

The Kensington Initiative

Process and Impact Evaluation Summary

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Introduction

The Kensington Initiative (KI) is a collaborative, law enforcement-driven strategy operating in the greater Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This initiative was developed in 2018 to bring agencies together in a multi-pronged approach to combat gun violence and reduce overdose incidents in an area with numerous high-volume outdoor drug markets. The effort is led by the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General's (OAG) Bureau of Narcotics Investigation (BNI) and Drug Strike Force Section and coordinated with the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD), with follow-up city services on targeted blocks delivered by agencies under the City's Managing Director's Office (MDO).

In 2019, when the KI was already underway, the OAG was awarded a federal grant through the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to further develop the KI strategy and add a research partner (Temple University, Department of Criminal Justice) to conduct a process and impact evaluation of the initiative. The research team utilized a logic model approach, examining the resources devoted to the program, strategic activities and operations, the outputs from those activities, and the targeted outcomes articulated by program developers. (The logic model, and details on the partners and organizational structure of the KI, can be found in an earlier [project brief](#)). The outputs served as performance measures that would, when combined with the range of in-depth interviews and observation data also collected, facilitate an understanding of whether and how longer-term outcomes (reductions in gun violence) were achieved. This brief summarizes the findings of the research study. A longer and more detailed report will be available to the public after BJA review.

The KI set forth a collaborative strategy between multiple law enforcement agencies and city-based services. Extensive resources and investigative tools were utilized to build investigations over time to take down entire drug-selling groups including their leaders, while also addressing issues in the built environment surrounding the group's area of influence. These resources came together to constitute a three-pronged approach:

- (1) Coordination of criminal intelligence investigations at three levels of government as a force multiplier.
- (2) Involvement and supervision from a state-level prosecutor from the onset of investigations through arrest and prosecution. The same lead prosecutor is involved in all investigations and prosecutions across the KI.
- (3) Operational engagement with community outreach and city-led services with the goal of supporting sustainable reductions in gun violence.

The Kensington Context

For context, Philadelphia is a leading regional and multi-state source of supply for high-grade heroin (and now also fentanyl) and has earned the unfortunate distinction of having more overdose deaths than any big city in the U.S. (Eichel & Pharis, 2018). The greater Kensington neighborhood is considered ground zero with the highest concentration of accidental overdose deaths in the city. Additionally, this area is seen by many as the epicenter of the opioid epidemic – both in Philadelphia, and on the entire east coast of the United States. There are over a dozen highly-organized drug markets across this area, and additional smaller and less-organized corner markets, many of them operating out in the open. Local law enforcement agencies refer to the large, high-volume drug organizations as drug trafficking organizations or “DTOs.”

Academic research aimed at Philadelphia suggests that the greater Kensington area comprises what has been deemed an “agglomeration economy,” where drug markets cluster tightly across the area and even co-locate on blocks on opposite corners (Taniguchi et al., 2009). This clustering provides an economic benefit for both sellers and buyers. Sellers desire to be in these economies because they are highly profitable. Some also have hypothesized that the clustering is the result of the search behavior of those seeking drugs. Over time, buyers learn that it will be simpler to locate drugs when there are multiple corners close together, a benefit when a potential customer might not know the exact location of a drug market and also a benefit when looking for a variety of drug products. It is also

Evaluation Findings Brief – August 2022

possible that the clustering sends a signal that buyers (and sellers) may be safe from the police—the perception is that their risk of arrest is lower given the large numbers of ever-present buyers and sellers. One journalist equated Kensington’s agglomeration economy to a farmers’ market and street bazaar (Volk, 2007). The agglomeration drug economy poses significant challenges for law enforcement attempting to reduce drug supply and increase public safety.

The greater Kensington area is covered by the 24th, 25th and 26th Police Districts. This area has ranked higher than other neighborhoods in Philadelphia for a number of years on rates for accidental overdose deaths, drug incidents, and shooting victims. Figure 1 shows the rates of shooting victims (per 1,000 population) across four neighborhoods that have typically had the highest rates in recent years. In four of the six years, the greater Kensington neighborhood outpaced other neighborhoods in shootings. Although not shown in the graph, since 2016, the greater Kensington area also outranked other neighborhoods in the rate of overdose deaths by more than threefold. This pattern holds for drug incidents as well. In some years greater Kensington exceeded the drug incident rate of the next highest neighborhood by more than 600%. Taken together, these numbers illustrate how Kensington bears the brunt of intersecting social issues, situating it for a comprehensive strategy like the KI.

