U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance

FY 2021 Local Law Enforcement Crime Gun Intelligence Center Integration Initiative

City of Charlotte
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department

PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Introduction

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) is a local law enforcement agency, comprised of 1,982 officers and 475 civilian employees, dedicated to providing problem-oriented, data-driven, and evidence-based practices that improves its service delivery to the 951,287 residents of the City of Charlotte and unincorporated areas of Mecklenburg County. The primary mission of the CMPD is to protect lives and enforce North Carolina State Law. The identification of firearm related violent offenders aligns with the CMPD's mission and is critical to protecting lives. In addition to identifying offenders, it is essential that effective cases are established so that violent offenders are properly prosecuted.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg community has experienced a precipitous increase in firearm related violent crime over the past three years, and the CMPD has continued to implement measures to improve safety. This proposal narrative seeks $700,000 through the Bureau of Justice Assistance's (BJA) FY2021 Local Law Enforcement Crime Gun Intelligence Center Integration Initiative to address the increase in firearm related violent crime in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community by identifying unlawfully used firearms and their sources, effectively prosecuting perpetrators engaged in violent crime, and developing a safer community.

Description of the Issue

The CMPD's jurisdiction has experienced a significant increase in population growth in the last five years. There was also a significant increase in firearm related violent crime during this same period, as evident in the Firearm Related Violent Crime Statistics generated by the CMPD's Crime Analysis Division. As referenced in Table 1 below, from 2016-2020, there has been a precipitous increase in firearm related crime involving murder victims and non-fatal gunshot victims in relation to population growth.

Table 1: CMPD Firearm Related Violent Crime Statistics 2016-2020

	2016	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Firearm Related Murders	51	67	47	85	103
Non-fatal Gunshot Victims	343	302	316	340	511
CMPD Jurisdiction Population	847,700	869,495	886,164	930,613	951,287
Rate Per 100,000 Population					
Firearm Related Murder Victims	6.0	7.7	5.3	9.1	10.8
Non-fatal Gunshot Victims	40.5	34.7	35.7	36.5	53.7

Although the number of firearm related murders and non-fatal gunshot victims decreased in 2018, those numbers increased tremendously in 2019 and 2020.

According to the CMPD's Firearm Related Violent Crime Statistics, in 2018-2020 firearm related violent crime increased in the following categories: assault with a deadly weapon (ADW), shooting into occupied property (SIOP), violent crime non-fatal gunshot incidents, violent crime non-fatal gunshot victims, and homicide fatal gunshot victims. Table 2 below indicates the increased amount of firearm related violent crimes by category for 2018-2020.

Table 2: CMPD Gun Crime Statistics by Category 2018-2020

	2018	**2019**	**2020**	**Percent Change**
ADW-Gun Incidents	1,281	1,441	1,947	+35.1%
SIOP	530	631	927	+46.9%
Violent Crime: Non-Fatal Gunshot Incidents	279	305	456	+49.5%
Violent Crime: Non-Fatal Gunshot Victims	316	340	511	+50.3%
Homicide/Murder: Fatal Gunshot Victims	47	85	104	+22.4%

Per UCR data reported in the CMPD's 2020 end of the year Crime Statistics Report, there were 122 homicides in 2020 compared to 103 in 2019, an 18.4% increase. There was a 6.7% increase in strong armed robbery and a 28.6% increase in firearm related aggravated assault. Due to the increase in violent crime, the CMPD continues to face challenges deploying additional resources and necessary personnel such as patrol officers, detectives, and crime scene search to

aid in their crime reduction efforts. This increase has also resulted in a heavier case load for the CMPD's Crime Lab (Crime Lab) and Investigative Services Group.

To address the increase in firearm related violent crime, the CMPD proposes to use funds from this grant program to establish a Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) by connecting with Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) partners to use intelligence, technology, and community engagement to quickly identify unlawfully used firearms and their sources and to partner with a subrecipient, Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office, to review firearm cases that occur within the jurisdiction of Mecklenburg County and effectively prosecute perpetrators engaged in violent crime.

