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BSCC ORT Prevention Grant Project Local Evaluation Plan

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Submitted by the Costa Mesa Police Department
(bwadkins@costamesaca.gov)

Prepared with EVALCORP
(smetcalf@evalcorp.com)

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Background

Project Need

Costa Mesa is home to South Coast Plaza (SCP), the largest retail mall in California and fourth largest in the United States. Over a six-month period, SCP had approximately 10 cases with links to Organized Retail Theft (ORT) and a total loss of approximately \$85,000. More than a decade ago, SCP had one of the largest ORT cases in Orange County's history involving the Romanian Mafia and millions of dollars in fraud and theft. Moreover, overall theft crimes from SCP have increased significantly over the past five years.

In addition to retail theft, motor vehicle and motor vehicle accessory theft (MVT and MVAT) are prominent concerns in Costa Mesa. Data indicates a 26% increase in vehicle thefts in Costa Mesa over the past five years, with 454 total thefts in 2021. There has also been a surge in catalytic converter thefts in Costa Mesa, reflecting the broader trend across the country. Between 2018 and 2021, Costa Mesa saw an increase of 800%, from 37 (2018) to 345 (2021). These trends highlight the need for heightened enforcement strategies and proactive measures, such as technology, to combat auto theft in Costa Mesa.

ORT, MVT, and MVAT pose serious threats to the local economy, public safety, and overall community well-being. Costa Mesa PD and partners will deploy a series of strategies to disrupt criminal networks more effectively, decrease rates of ORT, MVT, and MVAT, and prevent similar crimes in the future.

Project Overview

With ORT funding from the BSCC, Costa Mesa Police Department (CMPD) will implement a comprehensive crime prevention program designed to reduce organized retail theft, motor vehicle theft, and motor vehicle accessory theft; educate the public and retail partners; and acquire technologies and additional training to increase investigative capabilities. This initiative incorporates a range of activities, services, and interventions aimed at reducing these crimes and enhancing community safety. The planned strategies, described below, include: (1) directed enforcement and other operations, (2) training and education, and (3) technology implementation.

1. Directed Enforcement and Other Operations

South Coast Plaza Directed Enforcement

Operations will ensure SCP Detail is staffed with a minimum of two officers working seven days a week. Officers will conduct high visibility patrol of parking lots as a deterrent, respond to ORT and vehicle-related crimes occurring on the exterior, and provide immediate response to License Plate Reader (LPR) notifications in the area to prevent crime. Supplemental staffing will be provided during peak hours, holidays, or anytime an additional increase in patrons to the SCP is anticipated.

Based on historical department experience and data, an increased uniformed police presence and the use of high visibility patrols has a direct impact on deterring crime in a given geographical

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location. Increasing staffing levels for SCP Detail allows for quicker response to ORT and other crimes occurring at SCP, which gives CMPD a better opportunity to identify and arrest perpetrators.

Additionally, the grant will be used to bolster investigative personnel time to follow up on ORT criminal investigations. Due to staffing limitations, the department's investigative services bureau prioritizes the investigation of crimes against persons, which at times means that property crime investigations, such as ORT, are delayed. Grant funds will allow detectives the ability to ensure ORT crimes are followed up on in a timely manner to raise apprehension and prosecution rates.

GPS Bait Tag Operations

CMPD will purchase bait tag technology and high-value bait items, and fund special enforcement operations targeting organized retail theft, vehicle theft and vehicle accessory theft. GPS bait tags will be attached to high-value items, enabling remote tracking and monitoring. By strategically placing bait tags in targeted areas, law enforcement can gather intelligence on theft patterns, identify criminal networks, and pinpoint high-crime locations.

- *ORT Operations:* To effectively deploy bait operations, CMPD will utilize crime analysis information to determine the most effective days, times, and locations most probable for a theft linked to organized retail. Operations are planned to occur monthly.
- *MVT/MVAT Operations:* MVT and MVAT bait operations will also be informed by current crime analysis to ensure the most effective deployment location, day, and time. High-value bait items that would qualify for grand theft will be used inside vehicles. These operations are planned to occur monthly.

2. Training and Education

Retailer Training Program

CMPD will educate retailers and security personnel on the current trends of ORT groups, ways to deter theft through customer service, observation skills in the event of theft, and how to properly report thefts to assist with suspect identification and apprehension.