Figure 1. Shooting Victims per 1,000 population, Selected High-Crime Neighborhoods,¹ 2016-2021

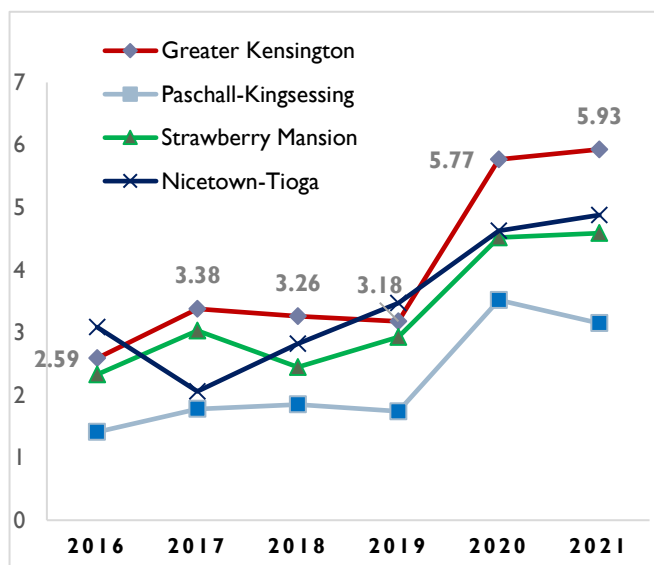
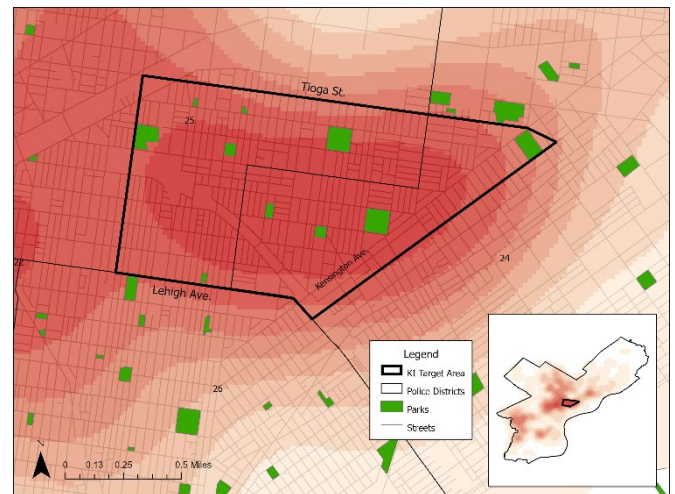


Figure 2 displays the boundaries defined for the KI. The boundaries were chosen to encompass the majority of the most violent drug corners at that time (late 2018) and were based on

a combination of human intelligence data, crime data, and information from PPD East Division street officers. The specific boundaries are 5th Street (west boundary), East Tioga Street (north boundary), Jasper Street (east boundary), and Lehigh Ave (south boundary).

Figure 2. Kensington Initiative Target Area



Is the Kensington Initiative Different from Business-as-Usual Law Enforcement?

Specifically, the following elements were designed to extend the KI past “business as usual” for the OAG and collaborative law enforcement partners overall:

- *Intensive group- and location-based investigations* that involve carefully coordinated efforts across law enforcement partners and resources from multiple agencies. Such collaboration, to the extent of the KI, is not typically seen in this setting. The extensive collaboration and communication include real-time intelligence sharing. Agents from other agencies, including PPD, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA; local transit), are embedded at the OAG (taskforce model) and are members of the core KI investigative team and/or assist with serving warrants on takedown day.
- *Intelligence-driven target selection* based on the extent of violence and opioid sales in a particular area/by a specific group and using intel from more than one source and point in time. The OAG (like most law enforcement agencies) traditionally chose targets based on limited intel, usually from a confidential informant (CI) or cooperating defendant

or built upon intelligence gathered from prior jobs. KI investigations are intended to be less source-led and reactive and more intelligence-driven with information from multiple sources including, but not limited to, CIs.

- *Longer timeframes and greater allocation of resources to KI investigations.* The length of time allotted for a KI investigation/job, which was intended to be 6-8 weeks but in practice was roughly 6 months, is shorter than a typical federal investigation that could take years, while still focused on the supply side/higher levels of a drug-selling group (like federal agencies). On the other hand, the KI investigations are much longer and more involved than investigations by local law enforcement. The goal was for the KI jobs to last long enough to develop good intel and reach the top of a drug-selling organization, but short enough so as not to lose steam or the ability to arrest targets/people catching on to surveillance. The job would culminate in arrests warrants being served—at the same time on one day—across the targeted members of the DTO.
- *Efficient, successful prosecution efforts through a consolidated KI caseload engaged from the start.* One state attorney, housed in the Drug Strike Force Section that works with BNI at the OAG, is assigned to prosecute all the defendants in each case, across all investigations. Importantly, this lead attorney is involved closely with the investigation from its origin (i.e., deciding on the next target DTO) to the day of the DTO takedown and through sentencing for all court cases.
- *Engagement of city services to address resident needs and the built environment* immediately after a KI takedown on the blocks associated with the drug corner. The third prong of the strategy involves city services delivered after each investigation by agencies under the MDO; services include addressing social and physical disorder issues such as cleaning up trash, fixing broken windows and streetlights, fixing or putting up fencing, boarding up abandoned buildings and lots, and removing graffiti. This component of the KI extends the KI past a singular law enforcement focus to address the larger context of drug sales and block-level incivilities and to benefit the community and Kensington residents beyond what is realized in typical law enforcement-focused responses.