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Project Design and Implementation

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The CMPD and Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office are committed to developing a safer community and propose to use program funds to address the increase in firearm related crime withing the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community by adhering to BJA's ATF CGIC model and accomplish the following goals:

Goal 1: Establish a Collaborative Working Group:

The CMPD will establish a collaborative working group to identify unlawfully used firearms and their sources and effectively prosecute perpetrators engaged in violent crime by partnering with ATF, the United States (US) Attorney's Office of the Western District of North Carolina, North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office, an Academic Organization in addition to representatives from the following local law enforcement agencies: Cornelius Police Department; Davidson Police Department; Huntersville Police Department, Mint Hill Police Department; Mathews Police Department; and Pineville Police Department. The CMPD's partnership with ATF will utilize the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) to identify and investigate violent crime in the Charlotte-

Mecklenburg area. The US Attorney's Office will review firearm related cases that occur in Mecklenburg County and prosecute appropriate cases in federal court. Mecklenburg County DA's Office will review firearm cases that occur in their jurisdiction and will prosecute appropriate cases in state court. The CMPD will partner with other local law enforcement agencies to allow them to submit their firearm related evidence to its Crime Lab for analysis. This working group will be established by an MOU detailing partner roles and responsibilities.

Goal 2: Enhance the CMPD's Firearms Taskforce:

The CMPD currently maintains a firearms taskforce comprised of five CMPD detectives, six ATF agents, a State of North Carolina probation officer, a CMPD Sergeant, and an ATF Group Supervisor. This team has been working together under existing MOUs and will continue to do so unless additional agreements are required. CMPD Detectives and ATF agents receive case assignments from the supervisory agents and CMPD sergeants for investigation. The detectives and agents then work with federal and local prosecutors to build effective cases for prosecution. The NC Probation Officer uses the authority given through the state to address issues with previously convicted offenders that are potential serial crime gun offenders. Grant funding will allow the CMPD to add a dedicated Data Analytics Specialist, Crime Laboratory Technician, and partner with a subrecipient, Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office, to prosecute firearm offenders in a more efficient manner.

Goal 3: Establish a Crime Gun Intelligence Center Business Model:

In early 2020, discussions between the CMPD and ATF led to an aggressive push to add resources to the CMPD's Crime Lab to expand the NIBIN Program. The goals of the expansion were to test fire all firearms of ATF-approved calibers for entry in the database while continuing to receive, triage, and enter all fired cartridge cases from crime scenes, and disseminate NIBIN investigative leads within the timeframe outlined in the ATF's Minimum Required Operating

Standards for NIBIN sites. To meet these goals, the Crime Lab streamlined internal processes and assigned additional staff to assist with the program. The Firearms Section of the Crime Lab implemented a process of receiving and triaging all discharged cartridge cases from crime scenes. Triaging the fired evidence allowed qualified firearm examiners to determine how many firearms were involved and select representative samples from crime scene evidence to be entered in the database. The triaged evidence is then forwarded to the NIBIN technician(s) for entry in the NIBIN database.

In February of 2020, the reporting of NIBIN database associations changed to incorporate the "investigative leads" process recommended by the ATF. Investigative leads, or unconfirmed investigative leads, are database links between evidence that have not gone through a full confirmation examination by a firearm examiner. Before this change, all NIBIN database links were confirmed by a firearm examiner prior to the information being released. Removing the confirmation step significantly shortened the process of distributing the information to officers.

In April 2020, four part-time retired officers were trained to assist with test firing the backlog of guns waiting to be entered in NIBIN. In May 2020, one of the officers also received training to assist with the entry of test-fires and evidence samples in the database. A retired NIBIN Technician was hired as a contract employee in June of 2020 to assist with the acquisition and correlation of NIBIN exhibits for approximately 24 hours per week during third shift hours.

These process improvements and staffing additions have eliminated the backlog of guns waiting to be test fired and generated other benefits. There has been an increase in the number of investigative leads, and the turn-around time for distributing NIBIN investigative leads has improved significantly. The test-firing of all firearms of ATF approved calibers received by the department is also currently up to date. Firearms are now test-fired within three business days of the incident. Likewise, crime scene cartridge cases are now entered within three days of the

shooting. In the first 12 months after implementing the investigative lead process, the Crime Lab released 795 investigative leads. This is a significant increase over the 70 confirmed leads released by the Crime Lab in 2019 when all database links were confirmed by a full microscopic examination. In addition, 65 of the investigative leads involve evidence from other jurisdictions throughout North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. The unconfirmed investigative leads are distributed by e-mail to officers assigned to the case, the ADW Suppression Investigative group, the ATF, and the CMPD's Crime Analysis Division. The Crime Analysis Division is able to link the investigative leads to previous links and other investigative information to provide all stakeholders with a comprehensive picture of the investigation. The Crime Lab follows these steps regarding the NIBIN Program to ensure the effective delivery and processing of firearms and fired evidence: All fired evidence items consisting of discharged cartridge cases from crime scenes are submitted each day to the Crime Lab to be triaged and entered into the NIBIN database; All non-homicide firearms of ATF-approved calibers are submitted to the Crime Lab to be test fired and entered into the database; All firearms and fired evidence that are examined and/or compared at the request of detectives including homicide evidence are entered into the database; Database links between fired evidence and firearms are distributed as investigative leads to the officers assigned to the case; the ADW Suppression Investigative Group, the ATF, and the Crime Analysis Division.