Retail partners do not currently receive organized and regular training on ORT trends and methods. Also, due to high employee turnover, they often do not know how to appropriately respond to crimes in progress to better assist law enforcement to make apprehensions and obtain evidence for investigations. By providing regular training, CMPD's retail partners will become a force multiplier in our goal to prevent ORT and apprehend those involved.

Supplemental Training for CMPD Personnel

Grant funds will be used to send personnel to more specialized training, which will assist CMPD in our overall goal of reducing ORT, vehicle theft, and vehicle accessory theft and apprehending criminals. Classes may include but are not limited to: Institute of Criminal Investigation (ICI) Fundamentals of Cyber Crime, Vehicle Theft, ICI Real Estate Fraud Investigations, ICI Financial Crimes Course, ICI Identity Theft Investigations, ICI Burglary, Theft and Receiving Stolen Property, Rico and Money Laundering Investigations, Patrol Search Warrant, Advanced Search Warrants, Social Media Investigations, and Technology in Investigations.

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By utilizing training and best practices, personnel will be better educated and informed to complete comprehensive investigations, which will in turn lead to better outcomes and increased convictions.

3. Technology Implementation

CMPD has allocated funds to obtain technology that is used by other law enforcement agencies with great success. In addition to obtaining new technologies (e.g., data analytics software), CMPD will expend on current LPR technology that has already been used to make arrests and recover stolen property successfully. By expanding the use of or implementing new technologies, we anticipate additional successes.

License Plate Reader (LPR) Program

With BSCC ORT funding, CMPD is expanding our existing LPR program. Additional LPR cameras will be strategically located along major interior city arteries and near retail centers to assist in the apprehension, prevention and investigation of stolen vehicles, vehicle accessory theft, and organized retail theft.

Investigative and Data Analytical Software

The grant funding will be used to procure and field a modern data integration, analysis, and collaboration platform (i.e., a unified software platform from which the department can run its coordinated strategic response to ORT). This software will also provide the tools to measure the impact of this grant.

Cellular Phone Digital Forensics System

Cellular Phone Digital Forensic Systems assist law enforcement with accessing information on a suspect's cellular phone(s) and analyzing the substantial amounts of data that can be retained in these devices. ORT criminals utilize their phones to plan and coordinate criminal activity. This tool will assist us in identifying co-conspirators and obtaining compelling evidence for criminal prosecution.

Target Area

CMPD's comprehensive crime prevention program activities include strategies that impact the City of Costa Mesa as a whole. However, the primary target area is SCP, which houses a variety of high-end and luxury retailers. SCP has an estimated 20 million visitors per year, creating an environment where theft incidents can and do occur more frequently. SCP has experienced crimes committed by ORT Groups. In fact, some of the individuals associated with the ORT Groups have been involved with transnational criminal organizations, organized criminal street gangs, gypsy groups, and groups of adolescents and young adults organizing via social media networks.

Goals and Objectives

Three goals and four objectives have been established for the project:

Goal 1: Decrease the number of reported organized retail theft incidents at South Coast Plaza.

- ***Objective 1a:*** Implement comprehensive measures to significantly reduce the frequency of documented incidents related to organized retail theft at South Coast Plaza by 7%.

Goal 2: Increase awareness and education of organized retail theft among retail employees, and auto theft and auto accessory theft among the general public.

- ***Objective 2a:*** Implement comprehensive programs and initiatives aimed at educating retail employees on effective prevention strategies against organized retail theft.
- ***Objective 2b:*** Provide the general public with valuable information and resources to protect themselves against auto theft and auto accessory theft.

Goal 3: Utilize technology and expand officer training to improve investigative capabilities and apprehension rates related to organized retail theft, auto theft, and auto accessory theft cases.

- ***Objective 3a:*** Utilize technology and expand officer training to improve investigative capabilities and apprehension rates related to organized retail theft, auto theft, and auto accessory theft cases.

