
Sponsor: County Attorney's Office

Meeting Date: 9/27/2022

Title: Grant Award from the 2022 Bureau of Justice Assistance Byrne Discretionary Community Project Funding for Violence Reduction Initiative

File Number: 2022-500

Background and Rationale:

Ramsey County requested and received a Congressionally Directed Spending appropriation for the purposes of violence intervention as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 (Public Law 117-103). The Ramsey County Attorney's Office subsequently completed and has received notification of acceptance of the required U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) grant application. The objectives of this grant are to improve the capacity of the criminal justice system to effectively plan, manage, and allocate resources, encourage information sharing to reduce the incidence of crime and drug abuse, provide responsive law enforcement services, and assist victims of crime.

Like in other areas of the country with an urban area, Ramsey County has seen steep increases in violent crime in the last several years, particularly gun violence often resulting in homicides, and carjackings. Saint Paul has experienced record numbers of homicides over the last two years and hundreds of carjackings when carjacking was a previously rare occurrence. With that in mind Ramsey County applied and received grant funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the amount of \$900,000 for technical assistance to implement the Ramsey County Violence Reduction Initiative which will use an evidence-based focused deterrence strategy known as Group Violence Intervention (GVI). The Ramsey County Violence Reduction Initiative will adhere to the GVI model that has been established and shown to be effective across the country, with adjustments made for local needs and preferences, as determined by the local governance board in consultation with the technical assistance provider.

The Ramsey County Violence Reduction Initiative will be guided by technical assistance from The National Network for Safe Communities, "an internationally recognized action research center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, providing proven, evidence-based, life-saving violence reduction strategies to dozens of communities across America and beyond." The National Network is well-positioned to provide this support. Over 15 years of implementing proven violence reduction strategies and delivering unparalleled technical assistance have allowed them to build a community of practice with deep expertise in each of the components of the strategy as well as with other emerging innovations. The National Network regularly deploys this GVI practice through peer site visits, distance learning, and collaborative workshops to ensure effective implementation, advancement, and sustainability of the strategy within the jurisdictions they advise.

GVI focuses on the groups at highest risk for violent victimization and offending, with the intention to keep those in them alive, safe, and out of prison. The GVI partnership communicates directly with group members, conveying a powerful community message about disapproval for violence and in support of community aspirations; concrete opportunities for both immediate and longer-term assistance and support; and clear prior notice of the legal risks associated with continued violence. The GVI partnership then delivers swiftly on these commitments. The partnership of law enforcement, social service providers, and community actors (parents, ministers, outreach workers,

neighborhood associations, people formerly involved with gun violence and others) will engage in a sustained approach to combat violent group dynamics and enhance public safety. The city of Saint Paul has agreed to partner with Ramsey County as a grant subrecipient so they can hire a Project Manager who will set ongoing performance and accountability expectations and manage outreach and support contracts. This will include ensuring the tracking and documentation of core GVI activities; collecting data on outcomes; and routinizing GVI meetings. All of these measures will help demonstrate the progress of the strategy and contribute to institutionalization of GVI activities in Ramsey County.

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Ratify the grant application to the Bureau of Justice Assistance for 2022 Byrne Discretionary Community Project Funding / Byrne Discretionary Grants Program.
2. Accept a grant award and approve a grant agreement with the Bureau of Justice Assistance for the 2022 Byrne Discretionary Community Project Funding / Byrne Discretionary Grants Program as part of the Ramsey County Violence Reduction Initiative for the period of August 1, 2022 through July 31, 2024 in the amount of \$900,000.
3. Authorize the County Manager to establish a project budget for the Ramsey County Violence Reduction Initiative in the County Attorney's department.
4. Authorize the County Manager or designee to execute the grant agreement.
5. Authorize the County Manager to enter into agreements and execute amendments to agreements in accordance with the county's procurement policies and procedures, provided the amounts are within the limits of the grant funding.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner McGuire, seconded by Commissioner McDonough. Motion passed.

Aye: - 7: Carter, Frethem, MatasCastillo, McDonough, McGuire, Ortega, and Reinhardt

By: 
Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board