

The Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office, with its local, state and Federal partners, looks to expand, enhance, and improve the Cuyahoga County Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) established two years ago to become a national model for jurisdictions facing similar issues. A recent CGIC assessment identified gaps in personnel, and delays that affect timely correlations. Requested grant funding will address these gaps and improve the CGIC business process to use innovative technology and provide *timely* intelligence to disrupt the shooting cycle to preventing shootings and increase prosecutions.

### **1. Description of the Issue**

Due to an increase in violent crime, the CGIC Executive Working Group was established in 2018 to leverage longstanding partnerships to form a CGIC, with the *goal of utilizing intelligence, technology, and community engagement to swiftly identify unlawfully used firearms and their sources and effectively prosecute perpetrators engaged in violent crime*. The CGIC Executive Working Group is comprised of executive-level members from the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office (CCPO), the Cleveland Division of Police (CDP), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Ohio (USAO), the Adult Parole Authority (Parole), and the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Regional Forensic Science Laboratory (CCMEO). The CGIC Analysis Center is housed and coordinated at the CCPO due to its dedication to using crime gun evidence to enhance investigations, prosecutions, and violent crime strategies involving multiple jurisdictions.

Cuyahoga County has 1,235,072 residents, and Cleveland is its largest City with 381,009 residents. *U.S. Census Bureau 2020 estimate*. Despite being less than a third of the total population, Cleveland felony submissions comprise approximately 53% of the cases submitted

to the CCPO. Within Ohio, Cleveland is the second-largest city but the most violent (1,433.56 violent crimes per 100,000 residents) – a violent crime rate that is almost four times the national rate (368.9 per 100,000). According to the most recent available FBI Uniform Crime Reports (2019), Cleveland's homicide rate (21.25 per 100,000) was over four times the national average (5.0 per 100,000). The homicide rate has increased significantly since then. In 2020, Cleveland had 178 homicides which was its largest yearly total since 1982 (when the population of the city included an additional 200,000 people). Indeed, in 2020 the 178 homicides amount to a homicide rate of 46.71 per 100,000 persons<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, as of June 30, 2021, Cleveland was already at 84 homicides (14 ahead of the 2020 pace). Felonious Assaults were also up nearly 19% in 2020 from 2019 based on year end data released by CDP.

This increase in violence extends beyond just Cleveland and into the surrounding suburbs of Cuyahoga County. Through June 30, 2021, there have been 36 homicides in Cleveland suburbs compared with only 12 through the same time period in 2020 and 11 in 2019. At this rate, the Cleveland suburbs are set to far outpace the total of 48 from all of 2020. Over the ten-year period beginning in 2010, the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's has determined that firearms are the cause of death in 75% of all homicides.

The CGIC Executive Working Group will enhance efforts to reduce violent crime by developing a more robust CGIC that leverages the expertise and capabilities of each partner and addresses the following gaps: 1) any delay from cartridge acquisition to correlation, 2) coordinated follow up with non-CDP agencies, 3) lack of process to ensure all firearms are traced throughout CDP's five police districts, 4) expand the partnership to other departments and the community.

---

<sup>1</sup> 2020 FBI UCR Data is not currently available; however, this is based on CDP's internal numbers made available to the public here: <https://clecityhall.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/yearendreport2020final.pdf>

## 2. Project Design and Implementation

The **goal** of this initiative is to utilize intelligence, technology, and community engagement to swiftly identify unlawfully used firearms and their sources and effectively prosecute armed violent offenders. The goal will be accomplished through project **objectives** designed to fill identified gaps to improve identifying armed violent offenders through intensive, timely, and ongoing collaboration among partners, especially the ATF. This will complement the City's other initiatives: Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) Strike Force targeting drug trafficking and violent crime, National Public Safety Partnership (PSP) designation June 2019, and Operation Legend.

