

PSN TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Monthly Newsletter



Thank you for following our monthly Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) bulletin. The monthly bulletin highlights TTA and resources provided to PSN task forces and local law enforcement agencies. TTA requests can be made online [here](#). If you have questions regarding TTA, please contact your regional TTA liaison or the PSN TTA team at psntta@cna.org.

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PSN SPOTLIGHT: NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO

A three-month, violent-crime-reduction initiative in Cleveland led to 59 individuals being charged and arrested in connection with firearms trafficking, narcotics, conspiracy, or other firearms offenses.

“The Justice Department’s work to disrupt and dismantle the criminal gun trafficking pipelines that flood our communities with illegal guns has never been more urgent than it is now,” said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland. “That is why our prosecutors and agents are working more closely than ever before with our local law enforcement partners to get illegal guns off of our streets and hold accountable those who put illegal guns in the hands of violent criminals.”

Read more about their efforts [here](#).



PRACTITIONERS, RESEARCH PARTNERS, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS: A PROMISING COLLABORATION MODEL FOR ADVANCING PRACTICE AND RESEARCH FOR PSN

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My goal for this contribution is to call for research attention to the collaboration model composed of three components: 1) practitioners, 2) research partners, and 3) technical assistance (TA) providers. This model has become the Bureau of Justice Assistance's (BJA) standard to increase the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of law enforcement, criminal justice, and correctional practices; however, it has been understudied. I argue that this three-component research collaboration model deserves additional attention in its entirety as a comprehensive approach that "brings more 'science' into criminal justice operations,"[1] increasing the extent to which they are data-informed and evidence-based.

Personally, I did not receive training on community-engaged research in graduate school, and I was seven years into my academic career before an opportunity was presented to me. It would be two additional years before I engaged in a collaborative model that included TA providers, as I was contracted to serve as the research partner for the City of Omaha's PSN grant in 2012. Ed McGarrell and Heather Perez from Michigan State University (MSU) led the TA efforts, while the Omaha Police Department (OPD) served as the practitioner grantee, led by a dedicated PSN coordinator within the United States Attorney's Office. The goal was to reduce gang and gun violence in identified areas of the city. We all brought somewhat unique but complementary skills and knowledge to the table. The practitioners (OPD) knew the city and its crime hot spots. The TA providers (MSU) had vast knowledge of how PSN had worked historically in Omaha and other similar areas, and the research partner (myself) brought the "book" knowledge, data-management skills, and research skills to the collaboration.

[1] Center for Research Partnerships and Program Evaluation (CRPPE), Bureau of Justice Assistance, <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/crppe/smart-suite>.

Our local collaboration was further bolstered by convenings of PSN “Research Partner Orientation Courses,” “Smart/Innovations Suite Researcher-Practitioners Fellows Academies,” and PSN National Conferences, which brought together practitioners, researchers, and TA providers on a national scale, sharing expertise and knowledge, as well as providing formalized trainings in modern techniques of crime and gang reduction. More recently, I have served as the research partner for BJA Second Chance Act grants and a BJA Innovations in Supervision Initiative, which also include TA providers and in-person convenings for training and the sharing of expertise across sites[2].

In my experience, research partners and practitioners are often unaware of the full array of benefits that TA providers can bring to the table, such as insights gleaned from similar implementation sites, implementation expertise, research, data, and methodological expertise, recommendations for sustainability, and online resources, such as those found on the PSN website ([TTA Resources – PSN Training and Technical Assistance \(psntta.org\)](https://www.psntta.org)).

Scholarship on researcher-practitioner partnerships is often anecdotal.[3] Quantitative research of PSN sites indicates that **researcher-practitioner partnerships including a higher dosage of “research integration into strategic planning” result in significant, but modest, declines in rates of violent crime.**[4] Additionally, a more nuanced examination of the impact of research partners’ impact on program evaluation suggests that a larger focus on data and analysis from the beginning of a project leads to better implementation outcomes.[5] Distinguishing the unique contributions of research partners versus TA providers introduces an even larger challenge, but is of importance.

I highly recommend that practitioners communicate with their research partners and TA providers to make the best use of their expertise for improving their violence-reduction initiatives. Moreover, research partners should spend more time getting to know their TA providers and taking advantage of the expertise and resources that they bring to the table. When I began my career in engaged research, I did not ask enough questions. As the researcher, I was afraid of looking dumb and I also did not know what I did not know. Invest your time in getting to know the TA provider for your site. As Stephen Covey asserts, trust is the one thing that truly changes everything.[6] Build trust in your collaboration to produce lasting change in your communities!

[2] For a full list of BJA’s Smart Suite of programs, see: <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/crppe/smart-suite>.

[3] Scaggs, S. 2023. *Perspectives on Practitioner-Researcher Partnerships*. RTI International. <https://www.rti.org/insights/research-practitioner-partnerships-criminal-justice>.