Implementation of the Kensington Initiative

A total of seven investigations (known as “jobs”) under the KI banner took place as of June 15, 2022. The first job began in early August, 2018. The seventh job was completed on June 8th, 2022. Because this (7th) job began after the evaluation period concluded, it is not discussed in this brief. In addition, given the pandemic’s impact on gun violence, which disproportionately affected neighborhoods with drug markets (Johnson & Roman, 2022), the statistical models to assess program impact focus only on the first three jobs, each of which began and ended before the pandemic.

Law Enforcement Activities: Target Selection

First, when selecting a target for a KI job, the strategy dictates a focus on groups/corners that were responsible for a large volume of opioid sales and violence. Equally as important is considering how to make significant progress in the time frame, and with the resources, allotted to that particular job. Essentially, an element of target selection was considering the likelihood that the top tier of an organization could be arrested with existing intel plus the information gathered during a shorter (six- to eight-week) investigation, and with the resources available to the KI – which were more abundant than typically available but not limitless.

Additionally, investigators emphasized the importance of targeting groups with a stable hierarchy. Ideally, a “corrupt organization” chargeⁱⁱ was pursued against each KI target group. The prosecutor would likely be unsuccessful with this charge if she was unable to show a pattern of activity or demonstrate the different roles and levels within the group. In the end, the typical KI target was a medium-sized drug-selling group with an organized and stable hierarchy, clear roles and responsibilities, a demonstrated history of opioid sales/trafficking, a propensity for violence against others, and a base of operations or significant activity in the KI target area.

The original plan for the KI included development of a “Master Target List” (MTL) – built in a collaborative process with the DVIC and intel analysts from the OAG and PPD to identify and track the most serious drug-selling groups in Kensington and their members. A 2019 list of 20 DTOs or corners became the “priority” list, as investigators referred to it.

As the first job was being concluded and discussions were held about the second job, it became clear that the best possible route to success was by capitalizing on already gathered intelligence related to a violent DTO. Instead of returning to a static priority list to select a target for each KI investigation, agents on the KI investigative team prioritized current intel from CIs and intel analysts, often building on information gathered from a law enforcement partner during a prior KI job. This was deemed preferable over relying solely on the MTL to stay ahead of the most serious threats to the Kensington community. While this is an acceptable way to develop targets in general, the KI strategy development team had intended that this intel would have ideally been presented at meetings with all KI partners to update the MTL in real time, by agents and agencies outside of the KI as well as the core KI investigative team, thus serving a larger purpose than just target selection. In addition, using CI intel to develop subsequent cases is a typical practice for many agencies – so selecting a target in this way is not a departure from business-as-usual. The KI investigators and prosecutors continued prioritizing jobs to fully capitalize on the resources and intel that were available in the moment; without a formal Executive Team structure and with the stress on resources due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the strategy leads believed they would be more successful in this manner, particularly because they were often capitalizing on intel generated about recent or impending violence. Not surprisingly, though, a majority of jobs conducted were on the original priority list.

Law Enforcement Activities: Investigations

A KI “job” officially begins once agents selected a final target and started intentionally collecting intelligence on the group/corner/target person. The first piece of intel is often gathered through camera footage or undercover buys by confidential informants (CIs). All KI investigations involve the core KI investigative team, which includes approximately 10 agents from multiple agencies, typically the following people: one to two undercover agent(s) from the OAG and PPD, two case agents from the OAG, two PPD Taskforce Officers, one HSI Taskforce Agent, and approximately three BNI Agents and a supervisor in support roles. Individuals on this team who are not OAG employees are stationed at the OAG to make the flow of information and collaboration easier.

Once a target DTO is selected, an investigation followed into the target group and corner/block/area with the end goal of arresting the head of the target group and as many individuals working under the leader(s) as possible, particularly the more pivotal members at the higher tiers of the group hierarchy. Early in an investigation, an organizational chart of the target

group is developed to understand group size, member identities, the established hierarchy, the responsibilities of different members, aliases, and relationships between individuals. This DTO chart is updated regularly, as new intel comes in or things change within the target group. The chart also acts as a running list of individuals the investigation will pursue for arrest, again, with an emphasis on the group leader(s) and other individuals at the top of the hierarchy along with as many in the lower tiers as possible.