Cuyahoga County is unique in that there are over 100 police agencies submitting felony cases for prosecution. Further complicating the issues is that CDP is broken into five police districts, and detectives are stationed within their district headquarters rather than in one location. These two factors resulted in information silos. As a result, the CCPO formed the Crime Strategies Unit (CSU) in 2015 to coordinate efforts with multiple police departments, other law enforcement agencies, and community stakeholders to implement strategies for decreasing violent crime and to be a central repository of information collection and dissemination to law enforcement countywide. The CSU is comprised of five assistant prosecuting attorneys (APA's), five crime analysts, one investigator, a paralegal, and approximately six criminology interns from surrounding universities that develop and implement data and intelligence-driven prosecution strategies to address gun/violent crime issues and target priority offenders. The CSU reviews violent offenses (homicides, robberies, shootings) and weapons violations reported by CDP, the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority Police Department, the Garfield Heights Police Department, the Maple Heights Police Department, and the Ohio State Highway Patrol, as data

shows incidents in these jurisdictions are frequently related. The analysts look for patterns/connections between these incidents and prepare materials for distribution to the prosecutors and detectives working the cases utilizing IBM's i2 Analyst Notebook link analysis software. CSU has recently acquired grant funding for additional software to utilize social media and cellphone records to enhance social network analysis in the coming years.

Beginning in 2018, CCPO began hosting a monthly CGIC meeting to review and discuss NIBIN leads. This process has evolved to meet an increase in crime and an increase in commitment from partner agencies. Currently, the CGIC hosts both a daily analysis meeting and a weekly investigative meeting at the CCPO. The daily analysis meetings begin each morning when an ATF contractor meets with a CSU APA and CSU analysts to review the NIBIN leads that were uploaded into NESS the prior evening. The ATF contractor requests all police reports from non-CDP agencies and the CSU analyst pulls all CDP reports by having direct access to CDP's record management system. The CSU APA reviews the leads for any active prosecutions to make sure any relevant NIBIN leads are forwarded to the correct prosecutor. The ATF contractor then uploads this information in NESS and distributes the leads, which now included offense summaries and listing of all involved parties, to case investigating detectives. Cleveland leads are prioritized and distributed to the four CDP CGIC detectives (these detectives are in the process of being designated as ATF TFO's). These detectives review the Cleveland incidents and provide investigative assistance when required. In 2020, 39.1% of the crime guns identified through NIBIN involved an agency other than CDP in at least one incident. A grant funded countywide investigator will address this gap by allowing for assistance throughout the county. The CCPO investigator will reach out to the non-CDP agency to determine if they need assistance investigating each viable lead.

The weekly CGIC meetings involve the CDP CGIC Detectives, CDP District Detectives, ATF, and all CSU personnel. These meetings leverage the combined intel of all involved parties. A CSU APA leads the meetings by going over each lead and opening the floor for discussion. Any active investigation or possible follow up is discussed. CSU APA's assist in bond revocation motions and search warrants. Due to COVID, the meetings now include a Zoom platform allowing parties to appear virtually. District detectives have taken advantage of this remote function, allowing them to appear at the meeting that they may not otherwise have been able to attend. This Zoom feature will be used to expand the meetings as additional partner agencies are added.

The CGIC also reviews repeat offender factors and identifies individuals who are involved in illegal use or firearms sales for proactive investigations into weapons trafficking and straw purchasing. There is so much crossover between the CPD districts and other jurisdictions for the NIBIN leads that an additional grant funded investigator is needed to improve coordination with non-CDP agencies to prevent several detectives working on a smaller part of a larger investigation and possibly missing key information.

The Mobile NIBIN Unit was detailed to CDP from August 14, 2020 until January 22, 2021. During that time, the casings that were entered into NIBIN were correlated at the NIBIN National Correlation and Training Center (NNCTC) and not CCMEO. During this time, the CGIC often received NIBIN leads with 24 to 48 hours of the casings being submitted. The CCMEO performs a variety of functions including, NIBIN entry (BRASSTRAX), NIBIN correlation (IBIS MATCHPOINT), restoring serial numbers, test firing weapons, preparing expert reports for firearm comparisons, and testifying in court. While, NIBIN entry and the preparing of expert reports have remained at high levels, the NIBIN correlation has slowed down because there are not enough Firearms Examiners to maximize output of the MATCHPOINT machine. Currently,

a NIBIN lead can take several weeks to be generated following NIBIN entry. This affects investigations because important video evidence is lost during this time period. Therefore, a grant funded Firearms Examiner will help to maximize the output of the MATCHPOINT machine and speed up correlations from CCMEO.