[4] McGarrell, E.F., Corsaro, N., Hipple, N.K., & Bynum, T.S. (2010). Project Safe Neighborhoods and violent crime trends in US cities: Assessing violent crime impact. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 26, 165–190. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10940-010-9091-9>.

[5] Saunders, J., Hipple, N.K., Allison, K. & Peterson, J. (2020). Estimating the impact of research practitioner partnerships on evidence-based program implementation. *Justice Quarterly*, 37(7), 1322–1342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2020.1831578>.

[6] Covey, Stephen M. R. 2008. *The Speed of Trust*. London, England: Simon & Schuster.

Here, I offer my short-term recommendations for moving forward the science of the implementation of evidence-based practices for violence reduction:

- 1 PSN sites adopting this model of collaboration should devote time during the planning period to the task of describing the roles and goals of each entity, as well as the benefits that each can provide. This does not always happen, as I have worked with practitioners who were well into their grant cycle, yet had little understanding of why they had been assigned a TA provider.
- 2 Implementation science research on PSN interventions and similar initiatives should focus on advancing the validity and reliability of measures of important components of program implementation, including the relative inputs of TA providers and research partners.
- 3 Within larger, more standardized grant initiatives (such as PSN or the Second Chance Act Demonstration Program), rigorous comparisons should be made between a) sites utilizing practitioners alone, b) sites including research partners, c) sites including technical assistance providers, and d) sites including the full collaboration model with all three components. Such studies should include a focus on implementation outcomes, outcomes of the intervention(s), and cost-effectiveness of the model adopted.

WEBINARS

Prosecuting Ghost Gun Cases

Date:

October 5, 2023

3:00–

4:00 p.m. ET

[Registration link](#)

Basic Digital Forensic Analysis: Windows Acquisition

Date:

October 31 -

November 2, 2023

9:00 a.m.–

6:00 p.m. ET

[Registration link](#)

Follow [@PSNTTA](#) on Twitter to receive regular updates, learn about resources, or ask questions.



GRANTS SPOTLIGHT BY JOAN BRODY: WRITING A CONCEPT PAPER

Concept papers are essentially project summaries or outlines. I consider them “mini proposals” that provide just enough information to higher-ups or potential grantors to get permission to start working on a grant application.

Below is a concept paper template about a fictitious drug prevention/intervention project. I chose this example thinking about the current opioid and fentanyl crisis and the growing number of public and private funding opportunities to address it. As always, please reach out with any questions.

Concept Paper Template

1. Introduction—Write about your need and what you would like to do/fund to address that need.

Example: ABC City Police Officers are seeing an alarming increase in drug overdose cases in the downtown retail area. ABC City would like to put together a multi-agency team that includes police, EMS, public health, local businesses, drug treatment providers and others to develop and implement the XYZ Pilot Project to effectively intervene in overdose cases and develop a drug prevention campaign.



GRANTS SPOTLIGHT, CONTINUED

2. Need—Write a paragraph that includes any quantitative and/or qualitative information about the problem.

Example: ABC City has seen an X% increase in calls involving drug overdoses during the past six months in the downtown area. The majority of overdoses occur in fast food restaurant and coffee shop restrooms. Many are repeat calls involving repeat users who are known to the police and EMS. Research has shown that drug users who are enrolled in outpatient drug treatment have an X% better chance of avoiding relapse than users who are not. Criminal justice researchers have also proven that employing swift and certain sanctions helps reduce recidivism. Under the proposed XYZ Pilot Project, ABC City proposes offering swift and certain referrals to drug treatment to help prevent relapse and overdosing.

3. Project Scope—Write a paragraph about what steps you will take to get this project off the ground.

Example: Under the proposed XYZ Pilot Project, the ABC City Police Department will lead a multi-agency effort to develop a Rapid Treatment Team (RTT) comprised of a police officer, EMS professional, drug treatment case manager and others, as needed, to rapidly respond to overdose calls and develop and implement a referral process that transports users to needed medical and drug treatment programming. The first step of the proposed pilot project will include convening a planning team composed of police, EMS, public health, local business representatives, drug treatment providers and a project evaluator. The planning team will develop protocols and processes for the RTT that will include assessment/referral services, immediate transportation to medical and drug treatment, and case management services. Additionally, the planning team will develop recommendations for a drug overdose prevention campaign, including social media and community-based messaging strategies.



GRANTS SPOTLIGHT, CONTINUED

4. Project Outcomes—Write about what you want to accomplish.

Example: It is anticipated that through this intervention and prevention project, overdose deaths, overdose calls and the number of repeat user calls will decline. It is also hoped that businesses in the affected downtown area will report increased pedestrian traffic, sales, and other positive outcomes.

5. Timeline and Costs—Provide initial cost estimates.

Example: The proposed pilot is one year. Funding will be needed for supplies, transportation, developing a speedy assessment/referral tool, case management and drug treatment services and project evaluators. Agency overtime funding will also be needed. A local advertising firm will donate their services in-kind. The total cost of the XYZ Pilot Program is estimated at \$XXXXXX. Please see initial budget estimates below (include brief sample budget numbers).

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