Goal 4: Effectively Investigate Firearm Related Violent Crime:

The CMPD will hire one full time Crime Laboratory Technician to provide support to the NIBIN Program by receiving and processing firearm related evidence to include screening discharged cartridge cases for IBIS entry, test firing recovered firearms, entering exhibits in the NIBIN database, making entries in the NIBIN database, and reviewing correlation results.

To ensure that all gun crimes and guns are submitted accurately, the CMPD will continue

to use the Property and Laboratory Information Management System (PLIMS). PLIMS enables CMPD to track every crime gun and piece of fired evidence along with all CMPD evidence items from the initial point of seizure, through all steps of analysis and evidence data entry associated with that specific firearm. In addition to using PLIMS, the CMPD's Property Control and Evidence procedures for the intake of firearms requires the entry of all fired evidence into the KBCOPS, the CMPD's in-house records management system (RMS). The CMPD will use tracking mechanisms in the KBCOPS-RMS to track the number of cases referred to the CGIC. KBCOPS has the ability to track the clearance status and offender information associated to crime gun cases. Once the item is submitted to the Property and Evidence Unit, the submitting officer is required to complete the paper eTrace form. The evidence is accepted by the unit and immediately logged and transferred to the custody of the CMPD's Crime Lab for testing. The eTrace form is then entered into the electronic eTrace system (NTC). Department policy requires system entries of all firearms and fired evidence. The CMPD will continue to evaluate its policies to ensure that this process is followed, as this will provide the ability to report the number of guns seized and the number of trace forms completed.

Goal 5: Establish a Comprehensive Training Program:

Members of the CMPD's CGIC Team will attend the two-day CGIC Site Training located in Columbia, South Carolina to implement the CGIC integration initiatives essential elements and receive training on key issues concerning gun-related violent crime intelligence, investigations, and prevention. Training attendees and team members who serve as subject matter experts due to their knowledge and experience with firearm investigations, will be responsible for conducting on the job training with detectives from partnering agencies to aid in the effective implementation of the CGIC Team.

Goal 6: Establish a Violent Crime Prevention Strategy:

The CGIC Team will conduct community outreach by providing NIBIN related success stories to the CMPD's Public Affairs Office and request that they conduct a media release in an effort to increase awareness of the CGIC Program to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. Additionally, CGIC success stories will also be featured in the newsletters that will be developed and administered by the CMPD's Patrol Services Group. Each CMPD patrol division will distribute the newsletters to the community leaders located in their specific service area.

Goal 7: Establish an Improved Response to Gun Shots Fired:

The CMPD will hire one full-time Data Analytics Specialist to provide analytical support to the CGIC Team. This position's responsibilities will include using crime analysis software to conduct research to identify patterns and trends related to violent firearm-related crimes, analyzing long term patterns and trends using probability studies and complex statistical analysis, developing, and testing hypotheses, forecasting future activities, developing comprehensive victim and suspect profiles and compiling and analyzing findings. The Data Analytics Specialist will also compile a monthly report analyzing the calls for service associated to shots fired, fired evidence submissions, the number of firearms seized, crime gun arrests, and any other gun crime related information as reported in the KBCOPS-RMS. This information will be provided to CGIC team members and will be used to direct operational efforts on specific geographic locations, offenders, or trends.

Goal 8: Effectively Prosecute Cases Involving Firearm Related Violent Crime:

Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office proposes to use their portion of funding to hire one full-time Assistant District Attorney to review firearm related cases that occur with Mecklenburg County's jurisdiction and to appropriately prosecute cases in North Carolina State Court.

Goal 9: Completion of a Final Analysis Report:

The CMPD will partner with an academic organization as a subrecipient to evaluate the effectiveness of the CMPD's CGIC Program. Upon completion of the evaluation, this organization will provide a final analysis report describing the implementation and outcomes of the program.