The CSU and CGIC also work closely with probation and Parole's Unit that focuses on high risk/high security offenders who have a history of gun and gang violence, many of whom continue to re-offend. Because of this success, Parole has agreed to check GPS trackers against shooting incidents and work with the CGIC and CDP's Real Time Crime Center (RTCC - established this year to provide real time information to officers in the field and monitor cameras across the City) to develop a notification system for law enforcement in real-time of potential shooting suspects. To complement this effort, the CCPO and the USAO have a robust working relationship and are resuming bi-monthly meetings with the CDP Gang Impact Unit and Parole to discuss shootings and the most violent offenders. The CSU and USAO discuss all gun cases, obtain law enforcement input, and make a collective decision over the appropriate prosecution venue – State or Federal. Beginning in 2018, an Assistant U.S. Attorney was detailed to handle all firearm offenses resulting from referrals at this meeting and will be included in the CGIC weekly meetings.

Even though partnerships are strong, the CGIC staffing and business process need improvement, and the CGIC will accomplish the following objectives to improve timely crime gun evidence collection and processing, NIBIN lead analysis and prioritization, and investigations to ensure timely arrests and prosecutions of violent offenders.

**Objective A: Expand CGIC Executive Working Group (Deliverable 1).** The Executive Working Group was established in 2018 and will be enhanced by the new members who are committed to the CGIC's success, evidenced by their letters of support. MOUs are already in place

between the Lab, CDP, and the ATF. The grant funded county wide investigator will work to establish success in no-CDP jurisdictions. This will assist in creating an added “buy in” from agencies that have had less success than CDP in prosecuting NIBIN offenses. The CCPO and ATF will work with all partnering departments/agencies to ensure a MOU is in place detailing staff assignments and roles/responsibilities of the expanded CGIC Team.

**Objective B: Improve the CGIC Business Process (Deliverable 2).** The CGIC Program Manager and ATF will work with each partnering agency to improve its **business process** to ensure policies and procedures are updated and/or implemented to focus on the immediate collection, management, and analysis of crime gun evidence such as shell casings and test fires of unlawfully used firearms recovered in real-time to identify criminal shooters, disrupt criminal activity, and prevent future violence. Specifically, crime gun evidence must be submitted to the Lab and *eTraced* within one business day of recovery. CDP is currently doing both collection and eTracing, but this does not consistently occur timely nor comprehensively, but rather varies from one day to weeks necessitating the need for additional training and a grant funded CDP Investigative Research Specialist (IRS). Among other duties related to the RTCC, this specialist will verify each week that all evidence has been submitted and verify that all guns have been entered into eTrace.

Cleveland is currently in the queue to be added to the ATF's NNCTC. Once added, the NNCTC will correlate all NIBIN leads within 24-48 hours, dramatically increasing the distribution of leads. Currently, all leads are being generated from the CCMEO. Last year, ATF assessed the operations of CCMEO and provided recommendations for needed staffing adjustments and policies changes (prioritize NIBIN entry over DNA and latent print testing when possible, focus on current crime gun evidence) to ensure leads are generated within 24-48 hours – the time period

varied from within hours to weeks later.. A grant funded firearm's examiner will greatly increase the hours per week that the IBIS MATCHPOINT is being operated and will increase the timeliness of correlations and leads. If Cleveland is successfully added to the NNCTC during this grant period, this grant funded examiner can be transitioned to NIBIN acquisition and the writing of experts reports for use in prosecution.

