

Minnesota Violent Crime Coordinating Council

Key Elements of a Statewide Strategic Framework

C/o Minnesota Department of Public Safety,
Office of Justice Programs
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The Minnesota Violent Crime Coordinating Council 2012 Statewide Strategy

A Move Toward Coordination and Strategic Thinking

A RICH HISTORY OF PROTECTING THE PUBLIC

Multijurisdictional Task Forces - Since 1988, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Justice Programs has funded multijurisdictional narcotics and gang task forces with funding provided by the State of Minnesota and the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance. This funding supports programs that integrate law enforcement agencies and prosecutors to conduct effective, multijurisdictional drug and violent crime investigations and prosecutions. Federal and state resources provide \$9 million in funding to support the operations of 23 multijurisdictional task forces in the SFY 12-13 biennium. This is in addition to significant local contributions of cash and personnel, as well as in-kind contributions.

From 1988 to 2004, the Narcotics Enforcement Coordinating Committee (NECC), an informal advisory body, provided guidance to the Commissioner of Public Safety on matters relating to the multijurisdictional drug task forces. The 2005 Minnesota Legislature passed legislation to formalize the coordination of gang and drug enforcement efforts throughout the state. The Gang and Drug Oversight Council was established to provide leadership for those efforts.

The 2010 Minnesota Legislature subsequently established the Violent Crime Coordinating Council ("Council") to provide guidance related to the investigation and prosecution of gang and drug crime. The council provides direction and oversight to the multijurisdictional task forces and enforcement teams located throughout the state. This new council replaced the Gang and Drug Oversight Council.

The Council is composed of 19 voting members, including four citizen members and 15 members representing federal, state and local law enforcement and prosecution agencies. The council's primary duty is to "develop an overall strategy to ameliorate the harm caused to the public by gang and drug crime within the state of Minnesota." In addition, the council works closely with the Commissioner of Public Safety and is charged with additional responsibilities that include:

- Development of an operating procedures and policies manual to guide gang and drug investigations;
- Development of processes to collect and share investigative data;

- Identification and recommendation of an individual to serve as the statewide gang and drug coordinator;
- Development of grant eligibility criteria and application review process;
- Adoption of objective criteria and identifying characteristics for use in determining whether individuals are or may be members of gangs involved in criminal activity.
- Development of policies to prohibit the improper use of personal characteristics to target individuals for law enforcement, prosecution or forfeiture actions; and
- Recommendation for multijurisdictional task force funding termination for those not operating in a manner consistent with the best interest of the state or the public;

Statewide Strategy

FIRST YEAR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Council first convened in December 2010 and took initial steps towards a comprehensive approach to gang and drug enforcement in the state. To date, the Council has:

- Adopted By-laws to govern the work of the council.
- Established a subcommittee structure to address the duties and issues facing the council.
- Recruited citizen members and devised communication strategies to inform community members and solicit input.
- Reviewed and approved the "Request for Proposal" and review process for 2012 task force funding.
- Amended the current Operating Procedures and Guidelines Manual to ensure that proper investigative protocols and record-keeping are used by all funded task forces. This included revisions to the impartial policing section that prohibits the improper use of personal characteristics to target individuals.
- Reviewed performance data and monitoring reports for all of the multijurisdictional task forces.
- Convened three community forums to hear subject matter experts, law enforcement, and community members' comments on the current criteria and the changes that they believe are necessary for determining whether individuals are or may be members of gangs involved in criminal activity.
- Assessed potential information sharing systems for use by task forces.

NOTE: Additional information on the work of the Council can be found at:
<https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ojp/Pages/violent-crimes-coordinating-council.aspx>

CHARTING THE COURSE FOR THE FUTURE

On November 2–3, 2011, the Council and invited professional and community experts gathered for a planning session to determine the strategic elements necessary to address the harm caused to the public by gang and drug crime within the State of Minnesota. Thirty individuals worked with a facilitator in both large group activities and small discussion groups. Participants represented statewide, rural, metro, and suburban constituencies and represented subject matter expertise in law enforcement, prosecution, community involvement, gang intervention and corrections.

The objectives for the session were to:

- Understand current and emerging trends in gang and drug crimes,
- Identify stakeholder perspectives on key trends,
- Determine elements of vision, priorities, recommendations, and roles, and
- Develop a tactical plan for the coming year.

The result has informed the Council's development and implementation of the following statewide strategic framework:

1. There is a need for a community-led paradigm shift and broader collaboration between criminal justice agencies and community organizations.

- There needs to be a realization that the harm caused to the public by gang and drug crime is not just a law enforcement problem.
- It is critical for law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies to earn public trust and participation through proactive engagement and an effort to create a shared understanding of the issues and goals.
- Community ownership and representation will help to establish and promote healthy community norms and reduce the demand for drugs and the tolerance of gangs and criminal activity.
- An opportunity exists for partnerships between public and private organizations with similar goals, particularly for prevention and intervention activities or services.
- Success will require a focused effort to reduce language and other barriers with cultural and ethnic groups.