Logic Model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
<p>Funding Grant Award: ORT Prevention financial resources allocated</p> <p>Additional Funding Sources: CMPD budget, OCDA funding</p> <p>People Law Enforcement: Officers, Detectives, IT Administrators, Community Policing Unit, Public Affairs, Crime Analysts, ORT Project Coordinator</p> <p>ORT Grand Advisory Committee</p> <p>Partners: Local Retailers, Loss Prevention and Security, EVALCORP</p> <p>Tools Law Enforcement Technology: License Plate Readers (LPR), GPS Bait Tags, Facial Recognition Software, Cellular Phone Digital Forensics System, and Data Analytic Software</p> <p>Training Materials and Programs: for retail partners and law enforcement personnel.</p> <p>Community engagement tools: for public education campaigns</p>	<p>South Coast Plaza Directed Enforcement Operations: Increase police presence and patrols, particularly during peak times</p> <p>Retailer Training Program: Educate retail employees on theft prevention and reporting</p> <p>Specialized Training for Officers: Provide officers with training in areas such as vehicle theft, financial crimes, and cybercrime</p> <p>Public Education Campaign: Use social media and other platforms to increase public awareness about theft prevention</p> <p>Enhance License Plate Reader Program: Expand the existing LPR program to cover strategic locations</p> <p>Implement GPS Bait Tag Operations: Deploy GPS tracking tags on high-value items to monitor and apprehend thieves</p> <p>Adopt Advanced Investigative Technologies: Procure and implement facial recognition software and a cellular phone digital forensics system</p>	<p>Number of overtime hours utilized for ORT Prevention/Intervention</p> <p>Number of training sessions conducted for retail employees</p> <p>Number of retailers trained</p> <p>Number of training sessions attended by law enforcement personnel</p> <p>Number of law enforcement personnel trained</p> <p>Number of social media posts completed as part of a targeted public education campaign</p> <p>Public education materials distributed</p> <p>Number of new LPR cameras installed</p> <p>Number of GPS Bait Tag Operations conducted.</p> <p>Number of quarterly stakeholder meetings and number of attendees</p> <p>Inventory of advanced technology deployed, including systems implemented (e.g., facial recognition)</p> <p>Number of flags from facial recognition software</p> <p>Number of cell phones analyzed with cell phone digital forensics</p>	<p>Reduction in reported retail theft incidents at South Coast Plaza</p> <p>Improved investigative success and increased arrest rates for theft-related crimes</p> <p>Increased retailer knowledge of effective prevention strategies and reporting process</p> <p>Enhanced public awareness</p> <p>Enhanced knowledge and skills for officers in preventing and responding to ORT, MVT, and MVAT</p> <p>Decreased response time to incidents of retail theft</p>	<p>Safer Community Environment: Reduction in organized retail theft, auto theft, and auto accessory theft contributes to overall community safety.</p> <p>Strengthened Law Enforcement Capabilities: Enhanced investigative tools and training improve long-term crime prevention and response effectiveness.</p> <p>Increased Public Confidence: Activities increase public's confidence in law enforcement's ability to protect the community and deter crime.</p>

Evaluation Method and Design

The City of Costa Mesa has contracted with EVALCORP to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the project, including both process and outcome components, described together in this section.

Framework

Evaluation Goals

The goals for the proposed evaluation are to (1) document the implementation of the project and the extent to which proposed activities were completed as intended; (2) measure the degree to which the goals or objectives were achieved; and (3) identify successes, challenges, and lessons learned.

Approach

A mixed-methods evaluation approach consisting of qualitative and quantitative data collection activities will be implemented to assess the process and outcome measures established for the CMPD comprehensive crime prevention program.

The planned robust evaluation is designed to assess the impact of the work carried out as part of this grant using multiple data collection approaches and sources to inform the assessment. Specific strategies that will be used include:

- A pre/post comparison methodology that contrasts baseline data collected prior to project activities with data collected during implementation to determine the ORT prevention program's overall effectiveness on the outcomes established for the project.
- Ongoing assessment of identified process and outcome metrics assessing cumulative change (counts, increases, decreases) to (1) track ongoing project implementation and outcomes, and (2) allow for any necessary changes to strategies as the grant-funded initiative rolls out. This is key to a formative evaluation and involves compiling and reviewing ORT evaluation metrics on a consistent basis. Key project staff will be interviewed at the end of the project period to identify the extent to which the activities were implemented as planned, along with challenges and unforeseen events that impacted implementation and/or related outcomes.
- Qualitative enhancements through the use of Stakeholder Interviews with key personnel participating in the ORT project. The evaluation will utilize stakeholder interviews, observations, and success stories to inform the Local Evaluation Report (LER) and provide context, lessons learned, any unanticipated challenges and how they were overcome in addition to the quantitative measures (ORT process and outcome metrics).

Coordination and Oversight

The CMPD Project Director is Captain Byan Wadkins; he will provide strategic guidance and oversight for the project. Captain Jason Chamness, the Project Coordinator, will oversee the day-to-day operations and the ORT Grant Committee (composed of law enforcement managers, supervisors, and specialists). Lieutenant Scott Stafford, Records Manager Olivia Rodgers, and Crime Analyst Yuliana Murillo will assist with data collection and monitoring activities.