Successful prosecutions begin with successful investigations. Including a county wide investigator will ensure that necessary video is collected and witnesses are interviewed for the almost 40% of crime guns that involve a non-CDP agency.

**Objective C: Improve coordination with the RTCC (Deliverable 2 & 3).** CDP opened the RTCC in 2019. The RTCC has access to CDP dispatch and thousands of cameras throughout the city. These cameras are used to investigate crimes and can assist in identifying suspects and witnesses that may be fleeing from a crime scene. Too often though, this valuable evidence is lost during NIBIN cases. A case with an uncooperative victim and no witnesses may be a low priority for a district detective. When a NIBIN lead comes in weeks later, the CDP CGIC detectives are often unable to access the video because it is beyond the 30-day retention. A CDP IRS dedicated to the CGIC and stationed at the RTCC is necessary to review and save videos from all homicide and firearm related offenses involving the unlawful discharge of a firearm. For instance, video of a red SUV near a crime scene might not have any value until a firearm is recovered months later in a red SUV. Once the video has been reviewed and saved, it will be available later when it is needed by CGIC investigators.

**Objective D: Improve Tracking and Feedback of NIBIN Prosecutions (Deliverable 2 & 3)**  
The CCPO implemented a "NIBIN stamp" in its electronic case management system to identify and track successful NIBIN prosecutions. The grant funded CCPO Investigator will also be tasked



with keeping track of all CGIC cases by ensuring that the electronic “NIBIN stamp” is placed on all prosecution files. This stamp flags cases in the CCPO case management system allows for simple tracking of cases. The CCPO will generate a quarterly report of all cases using the NIBIN stamp, their cases status, and outcome.

The CCPO's electronic case management system automatically provides mandated court updates to crime victims, so the CCPO will explore using this system to automatically provide officers involved in the crime gun evidence collection and their superiors *feedback* on successful NIBIN prosecutions in the form of letters of accommodations. In addition, the CGIC will continue to disseminate NIBIN success write-ups to the CGIC Executive Working Group as positive *feedback* is key to the success of the CGIC moving forward to ensure buy-in.

**Objective E – Acquire Technology (Deliverable 3).** CDP has shown their dedication to the success of the CGIC by assigning four detectives to the CGIC. This Unit is led by a CDP Sergeant who supervises three detectives. These detectives work mobile and will leverage resources at the Strike Force with the CGIC Analysis Center at CCPO. These detectives will be outfitted with grant funded laptops to maximize their productivity as they operate citywide.

**Objective F: Enhance NIBIN lead prioritization (Deliverable 3).** Prioritization is determined by individuals involved, incident location, event type, time between incidents, and solvability. The CGIC will continue to meet daily and weekly and triage/prioritize NIBIN leads for immediate assignment but will improve investigations by adding a county wide investigator, and increased use of the RTCC through a CDP IRS dedicated to the CGIC. A person connected to multiple NIBIN leads with a significant criminal history will be prioritized for Federal prosecution.

**Objective G: Develop a comprehensive training program (Deliverable 4).** ATF and the CCPO have given NIBIN and *eTrace* training to CDP and suburban police departments over the years but

have not established a formal program. The CCPO APAs and CDP CGIC detectives will develop two trainings 1) evidence collection and documentation best practices for responding officers and 2) investigative best practices for detectives receiving leads and investigative support from the CGIC.

**Objective H: Increase community and non-governmental agencies involvement (Deliverable**

**5).** The CGIC Executive Working Group already participates in the monthly Project Safe Neighborhoods Stand Together Against Neighborhood Crime Everyday (STANCE) Executive Committee Meetings, briefs on shooting trends, and seeks assistance/input from the community and non-governmental organizations. All partner police and prosecutor agencies hold community meetings. The CGIC staff will attend these meetings to discuss gun violence and seek input on gang feuds, problem neighborhoods, and community engagement strategies.