This process replaced the process of working from the MTL. Partner agencies like PPD and the PA State Police also make pedestrian and car stops at the direction of the KI team in order to identify possible targets and/or confirm identities of people already on the target list. The process also includes conducting additional surveillance, using CIs and undercover agents to make buys, getting purchased drugs tested and logging the name of packets (drug tags), and working with other agencies to execute arrests or debrief defendants throughout the investigation. In most KI investigations, agents eventually built up to a Title 3 wiretapⁱⁱⁱ of group member cell phones. Because of the legal requirements, a wiretap is neither appropriate nor possible in every investigation. When relevant, a wiretap provides invaluable information to investigators.

A novel contribution of the KI was the introduction of “Saturday jobs,” used to gather intel toward the current KI investigation as well as make contact with targets and conduct arrests on a smaller scale. These investigative efforts were therefore related to the ongoing KI job but targeted people and places peripheral to the main/target DTO – like low-level sellers – with the goal of getting defendants to cooperate and provide information.

As stated earlier, once enough intel was collected, each KI investigation culminated in a takedown. Every takedown lasted many hours and required assistance from a range of other professionals to execute all search warrants and arrests safely. The supporting agencies that furnished officers for this purpose included, but were not limited to, the following: PPD, U.S. Marshals, SEPTA, Montgomery County PD, Sherriff’s Department, Pennsylvania State Police, FBI, DEA, HSI, ATF, and SWAT. Canine agents from SEPTA and OAG were also utilized when appropriate (in most KI takedowns).

Law Enforcement Activities: Prosecution

A central and innovative component of the KI is having the lead prosecutor involved in all KI investigations from the beginning of the investigation through to the final prosecution stages including sentences and any appeals. As stated earlier, the KI

lead at the OAG serves the role as the dedicated prosecutor for all the KI jobs. She is part of the early discussions to select each target DTO and is involved in all key decisions related to investigations. She also can refer a case up to the federal level when appropriate (but this was not done for any of the jobs). Responsibilities of the prosecutor include, but are not limited to, the following: make sure evidence is sufficient to request a Title 3 wire; monitor legal aspects of the wire; oversee development and serving of warrants; and otherwise help to build cases around the target group to ensure an effective prosecution later.

The prosecutor is present at all case briefing meetings and is intimately aware of progress on each job. She gives advice on building a reliable case from surveillance and undercover buys. The lead prosecutor guides investigative efforts toward actions that would improve the case against each defendant and minimize issues that might jeopardize strong prosecution.

Short-Term and Intermediate Outcomes

Law Enforcement Performance Measures

A key role of the grant-funded Program Manager was to develop and maintain performance measures. Because some information was not readily accessible via available data systems or internal data tracking, the KI Program Manager developed a data tracking form that was completed by the supervising agent on each job with assistance (as needed) from the OAG intelligence analyst(s) who worked on each job. At first, the Program Manager requested this form be completed monthly throughout an investigation, but this posed a challenge for investigators who were inundated with investigative tasks and not used to this reporting requirement. Completing the form once at the end of each job became sufficient. The performance measures related to cash, weapons, illegal drugs and other materials seized are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Key Performance Measures for Each KI Job: Seizure Data

| Measure | JOB 1 | JOB 2 | JOB 3 | JOB 4 | JOB 5 | JOB 6 |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|---|---|
| Cash | \$795 | \$14,057 | \$178,372 | \$1,062 | \$455,078 | \$30,139 |
| Weapons | | | | | | |
| Handguns | --- | 3 handguns | 6 handguns | --- | 14 handguns | 6 handguns (incl.ghost gun) |
| Long guns | --- | --- | 1 rifle 1 pellet gun | --- | 4 long guns | 1 pump-action shotgun |
| Ammunition | 8 rounds | 21 rounds | 56+ rounds | 45 rounds | 878+ rounds | multiple boxes of ammo |
| Drugs | | | | | | |
| Heroin/fentanyl | <1g heroin | 5.9kilos heroin/fentanyl | 5.5kilos heroin/fentanyl | 22.3g heroin/fentanyl | 1.1 kilo heroin/fentanyl | 259g heroin (equivalent to 8,633 packets) |
| Cocaine/crack | <1g crack | 6g cocaine | 1.7kilos cocaine/crack | 87g cocaine/crack | 67g cocaine/crack | 1,533g cocaine 560g crack |
| Marijuana | 6g marijuana | 318g marijuana | 2 oz marijuana | | | 3lbs marijuana |
| Prescription pills and miscellaneous | <1g PCP 6g white powder | 5 oxycodone tablets | 26.3g white powder | glassine packets & white tablets 120g white powder | Morphine, oxycodone pills; boxes of "tranq" bottles; 340g white powder; 2.1 g meth | --- |
| Vehicles | 0 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 2 |

Evaluation Findings Brief – August 2022

Other highlights from the investigations are provided below; and Figure 3 shows that high levels of success that prosecutors achieved in the courtroom over the first six KI jobs. A full set of performance measures can be found in the larger BJA report (forthcoming).

