

# WORKING P A P E R

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## FY2006 Anti-Gang Initiative Grants in the Central District of California

Report to the U.S. Attorney

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INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFETY, AND ENVIRONMENT

## SUMMARY

This Final Report to the U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California includes evaluations of all the grants made to members of his Project Safe Neighborhoods Task Force under the FY 2006 Anti-Gang Initiative program. In fiscal year 2006, the Department of Justice allocated \$1,018,901 through its Anti-Gang Initiative (AGI) program to fund local law enforcement efforts to combat gang violence in the Central District of California. Based upon the gang-reduction strategy adopted by the Task Force in March 2006, grant funds were targeted to support activities of law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies within Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties. Local law enforcement agencies developed proposals for anti-gang programs which were presented to a Selection Committee in April 2006. Initiatives were selected for funding by the committee based upon a competitive process; a total of seven projects were ultimately funded through sub-grants. RAND was selected as a research partner for these grants and was tasked with making quantitative and qualitative assessments of the contribution of the grant expenditures to the AGI's primary goal of reducing gang violence.

The grants provided human resources and technical resources to support the grantee's efforts to combat gang violence. The human resources grants included:

- Overtime and personnel to assist a gang injunction implemented by the Orange County District Attorney and Santa Ana Police Department;
- Dedicating an additional "vertical" prosecutor for gang cases at the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office and the Ventura District Attorney's Office;
- Placing a Deputy Los Angeles City Attorney in the U.S. Attorney's Office to work as a cross-designated prosecutor; and
- Placing a Los Angeles Police Department detective in the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms Southern California Regional Crime Gun Center.

The technical resources grants included:

- Purchasing a surveillance van for the Riverside Police Department; and
- Purchasing handie-talkie radios for the Riverside County Gang Task Force.

The RAND research team evaluated each grant. RAND conducted site visits at each of the sub-grantee agencies, interviewed key personnel about their grant activities and methods for evaluating performance, and collected data. Interviewees described their systems for measuring grant-related activities and in many cases provided data to RAND regarding workload or other outcomes. Because the nature of the grant activities and the nature of data on the activities varied from agency to agency, there was no single evaluation strategy that was appropriate for all agencies.

Of the various grants, only one grant initiative could support a rigorous evaluation. In 2006, the Orange County District Attorney and Santa Ana Police Department (SAPD) initiated a civil gang injunction designed to reduce crime in a specific 1-square-mile area of the city through targeted enforcement. We evaluate the effectiveness of this intervention using a database of all service calls received by the SAPD between January 2005 and December 2007. We describe and implement both differences-in-differences and matching methods to measure the effects of the injunction on reported crime in the injunction zone and also examine crime spillovers to adjacent areas. The injunction generated an increase in reports of violent crime and a decrease in property crime reports, with no effect on overall crime or public order crime. These effects may reflect changes in willingness to report crimes to the police, which make it difficult to quantify actual changes in criminal behavior due to the injunction. Crime in adjacent areas fell following the injunction.

The other initiatives could not be properly evaluated due to a lack of adequate data or an available comparison group to establish likely outcomes without grant funds. For these, we describe the initiative and data issues in Section 3 of the report. No empirical findings are offered for any of these evaluations due to insufficient data, but it appears that the additional prosecutors provided by the grant were able to reduce office caseloads and secure convictions, the purchase of handie-talkie radios facilitated Riverside County Gang Task Force "saturation days", and the Riverside Police Department has been able to

conduct surveillance in gang-controlled areas due to its use of a new surveillance van. The extent to which these apparent benefits have reduced gang crime is unclear.

When it created AGI, Congress intended to encourage law enforcement agencies to pursue data-driven initiatives to counter gun violence. The initiatives funded by AGI in FY2006 in the Central District of California vary in their goals and present different challenges to evaluation. For all but one, the nature of the initiatives precluded a clear analysis of the likely counterfactual enforcement outcomes had grant funds been unavailable, making a rigorous evaluation of the impact of the grant not feasible. Although grantees suggested in their applications that their efforts would be cutting edge and that they would collect all relevant data, several grantees used the funds to pay for ongoing, routine law enforcement efforts and/or did not collect data. Additionally, there was a relatively limited period during which agencies were able to collect data regarding the performance of their grants because there were significant delays in processing the FY2006 grant funds at the federal and state level.

This limited scope for evaluation makes it difficult to identify promising gang violence reduction strategies in California that might be exported to other regions of the state and country. For example, several of the sub-grants were used to fund equipment purchases. Although modern equipment clearly is an important input into gang enforcement, measuring the specific contributions of equipment to enforcement outcomes is generally problematic. For initiatives involving hiring, agencies were generally able to provide data on the workload of funded personnel, but less indication of how this workload might have been handled differently had grant resources been unavailable.

Going forward, greater attention to funding grant activities that create data to support rigorous evaluation would allow better identification of the most successful enforcement strategies under AGI. This would better fulfill Congress's intent to encourage the development of data-driven initiatives for law enforcement agencies to use to counter gun violence. In addition, because developing data to analyze

takes time, providing a longer amount of time between the dissemination of grant funds and final evaluation will facilitate analysis.