**Objective I: Improve response to shots fired through gunshot detection system (Deliverable**

**6).** CDP began a two-year pilot project utilizing ShotSpotter on November 4, 2020. This three-square mile project is designed to evaluate the technology and increase the response time for shots fired. The RTCC is currently collecting data on shots fired calls. A preliminary review of the data has shown that only 15% of shooting incidents involve a call for service. This has caused a large increase in the amount of evidence collection. With this increase in shell casing collection, it is imperative to have an additional Firearms and Toolmarks Examiner to assist with the increase in recovered cartridge casings. The CGIC and partnering agencies will explore installing additional ShotSpotter in other areas throughout the County.

**Objective J: Collect performance data that reinforce the CGIC objective (Deliverable 7).**

The CGIC and CCPO Crime Analyst will collect and report out the required performance measure data. They will review and analyze gun crime data collected from the police report

management systems, ShotSpotter, prosecutor case management systems, NESS, Lab submission data, and parole and probation tracking systems *to measure the effectiveness of the CGIC in reducing crime and successfully investigating and prosecuting violent offenders*. They will track NIBIN success stories and assess any crime reduction in targeted areas through geospatial trends in gun-related crimes.

**Objective K: Prepare a final analysis report (Deliverable 8).** The Program Manager and the CGIC analysts will prepare the final report detailing the project's implementation and outcomes as well as key findings and lessons learned from this initiative.

### **3. Capabilities and Competencies**

The CCPO is dedicated to the success of data and intelligence-driven prosecution evidenced by creating the CSU and expanding the Unit over the years – this unit now consists of five prosecutors, five analysts, a research specialist, and an investigator. **Ryan Bokoch** joined the CCPO in 2006 and has been a member of the CSU since it was founded in 2015. He will serve as the Program Manager for this effort as he currently does for both the 2019 and 2020 BJA Innovative Prosecution Solutions Grants that feed into the CGIC's efforts for identifying repeat violent offenders and problem areas. Mr. Bokoch has extensive experience in handling violent firearms offenses in which NIBIN is crucial component of the evidence. Mr. Bokoch has provided training for CDP officers and ATF TFO's related to the investigation and prosecution of NIBIN related cases. He will oversee the CGIC staff, project deliverables, and information dissemination.

The **CGIC Executive Working Group** partners have a longstanding record of successful collaborations on Federal initiatives to reduce violent crime. CDP and CSU are actively engaged with Project Safe Neighborhoods and Operation Legend that result in prosecutions of the most violent offenders in the community. All partners are actively engaged in the STANCE initiative

started in the late 2000s and serves as an excellent example of a culture of sustainability among the partners. The partners also collaborate on another longstanding grant-funded initiative the Northern Ohio Violent Crime Consortium to reduce violent crime based on intelligence-led/evidence-based policing. Because of the longstanding partnerships, Cleveland was selected for an OCDETF Strike Force targeting violent crime and drug trafficking, as a National Public Safety Partnership Site in June 2019, and Operation Legend.

#### **4. Plan for Collecting and Analyzing the Data Required for this Solicitation's**

CGIC analysts will collect performance measure data necessary for all applicable objectives, deliverables, and reporting requirements. Case Western Reserve Begun Center staff (see attached support letter) have participated/currently participate in numerous DOJ-funded projects, similar to this proposed effort; therefore, they will be able to effectively assist in meeting the reporting requirements. The performance measures and data collection will be integrated into CGIC operations as they are integral to the grant key activities/deliverables and will be used to guide policy/procedure recommendations and a toolkit and training development.

#### **5. Sustainability Planning**

The County Prosecutor is dedicated the CGIC evidenced by the number of staff currently assigned and the additional office space that has been dedicated for CGIC partners. Additionally, Cleveland was selected for a Strike Force, is a PSP city, and is part of Operation Legend all ensuring continued coordination among partners. The CGIC Executive Working Group members have entered MOUs in prior endeavors and are committed to executing a CGIC MOU. The proposed process and outcome evaluation will aid in sustainability efforts. The CGIC will continue to expand by adding more County departments and agencies to truly have a countywide approach.