HIGHLIGHTS FROM INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION

- ◆ Before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic (March 2020), the average number of months from arrest to disposition for KI cases was 8.7 months. During the pandemic, the average number of months to disposition roughly doubled, but by Job 6, which concluded in June 2021, the time between arrest and disposition reverted to be roughly 8 months.
- ◆ Prosecutors successfully prosecuted 100% of defendants in Jobs 1, 2, 4 and 6. For Jobs 3 and 5, staff successfully prosecuted 91% and 89% of cases, respectively (see figure below).
- ◆ All defendants accepted a plea agreement to avoid very long sentences.
- ◆ Across all Jobs, 13 defendants received sentences averaging from 2 to 10 years. These defendants represented those higher up in the organizational structure of the targeted DTOs.

Figure 3. Number of Defendants Arrested and Prosecuted



Description of City Services

The city services component of the KI (the third prong) is an effort for the KI to respond to resident needs and address issues in the built environment. The original goal of the initiative was to tie the delivery of social and city services close in time and location to the site of each takedown and to involve community members in any plan for the block or neighborhood. The process included enlisting assistance by city/social services via the Managing Directors Office (MDO), relaying information from the OAG to the MDO regarding the disorder-related issues that exist on the target block, such as graffiti and abandoned properties and lots (especially those used for drug selling or using).

The Resilience Project team (and later the ORU staff) was the relevant partner in the KI and responsible for organizing and orchestrating any post-enforcement efforts to improve the built environment and address resident concerns around a KI job post-enforcement. Once arrest warrants were served for the take down of the DTO, the lead prosecutor would pass on the information within two days to the Resilience Project/ORU and ask that city services be coordinated for residents on the blocks that were contiguous to the drug corners. This was accomplished by the KI Project Director emailing the lead MDO contact—the Assistant Managing Director at the MDO—who forwarded it to all Resilience Project/ORU partners, who then prioritized action on the target block(s). The key actions that were part of the KI included, but were not limited to the following: the Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I) would clean and seal vacant properties, and the Community Life Improvement Program (CLIP) would remove graffiti and green vacant lots.

Sometimes, the relevant city agency staff would observe the block before satisfying the OAG's request for services to the KI target blocks and decide the request could not be fulfilled for a variety of reasons (e.g., already addressed this block recently, only one family remained on the block/actually lives there, residents were unwilling to engage). The original intent was for the OAG requests be addressed within 2 or 3 days of the initial email unless the group was alerted on a Friday and action was reserved for early the following week. The ORU also holds weekly meetings that the KI Program Manager attended, during which any outstanding request is discussed and assigned to a person or group to address.

While performance measure data were not regularly kept by city staff pertaining specifically to the KI target area and specific OAG requests, some general address-level data were provided to the research team on the following: parcels cleaned and sealed, locations of graffiti removed, and any greening or

beautification efforts completed. These data were then aggregated into two-week intervals to represent the two weeks before each job was completed (takedown) and the two weeks after takedown, as shown in Table 2. The findings from the table indicate that not many services were completed within the two weeks following the takedowns related to Jobs 1 to 4.

Table 2. City Social Services Delivered on Enforcement Blocks/Corners^{iv}

| Job | Date of Enforcement | 2 Weeks Pre-enforcement | 2 Weeks Post-enforcement | Change from pre to post |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Clean and seals completed (L & I) | | | | |
| Job 1 | 8/30/2018 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Job 2 | 2/14/2019 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Job 3 | 7/9/2019 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Job 4 | 6/18/2020 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Graffiti removal completed (CLIP) | | | | |
| Job 1 | 8/30/2018 | 1 | 0 | -1 |
| Job 2 | 2/14/2019 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Job 3 | 7/9/2019 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Job 4 | 6/18/2020 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Greened vacant lots (CLIP) | | | | |
| Job 1 | 8/30/2018 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Job 2 | 2/14/2019 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Job 3 | 7/9/2019 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Job 4 | 6/18/2020 | 0 | 4 | 4 |

Systematic Observation of Block-level Routine Activities: Performance Measures from Video Footage, Jobs 1 and 2

Because KI leaders were hoping that the initiative would increase quality of life for residents on the blocks around the DTOs, in addition to collecting administrative data related to initiative operations, the research team was interested in understanding whether there were “noticeable” changes in street activity on the blocks after the takedowns. At the time the research team wrote the grant, the KI initiative was already underway and MDO staff were conducting quality-of-life surveys on many of the blocks in the KI target area. As a result, the research team did not propose any type of data collection that involved resident or household surveys or in-person

observation to understand quality of life. The research team had also been informed by KI investigators that doing any type of observation with vehicles that did not include law enforcement would not be prudent. However, the onset of the pandemic cancelled any planned observation by vehicles. Instead, because the research team had access to camera footage from two investigations, the research team devised a method to code observations of street routine activities using the camera footage. The main hypotheses tested were that in the two weeks after the takedown of the drug organization/market the blocks would have more activity by children and fewer observed instances of illegal activity compared to the two weeks leading up to the law enforcement takedown.

