIC model in their jurisdictions and has visited over 25 CGICs throughout the nation. Alan holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminology, Law, & Society with a minor in Intelligence Studies from George Mason University. Before joining NPI, Alan worked as a Paralegal for a McLean, Virginia, law firm.

Jessica Davis has worked for Phoenix Police Department for over 25 years and is the Crime Gun Intelligence Unit/NIBIN Supervisor for the Phoenix CGIC. She has been working with the Crime Gun Intelligence Unit since 2010. She is a subject matter expert in Crime Gun Intelligence with extensive experience in program implementation, organization, and policy writing; identifying challenges police departments face in the investigation of gun crimes and establishing sustainable, long-term solutions. Her experience includes, but is not limited to, writing and applying for competitive grants along with the creation of data and program related performance metrics. She has extensive experience in training, public speaking and has assisted numerous law enforcements agencies in developing proactive, sustainable programs within their cities. In addition to her role at Phoenix PD, she is a Subject Matter Expert with NPI and spent two years with the Institute for Intergovernmental Research working with the Non-Fatal Shooting Review Team. She holds a B.S. in Justice Studies from Arizona State University.

Lt. Joshua May has over 20 years of experience with the Chattanooga, Tennessee, Police Department. While an investigator, he worked in the Gang Unit for 6 years prior to being promoted to Sergeant in 2014. Once promoted, he oversaw the Group Violence Initiative as the Focused Deterrence Coordinator. In 2018, Lt. May founded the Gun Team, a proactive unit that uses NIBIN leads to solve low-, mid- and high-level gun crime. In 2020, Lt. May wrote the CGIC grant that established the Scenic City CGIC, which services eight agencies in and around Chattanooga. Lt. May also served on the CPD SWAT team for nine years.

Sarah Verin joined NPI in January 2021 and currently serves as a Senior Project Associate, working on the CGIC TTA program, assisting agencies in implementing the CGIC models within their jurisdictions. Additionally, she works on the COPS Office Law Enforcement Accreditation program, providing resources to agencies seeking accreditation. Since joining NPI, Mrs. Verin has also worked on the training and technical assistance project, CS360, with law enforcement departments across the United States with the goal of enhancing officer safety and wellness and police-community relations through data-driven strategies. Before joining NPI, she worked as an analyst at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), focusing on internet crimes against children, including online enticement and child sexual abuse material. At NCMEC, Mrs. Verin worked with law enforcement, survivors, and electronic service providers to remove images from various webpages being hosted all over the globe and assisted law enforcement in relevant investigations. She holds a Master of Arts degree in Forensic and Legal Psychology from Marymount University and a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology with a minor in Administration of Justice from the University of Pittsburgh.



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