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Project-related decisions will be made collaboratively by the CMPD team, with consultation by EVALCORP when appropriate. Any changes requiring BSCC approval will be forwarded to the appropriate party prior to implementation.

EVALCORP will work collaboratively with CMPD personnel and the ORT Grant Committee to ensure the appropriate data collection methodologies, tools, and protocols are developed and implemented. The evaluation team will foster open communication with project personnel to ensure evaluation findings are communicated on a periodic basis and that high-quality, consistent data collection practices are employed. Meetings between CMPD and EVALCORP will occur quarterly, or as needed, to ensure opportunities to address issues and discuss successes as they arise. Data collection concerns will be coordinated between the EVALCORP team and CMPD personnel.

Evaluation Tools

A series of data collection tools and standardized processes will track and monitor the project's success. Primary data collection tools will be developed to collect information specific to grant activities and secondary data (i.e., data already collected for another use) will be used, when possible, to reduce the burden on staff.

Primary Data Collection Tools

- **Officer Training Survey:** CMPD officers who complete external training funded by this grant will complete an Officer Training Survey. The survey assesses officers' knowledge of the training topic, and its relevance to investigating or reducing retail crime, MVT, and MVAT.
- **ORT Training Spreadsheet:** A department spreadsheet will be used to track the number of law enforcement personnel that attend various project-related training sessions.
- **Retailer Training Survey:** The Retailer Training Survey will be administered to individuals attending the retail partner training sessions provided by CMPD. Relevant metrics include attendees' knowledge of prevention strategies and how to coordinate with CMPD.
- **Retailer Training Sign-In Sheet:** A sign-in sheet will be used at each retail partner training to track the number of individuals in attendance.
- **Evaluative Observations:** The evaluators will observe a purposeful sample of training session(s) as part of qualitative data collection strategies designed to enhance understanding and documentation of training successes, as well as identifying areas for training enhancement as the project is implemented.
- **Key Stakeholder Interviews:** To further assess implementation activities, the evaluation team will conduct key stakeholder interviews with primary project staff at the end of the grant period. These interviews will inform the extent to which the project was carried out as planned/intended and identify successes, challenges, and lessons learned.

Secondary Data Sources

- **Law Enforcement Data:** CMPD's Record Management System (RMS) and Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) System will be used to assess calls, incidents, arrests, and referrals related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT.
- **Incident Action Plans:** To track the number of operations conducted related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT, Incident Action Plans will be reviewed.
- **Payroll Records:** To determine the number of FTE staff assigned to various grant activities, payroll data will be used.
- **Public Affairs Tracking Spreadsheet:** Information regarding social media posts and other public education efforts will be tracked using a Public Affairs Tracking Spreadsheet.
- **Administrative Records:** Administrative records will be used to document the planned ORT strategies implemented (e.g., LPRs), partnerships established, levels of partnership agency participation, and attendance at training sessions.

The evaluation team will collaborate with CMPD personnel to ensure all requisite data are obtained, maintained, and reviewed for accuracy/validity on a consistent basis.

Data Analysis

Project data will be obtained and reviewed quarterly and annually to ensure accurate and consistent data entry (frequency depends on the specific metric). Data will be aggregated and validated before conducting all required quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis will include data collected via open-ended survey items, observations, and key stakeholder interviews. It will involve coding, categorizing, and interpreting data to identify key themes. This information may be quantified as a part of this process. The overarching goal of these analyses is to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the grant activities and perspectives on the extent to which the project is carried out as planned, including what challenges, if any, were experienced and the strategies used to overcome them.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data will be analyzed using Excel, R, or SPSS analytic software. Descriptive statistics will be run to characterize incidents, arrests, agencies engaged, retailers trained, and other relevant indicators. Crosstabs and inferential statistics (e.g., chi-square, t-tests) will be implemented to support descriptive findings and ensure data are interpreted appropriately.

Reporting

The following is a list of anticipated reports and/or presentations EVALCORP will be responsible for or aid in developing:

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- **Quarterly Progress Reports:** EVALCORP will support CMPD in developing the BSCC Quarterly Progress Reports.
- **Final Local Evaluation Report:** EVALCORP will develop a Final Local Evaluation Report summarizing the 3-year grant activity and the extent to which the goals and measurable objectives were achieved. This report will be submitted to the BSCC by June 1, 2027.
- **Annual Brief:** In addition to the two mandated reporting requirements described above (i.e., Quarterly Progress Reports and the Final Local Evaluation Report), EVALCORP will develop a summary outlining progress toward the grant's goals and objectives on an annual basis (i.e., end of calendar year).