<p align="center">Capabilities and Competencies</p>

The CMPD's experience in partnering with ATF in utilizing the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) to identify and investigate violent crime in the Charlotte region of North Carolina has increased the agency's knowledge, ability, and best practices using NIBIN and dedicating additional resources for both their Crime Lab and their Firearms Task Force. The CMPD will expand its capabilities by including local law enforcement agencies, testing additional evidence in their region, and partnering with Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office and the United States Attorney's Office of the Western District of North Carolina to prosecute firearm cases through the establishment of their CGIC Team. The CMPD will serve as the lead agency for this initiative.

As the administrative lead of the CMPD's Special Investigations Bureau, Major Alex Watson holds overall responsibility for the success of this program and has obtained full support from the CMPD's Chief of Police and his Executive Staff. Major Watson will serve as the central point of contact for the CGIC Team and will be responsible for collaborating amongst agencies and coordinating quarterly meetings. He will ensure that all administrative operations are completed to their full capacity. Major Watson joined the CMPD in 1998 and has held the following positions within the agency prior to his current role, Patrol Services Major, Independence Division Captain, Operations Command Lieutenant, Violent Crimes Lieutenant, Patrol Lieutenant, Internal Affairs Sergeant, Patrol Sergeant, Recruitment Background

Investigator, and Patrol Officer. Major Watson obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in Social Studies from Lee-McRae College and Master of Business Administration from Pfeiffer University.

The following paragraphs will identify the roles and responsibilities of key team members and agencies that will serve on the CMPD's CGIC Team.

CMPD Personnel (Crime Laboratory Technician and Data Analytics Specialist)

The Crime Laboratory Technician will be responsible for providing support to the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN) Program by receiving and processing firearm related evidence to include screening discharged cartridge cases for IBIS entry, test firing recovered firearms, entering exhibits in the NIBIN database, making entries in the NIBIN database, and reviewing correlation results.

The Data Analytics Specialist will be responsible for conducting research to identify patterns and trends related to violent firearm-related crimes, analyzing long term patterns and trends using probability studies and complex statistical analysis, developing, and testing hypotheses, forecasting future activities, developing comprehensive victim and suspect profiles, compiling, and analyzing findings, and collecting all performance measure data.

Collaborative Team Efforts

The CMPD's partnership with ATF will involve utilizing the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) to identify and investigate violent crime in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area.

As a subrecipient, Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office will be responsible for hiring the Assistant District Attorney whose responsibilities will include reviewing firearm cases that occur within the jurisdiction and prosecuting appropriate cases in state court. The United States Attorney's Office of the Western District of North Carolina will review firearm related cases that

occur in Mecklenburg County and prosecute appropriate cases in federal court.

Plan for Collecting the Data Required for this Solicitation's Performance Measures

The Data Analytics Specialist will provide analytical support for the CGIC program by collecting performance measurement data. They will be responsible for compiling a monthly report analyzing the calls for service associated to the number of shots fired, the number of fired evidence submitted, the number of firearms seized, crime gun arrests, and any other firearm-related information reported in the CMPD's KBCOPS-RMS. This information will be provided to CGIC team members. The data will be used to direct CGIC operational activities on specific geographic locations, offenders, or trends.

The CMPD will continue to use PLIMS to ensure that all firearms are submitted accurately. PLIMS provides the ability to track every firearm and fired evidence in addition to all other CMPD evidence items. The system will allow the CMPD to track the seizure of all firearm evidence from the initial point of seizure, through all steps of analysis in addition to all data entries associated with that specific firearm or piece of evidence.

The CMPD's Property Control and Evidence procedures for the intake of firearms and fired evidence requires the entry of the evidence into the KBCOPS RMS. Once the item is submitted to the Property and Evidence Unit, the submitting officer is required to complete an eTrace form. Once the form is completed, it is entered into the electronic eTrace system (NTC). The associating evidence is accepted by the unit and immediately logged and transferred to the custody of the CMPD Crime Lab for any required testing. Department policy requires that all firearms and fired evidence be entered into the system. The CMPD will continue to ensure that this process is followed as it will provide the ability to report the number of guns seized and the number of trace forms completed. The CMPD will use the KBCOPS-RMS to track the number of cases referred to the CGIC in addition to clearance status and offender information associated to

any firearm-related crime. The CMPD will also use this system to track suspects and offenders and the number of cases assigned to the CGIC Team.