The Neighborhood Inventory for Environmental Typology (NifETy) (Furr-Holden et al., 2008) and the nighttime NifETy (Milam et al., 2016) were chosen as the basis of measures for KI camera coding. The NifETy captures data relating to physical layout, dwelling/edifices, adult activity, youth activity, physical (dis)order, social (dis)order, and violence, alcohol, tobacco and other drug (VATOD) activity. The research team adapted the tool based on imagery available in the video footage. Every attempt was made during coding to ensure that the same people (or vehicles) were not counted multiple times in the same coding period.

The team coded 30-minute segments from the three weeks immediately preceding the takedown and the two-week period immediately following the takedown. These days chosen for coding were a combination of weekdays and weekends to capture possible differences in routine activities that coincide with the work week versus the weekend. This coding scheme resulted in 89 coding segments for Job 1 (51 pre/38 post) and 97 coding segments for Job 2 (57 pre/40 post). There were fewer coding segments for Job 1 because the school year started part way through, so most weekdays did not include the earliest morning coding block.

A secondary coder was trained to validate the coding. For discrepancies, the two coders worked together to review the footage and come to an agreement. For any remaining disagreements, the counts were averaged.

Table 3 presents the average scores (i.e., the means) for relevant categories of activity for Jobs 1 and 2 and provides t-test results comparing these means pre- and post-DTO-takedown. A t-test is a statistical method to compare the means of the scores for the two groups.

To start, for both jobs, members of the DTOs are visible on the camera for about a quarter of all visible minutes coded in

the time period before their respective takedowns. This points to a fairly active presence in the movement on their street blocks in the periods before the takedown.

For **Job 1**, there is a *statistically significant reduction* in means comparing pre-means to post-means in:

- The number of adults present;
- The number of adults in transit; and
- The number of adults sitting on steps.

These differences are likely due to decreased presence of people involved in the drug market after the DTO takedown.

With regard to youth, there was a:

- Non-statistically significant reduction in youth present and youth riding bicycles; and a
- Non-statistically significant increase in unsupervised youth activity and youth in transit.

Some of these changes regarding the presence of youth may be unrelated to the takedown as school started a few days before the DTO takedown. The beginning of the school year could have affected the number of kids out playing and would explain why there is a slight uptick in youth in transit at that time as they head to and from school.

There is also a non-statistically significant decrease in operable vehicles (those driving down the main street of interest), obvious signs of drug selling, and groups of all sizes. These decreases, while not statistically significant, could also be related to the takedown of the DTO, as half of the drug dealing activity was estimated to be “drive-up” and the main street of interest was not a main road or through street. Hence, some vehicle activity on the block may have been linked to the DTO. In addition, analyses of the footage over the time periods showed that groups often formed when drug selling was taking place.

For **Job 2**, the only statistically significant difference was:

- Signs of drug selling. There was a notable decrease in this measure. The DTO targeted by Job 2 operated by having people wait in between parked cars, then someone from a house on the left came out, met with the person briefly, and walked back into the house. At one point pre-enforcement, there was a group of 5 or 6 people waiting in between cars for a dealer. This behavior did not continue to occur after the takedown.

Like Job 1, although the change in means was not statistically significant, the number of adults present and in transit dropped after the takedown, likely due to decreased traffic from the drug market. The numbers of youth present, unsupervised, riding bikes, and in transit all increased after the takedown. While not statistically significant, this increase is in the direction we would expect counts to go if the presence of the DTO had been inhibiting youth activity. Additionally, this activity should not have been affected by school because it was consistent through the whole viewing period. There were slightly more pro-social groups seen after the takedown, which could suggest people felt more comfortable walking around, with their kids as well, after their block was no longer part of an active drug market. Before the takedown, this (Job 2) DTO and their customers were occasionally seen in groups but were much more likely to be alone or as part of a pair. This could have been because it was winter so members of the DTO likely hung out inside, out of view from the cameras.