In addition to ongoing grant meetings, these periodic reporting events allow grant personnel a formal process by which to monitor progress towards objectives and adjust activities as needed.

Evaluation Metrics

To support accurate, valid, and consistent evaluation metrics tracking throughout the grant term, a CMPD ORT Data Collection Matrix was developed (see Appendix A). The Data Collection Matrix was designed to ensure evaluation planning, coordination, and implementation continue to meet both the funding requirements and needs for information among the BSCC and CMPD. It includes the list of metrics to be tracked, where the data will be pulled from (i.e., data source), the metric type (i.e., process vs. outcome), and how each relates to the identified project goals.

Process Evaluation

The process evaluation will document and measure the degree to which grant activities were implemented as intended. The planned process metrics to be tracked for the evaluation of project activities include:

- Number of formal partnerships established
- Number and type of equipment deployed (e.g., license plate readers)
- Number of FTE staff assigned to ORT, MVT, and MVAT activities
- Number of operations related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT completed
- Number of ORT, MVT, and MVAT incidents reported
- Number of arrests related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT
- Number of educational materials distributed to the general public
- Number of social media posts completed as part of a public education campaign
- Number of training sessions completed with retail partners
- Number of retail partners trained
- Number of trainings law enforcement personnel completed
- Number of law enforcement personnel trained
- Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

Outcome Evaluation

The outcome evaluation will assess the extent to which the project successfully met each of the project's established goals (see page 6). Planned outcome evaluation metrics for the project are:

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- Reduction in reported retail theft incidents at South Coast Plaza (reported incidents may initially increase, then decrease, due to raised awareness and reporting capacity)
- Reduction in ORT, MVT, and MVAT incidents reported (reported incidents may initially increase, then decrease, due to raised awareness and reporting capacity)
- Increase in arrest rates related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT
- Number of referrals to the District Attorney's office related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT
- Increase in retailers' knowledge of effective prevention strategies
- Increase in retailers' knowledge of how to report retail theft
- Increase in officers' knowledge of topics related to the investigation of crimes, use of technology, and other skills associated with ORT, MVT, and MVAT prevention and response

Appendix A. Evaluation Data Matrix

Metric	Data Source	Type	Related Goal(s)
Number of formal partnerships established	Administrative Records	Process	1, 2, 3
Number and type of equipment deployed (e.g., license plate readers)	Administrative Records	Process	1, 3
Number of FTE staff assigned to ORT, MVT, and MVAT activities	Payroll Records	Process	1, 3
Number of operations related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT completed	Incident Action Plans	Process	1, 3
Number of reported retail theft incidents at South Coast Plaza	RMS Crime Data	Process	1, 3
Reduction in reported retail theft incidents at South Coast Plaza	RMS Crime Data	Outcome	1, 3
Number of ORT, MVT, and MVAT incidents reported	RMS Crime Data	Process	1, 3
Reduction in reported ORT, MVT, and MVAT incidents	RMS Crime Data	Outcome	1, 3
Number of arrests related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT	RMS Crime Data	Process	1, 3
Increased arrest rate related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT	RMS Crime Data	Outcome	1, 3
Number of referrals to the DA's office related to ORT, MVT, and MVAT	RMS Crime Data	Outcome	1, 3
Number of educational materials distributed to the general public	Public Affairs Tracking Spreadsheet	Process	2
Number of social media posts completed	Public Affairs Tracking Spreadsheet	Process	2
Number of training sessions completed with retail partners	Retailer Training Sign-in Sheets	Process	2
Number of retail partners trained	Retailer Training Sign-in Sheets	Process	2
Increased retail partners' knowledge of effective prevention strategies	Retailer Training Survey	Outcome	2
Increased retail partners' knowledge of how to report retail theft	Retailer Training Survey	Outcome	2
Number of trainings law enforcement personnel completed	ORT Training Spreadsheet	Process	3
Number of law enforcement personnel trained	ORT Training Spreadsheet	Process	3
Increased officers' knowledge of topics related to the investigation of crimes, use of technology, and other skills associated with ORT, MVT, and MVAT prevention and response	Officer Training Survey	Outcome	3
Successes, challenges, and lessons learned	Key Stakeholder Interviews	Process	1, 2, 3