



Innovative Solutions for Public Safety

Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships and Action Research

INNOVATIONS TO REDUCE VIOLENT CRIME – A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE OF POLICE LEADERS AND RESEARCHERS SHARING BEST PRACTICES

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) is supporting local, state, and tribal law enforcement agencies, and the communities they serve, through Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), the PSN Innovations Suite of grant programs, and the Partnerships for Public Safety (PSP). These programs foster partnerships, targeted and prioritized enforcement, prevention, and data-driven decision-making, all intended to reduce violent crime and enhance public safety. One example of such innovative PSN strategies is Detroit. For years Detroit has experienced some of the highest levels of violent crime in the nation. In recent years, however, Detroit has developed a comprehensive set of approaches that have included people-, group-, and place-based strategies. These include Ceasefire Detroit that uses a focused deterrence model to address gang and group violence. The PSN task force combines targeted enforcement aimed at high risk individuals, groups, and hotspot locations, police-probation-parole collaboration, and joint federal and county prosecution screening. Detroit One and Gunstat focus on the most violent offenders and include accountability tracking of cases as they move from arrest through prosecution. Detroit's Project Greenlight utilizes technology to address violent crime at small business locations and includes partnerships between the city, police department, and small business owners. These strategies have built upon crime analysis and innovative analytical techniques including social network analysis, geospatial analyses, and Risk Terrain Modeling. The results have been impressive as the city avoided the increase in violent crime experienced in many U.S. cities in 2015 and 2016. Indeed, in 2017 the city experienced a 12 percent reduction in homicides and the PSN focus area experienced a 30 percent decline in fatal and non-fatal shootings.

In developing these strategies, Detroit shared ideas and built upon the experience of other cities that are linking research, analysis, and focused strategies for reducing violent crime. The Cincinnati and Kansas City Police Departments provided training in social network and social media analysis that support the focused deterrence strategy. Los Angeles Police Department's LASER program provided a model for combining hotspot analyses with intelligence-led enforcement aimed at chronic violent offenders. Chicago, Denver, and Seattle have shared lessons learned about Crime Gun Intelligence Centers and the use of NIBIN to support investigations and provide intelligence on people and groups involved in multiple shootings. These cities are working with their research partners and crime analysts to focus enforcement resources on the people, groups, and places driving violent crime at the local level. The lessons learned have included peer-to-peer learning across these cities, enhanced public safety, and information crucial to officer safety.



Through its **Innovations Suite** grant programs, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) supports researcher-practitioner partnerships and the action research model. The action research model promotes evidence-based practice and innovation with the goal of enhancing public safety in local communities throughout the United States. Criminal justice professionals and researchers are asked to work in partnership to support public safety goals. Some may wonder what do we mean by a research partnership and action research, and, why engage in such a partnership?

What is a Research Partnership?

A research partnership involves an active collaboration between criminal justice professionals and researchers. The partners work jointly to identify the key problems that are affecting public safety; to raise research questions; to develop a logic model linking problem analyses, strategies, activities, outputs, and desired outcomes; to support effective implementation of strategies; to plan and carry out an evaluation to determine if the solution is working; and to plan for sustainability. The key to a successful partnership is that it involves active engagement and collaboration –and, it meets the needs of all the partners. Criminal justice professionals bring deep understanding of crime issues and criminal justice system challenges. Researchers bring systematic analytical skills that can be applied to these problems. The result is “**research informed practice**” and “**practice informed research**”.

Why a Research Partnership?

BJA has supported research partnerships for several decades. This experience has demonstrated that effective researcher-practitioner relationships lead to innovative public safety strategies. This occurs through a number of activities:

- Given resource limitations, it is essential to target resources on the key drivers of crime and violence as well as the key challenges facing criminal justice organizations. Research partners can listen and learn from criminal justice partners and analyze a variety of data sources to shed new light on the problem being addressed.
- Having analyzed the problem, the research partner can review the scientific literature and share evidence-based practices as well as evidence-informed innovations. Criminal justice professionals can then consider these innovations in local context building on assets and strengths while avoiding limitations and obstacles.
- A logic model can greatly assist in planning strategies, identifying milestones, creating accountability systems, and ultimately achieving the desired outcome of public safety. Research partners can assist the team develop this logic model that incorporates multiple partners’ needs and perspectives.
- Many evidence-based and innovative strategies fail to have their intended impact due to implementation failures. Implementation is difficult. The research partner can support the team’s goals for effective implementation by monitoring implementation success,

WHAT CAN A RESEARCH PARTNER CONTRIBUTE TO THE PARTNERSHIP?