Table 3. Means and t-Test Results for Coded Activity Categories Pre and Post DTO Takedown, Video Footage Coding

| | | Pre-Period Mean | Post-Period Mean | T-test p-values |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Variables Takedown: 8/30/2018 (6 am) | | 8/9-8/28 | 8/30-9/13 | |
| Job 1 | % of visible time DTO in frame | 25.1% | | |
| | Adults present | 14.49 | 10.55 | 0.01* |
| | Adults in transit | 13.06 | 9.37 | 0.01* |
| | Adults sitting on steps | 1.29 | 0.63 | 0.04* |
| | Youth present | 2.84 | 2.66 | 0.80 |
| | Unsupervised youth | 1.39 | 1.61 | 0.62 |
| | Youth riding bicycles | 0.41 | 0.37 | 0.83 |
| | Youth in transit | 2.02 | 2.24 | 0.75 |
| | Operable vehicles (main street) | 3.96 | 3.29 | 0.16 |
| | Obvious signs of drug selling | 0.10 | 0.03 | 0.19 |
| | Groups of 3 (adults and/or kids) | 0.67 | 0.45 | 0.31 |
| | Groups of 4 (adults and/or kids) | 0.24 | 0.21 | 0.80 |
| | Groups of 5 (adults and/or kids) | 0.10 | 0.03 | 0.19 |
| | Groups of 6 (adults and/or kids) | 0.02 | 0.00 | 0.39 |
| | Groups of 7 (adults and/or kids) | 0.06 | 0.00 | 0.13 |
| | | | | |
| Takedown: 2/14/2019 (6 am) | | 1/24-2/12 | 2/14-2/28 | |
| Job 2 | % of visible time DTO in frame | 26.0% | | |
| | Adults present | 14.37 | 12.75 | 0.33 |
| | Adults in transit | 13.35 | 11.20 | 0.16 |
| | Adults sitting on steps | 0.63 | 1.05 | 0.09 |
| | Youth present | 1.86 | 2.45 | 0.34 |
| | Unsupervised youth | 1.04 | 1.23 | 0.61 |
| | Youth riding bicycles | 0.02 | 0.05 | 0.49 |
| | Youth in transit | 1.75 | 2.33 | 0.32 |
| | Operable vehicles | 12.79 | 11.70 | 0.28 |
| | People smoking | 0.42 | 0.55 | 0.45 |
| | Obvious signs of drug selling | 1.58 | 0.00 | 0.00*** |
| | Groups of 3 (adults and/or kids) | 0.42 | 0.55 | 0.37 |
| | Groups of 4 (adults and/or kids) | 0.09 | 0.18 | 0.24 |
| | Groups of 5 (adults and/or kids) | 0.04 | 0.05 | 0.72 |
| | Groups of 6 (adults and/or kids) | 0.02 | 0.05 | 0.37 |

Notes. t-tests are 2-tailed, assuming equal variances. * p<.05; ** p<.01; ***p<.001.

Longer-Term Outcomes: Shooting Victims, Overdose Deaths and Drug Sales Events

The main long-term outcome assessed for the impact evaluation was the number of shooting victims. Although overdose deaths were included in pre-post count statistics, the measure was not included as an outcome in the rigorous statistical models because we were unable to obtain a complete time series of accidental overdose fatalities through 2021. The descriptive tables presented first also include narcotics-related dispatch data and requests for city services. More detail on the measures is provided below:

- **Shooting victims.** Data on shooting victims from 2008 through 2021 were provided by the PPD in an Excel spreadsheet with street address locations as well as XY coordinates. Any addresses not matching to an XY coordinate were re-assessed by the research team to potentially locate valid addresses. The resulting hit rate in ArcGIS Pro 2.6 was above 96%.
- **Accidental overdose deaths.** De-identified accidental overdose death location data were provided by the Philadelphia field division of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). These data originate from the Philadelphia Medical Examiner's office. The data series did not include the entire evaluation period and hence we do not include this outcome in all analyses.
- **Narcotics-related computer-aided dispatch (CAD) event data.** Narcotics-related CAD data ("drug incidents") with x and y coordinates for location of the event were provided by the PPD for call types "DRUGS" (drug sales outside) and "NARCIN" (narcotics sales inside). PPD's CAD database contains on average over 3 million entries each year. In general, CAD events include criminal and non-criminal activity, can be community-generated or officer-initiated, handled in the field or over the phone, and do not always result in a report being taken.
- **City service requests for non-emergency services through the Philly311 call portal.⁹** Data for Philly 311 requests were available via the Open Data Philly API. Requests were aggregated across the following types: abandoned vehicles, graffiti removal, streetlight outages, vacant lot clean up, and abandoned house/commercial property.

To establish the target area to assess long-term impacts, buffers were created around each of the first three jobs

using a sausage network buffer approach. Sausage network buffers were designed by obesity researchers studying food access and exposure in neighborhood environments (Forsyth et al., 2012). The buffering approach starts at a point of interest (in this case, the drug corner), and moves out a certain distance along a street network. In this case, a distance of 800 feet (or roughly two city blocks) was used. Next, taking those streets included in the 800-foot area around the drug corner, each line is "buffered out" perpendicular to the street a further 200 meters to create the final sausage buffers (hence they are not smooth circles but have jagged edges following the street network). Once the sausage buffers were created for each job, they were overlaid with Philadelphia Census blocks in ArcGIS Pro. The Census blocks that fell fully inside or mostly inside the sausage buffers were then defined as the target area for each job for the impact analyses.