TACTICAL PLAN FOR 2012: Clarify mutual expectations between citizens, council members and task forces. Develop a community engagement strategy.

2. A centralized information and intelligence sharing system is a key component for efficient and effective investigation and prosecution of drug, gang and related violent crime.

- Because individuals and organized groups do not confine their criminal activity to limited geographic areas, timely sharing of information and resources across jurisdictional borders is essential to public safety.
- Coordinated investigative efforts will also provide deconfliction information for enhanced officer safety.
- To address valid privacy concerns, information access should be controlled, oversight must be in place, and regular audits should be conducted to ensure appropriate use. Accountability will be based upon concrete standards for performance and consequences when warranted.
- The Council supports the selective, appropriate, and secure sharing of information among law enforcement and any legislative changes necessary to accomplish that goal.

TACTICAL PLAN FOR 2012: Determine the commitment of key stakeholders and link with those working to modify Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13 to include a classification for criminal intelligence data.

3. An effective strategy requires continual adaptation to increasing complexity and change in drug and gang crime.

- The Council believes that drug crime will continue to evolve in terms of access and self-manufacturing and that hybridization of gangs will continue.
- Law enforcement must move from traditional gang and drug investigative protocols to non-traditional techniques. Proactive, intelligence-driven strategies will replace reactive enforcement, and advancements in technology will change the way that investigations are conducted.
- The focus and priority must be on the most violent and/or habitual offenders.

- Training is a critical component and must be funded.

TACTICAL PLAN FOR 2012: Monitor trends identified by task forces, raise awareness and identify resources and evidence-based best practices for response.

4. Gang and drug education, prevention, intervention and treatment efforts are an important component of an overall statewide strategy.

- The development and implementation of an overall statewide strategy to address substance abuse and drug and gang prevention cannot be the sole responsibility of the Council, but criminal justice stakeholders are key and they must provide leadership while partnering with others in the planning process.
- The Council will encourage the efforts of task forces to use existing resources and personnel wherever possible to perform public outreach and prevention education in the community.
- The Council will support law enforcement and community partnerships in a coordinated effort to prevent gang and drug involvement.
- The Council supports increased access to treatment options to help break the cycle of addiction, crime, and violence.

TACTICAL PLAN FOR 2012: The Council will disseminate educational materials to task forces statewide in support of local gang and drug prevention efforts and will establish performance measures to monitor success.

5. The existing task force model must be examined and a determination made as to whether changes are appropriate.

- The nature of criminal activity may require fewer task forces that are more strategically placed, with additional participation by analysts, law enforcement specialists, prosecutors, and community corrections personnel.
- There should be a role for community organizations to work with the task force to mobilize community members in response to community violence.

- While there is a need for all task forces to comply with best practice procedures, there will always need to be flexibility to address regional and local needs in combating of violent crime.

TACTICAL PLAN FOR 2012: The Council determined it would table this issue for future examination.

6. The continuation of successful multijurisdictional task force efforts in combating violent crime requires sustainable external funding that adds to the resources that local jurisdictions currently provide.

- Local agencies currently bear most of the costs of sworn personnel assigned to task forces. Multijurisdictional investigations often require supplemental funding given the specialized nature of the work and expanded enforcement areas.
- A long-term funding commitment must be established at the state and federal levels to ensure that task forces receive the resources necessary to maintain operations.
- The viability of establishing dedicated funds to create a stable, long-term funding stream for multijurisdictional task force operations must be examined.
- Resources for technology and equipment infrastructure investments must be identified and made available.
- There is a need to create a wide variety of outreach and marketing documents that promote the impact of task forces. These can be utilized at the local level to support efforts to increase local resources dedicated to the program.
- Grant funding should be awarded through a fair, equitable, and objective process that rewards performance that is consistent with statewide goals.

TACTICAL PLAN FOR 2012: The Council will determine how much funding is needed for annual grants and necessary infrastructure investments. The Council will research options for the funding of task forces at the local, state, federal and private levels and develop a strategy to execute a comprehensive plan.

Conclusion

Gang activity, drug abuse, drug trafficking and related violent crime continue to pose significant threats to the safety and well-being of the citizens of Minnesota. Multijurisdictional task forces have proven to be a very effective law enforcement strategy.

The continuation of multijurisdictional efforts and the implementation of the key components outlined in this strategy will not happen without funding beyond what local jurisdictions can provide. Without outside support, many task forces report they will not be able to continue operations. Thus, given shifting federal priorities, reliable and sufficient funding remains a critical, yet uncertain, strategic component. A long-term commitment must be established at the state and local levels to ensure that task forces receive the necessary funding to maintain operations.

Guided by this statewide strategy and supported by a reliable funding stream, multijurisdictional task forces working cooperatively with the Violent Crime Coordinating Council can achieve even greater results.