- Systematic problem analyses
- Identification of evidence-based practices and evidence-informed innovation
- Assistance in developing logic models
- Analysis to support effective implementation
- Ongoing feedback for mid-course corrections
- Evaluation
- Support for sustainability



providing feedback to criminal justice partners, and suggesting mid-course corrections. A team approach to implementation enhances good outcomes.

- Ultimately, the goal of innovation is to enhance public safety through improved criminal justice system effectiveness and efficiency. The research partner can work with the team to plan and carry out an evaluation. Strong evaluations benefit from the grounded insights of criminal justice professionals. Thus, the partnership is critical in planning and conducting the evaluation and interpreting its results.
- Innovations Suite grant programs seek to build capacity in local communities and in the local and state criminal justice agencies that serve these communities. Planning and evaluation are critical for sustaining this capacity beyond the lifespan of the federally funded grant.

What is Action Research?

Action research is research that seeks to solve specific problems. In contrast to traditional research models where the researcher sets the research questions and seeks to advance knowledge, in action research the partnership specifies the problems to be addressed and there is continual dialogue between researchers and criminal justice partners aimed at public safety and community wellness. As noted above, practice informs the research and the research informs practice.

Why Should a Criminal Justice Practitioner Want to be Involved in a Research Partnership?

The researcher-practitioner partnership following the action research model provides:

- The opportunity to contribute to public safety and the enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of criminal justice agencies.
- The opportunity to do work that can have a real impact.
- The ability to contribute to better practice.
- The opportunity to systematically analyze issues and problems with partners who are trained in data and analysis.
- The ability to utilize limited resources in a way that maximizes their impact.
- The opportunity to sort out what works from what doesn't work.
- The opportunity to step away from the continual flow of incidents, arrests, and clients and to consider broader patterns.
- The ability to advocate for resources based on concrete evidence of needs as well as tested strategies.

WHAT CAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROFESSIONALS CONTRIBUTE TO THE PARTNERSHIP?

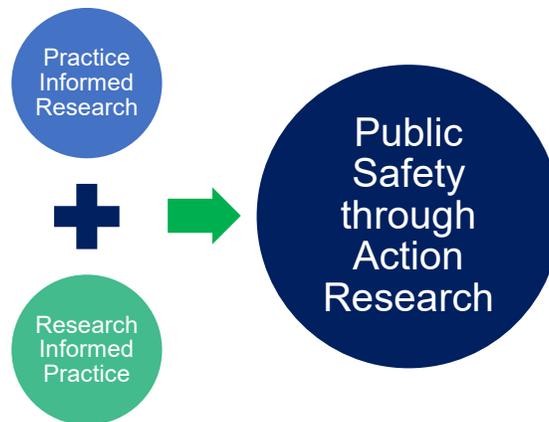
- Grounded and detailed understanding of public safety problems
- Understanding system strengths and gaps that are likely to influence implementation
- Ability to make strategy “happen”
- Access to data
- Understanding limitations of data and information systems



Why Should a Researcher Want to be Involved in a Public Safety Partnership?

The researcher-practitioner partnership following the action research model provides:

- The opportunity to contribute to public safety and the enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of criminal justice agencies.
- The opportunity to do work that can have a real impact.
- The ability to contribute to better practice.
- The ability to help measure implementation and give feedback on how to improve efforts devoted to public safety.
- The opportunity to gain a new and deeper perspective on crime, the impact of crime on people, families, and communities as well as a deeper understanding of the challenges and processes of the criminal justice system. Many action researchers find the experience strengthens their teaching.
- Access to data and opportunities for research and publication.
- For academic-based researchers, the research partnership can create opportunities for students (e.g., internships, part-time employment).



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