Descriptive Analysis: Simple Pre-Post Statistics

Table 4 includes the 12 month pre- and post-takedown frequencies of shootings, overdose deaths, drug-related CAD events, and requests for city services that occurred in target areas. Frequencies were created for each job by summing the total number of incidents in the target area for each job during the one-year windows before and after the takedown date.

Descriptively, there are some decreases in certain outcomes while others increased after the jobs were concluded. For instance, the first two jobs show a *reduction in shootings* between the year prior to and year post intervention (12.5% and 16.7% respectively), but Job 3 shows an over 100% increase in shootings. For drug-related incidents, the counts after Jobs 1 and 2 concluded *increased* between the 12-month pre- and post-intervention period but decreased for Job 3. For 311 calls for city services, there was a large decrease in the 12 months after Jobs 2 and 3, but an increase of 31% after Job 1. Overdose deaths decreased after the intervention for Jobs 1 and 2, with these numbers indicating a 5% reduction in fatalities in the 12 months after each job. However, in the 12-month period after Job 3 concluded, overdose deaths increased 40%.

Overall, these numbers indicate a mixed picture across the three jobs, but nonetheless, important reductions in shootings and overdose deaths after Jobs 1 and 2.

Table 4. 12-Month Pre- and Post-Enforcement Counts of Outcomes in Census Blocks within 200-Meter Sausage Buffers

| Job | Shooting victims | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
| | 12 months pre | 12 months post | Raw change | Percent change |
| Job 1. H & Potter St | 24 | 21 | -3 | -12.5% |
| Job 2. 3300 Argyle | 24 | 20 | -4 | -16.7% |
| Job 3.* 600 E Clementine | 24 | 49 | +25 | +104.2% |
| Drug incidents -sales (CAD) | | | | |
| Job 1. H & Potter St | 435 | 520 | +85 | +20.0% |
| Job 2. 3300 Argyle | 632 | 812 | +180 | +28.5% |
| Job 3.* 600 E Clementine | 858 | 489 | -369 | -43.0% |
| Overdose fatalities | | | | |
| Job 1. H & Potter St | 20 | 19 | -1 | -5.0% |
| Job 2. 3300 Argyle | 21 | 20 | -1 | -5.0% |
| Job 3.* 600 E Clementine | 15 | 21 | +6 | +40.0% |
| PHILLY311 city service calls | | | | |
| Job 1. H & Potter St | 385 | 504 | +119 | +31.0% |
| Job 2. 3300 Argyle | 423 | 327 | -96 | -22.7% |
| Job 3.* 600 E Clementine | 413 | 205 | -208 | -50.4% |

*The “post” period for Job #3 includes months affected by the pandemic. Other notes: Job 1 pre/post dates include 8/2017-8/2018 (pre) and 9/2018-9/2019 (post), except for CAD data, where pre/post dates are 1/2018-8/2018 (pre) and 9/2018-4/2019 (post). Job 2 pre/post dates are 1/2018-1/2019 (pre) and 3/2019-3/2020 (post). Job 3 pre/post dates are 7/2018-7/2019 (pre) and 8/2019-8/2020 (post), except for overdose data, where pre/post dates are 11/2018-7/2019 (pre) and 8/2019-4/2020 (post). CAD events for drug incidents include those occurring both outside and inside. Philly311 requests for service include requests for abandoned vehicles, graffiti removal, streetlight outages, vacant lot clean up, and abandoned house or commercial property. Overdose deaths are accidental overdose deaths. Due to census blocks in overlapping sausage buffer boundaries for the three jobs, values in each cell may not reflect mutually exclusive counts.

Synthetic Control Models to Compare KI “Treated” Areas to non-Treated Areas

To assess long-term changes, we also used rigorous statistical methods to establish comparison areas from which to assess differences in shootings after each KI enforcement for the first 3 jobs. As stated earlier, we did not run models for Jobs 4-6 because the pandemic introduced extraordinary circumstances that greatly impacted violence and police activity, with evidence that areas in Kensington were disproportionately impacted, with the specific mechanisms that coalesced in Kensington not well understood.

For Jobs 1-3, changes in pre-post shootings were compared against control areas using the synthetic control method (SCM). SCM has been the method of choice to use in evaluations of targeted crime and drug market reduction strategies (Buggs et al., 2022; Robbins et al., 2017). Establishing a valid counterfactual to the areas targeted by the KI is challenging because the KI corners were targeted

based on their exceptional levels of narcotics sales activity and violence, making it highly unlikely that there would be other blocks or areas with similar activity or similar factors that produce these extreme outcomes.

SCM attempts to estimate a treatment effect by comparing a treated group to a counterfactual (i.e., what would have occurred in the treatment area had the intervention not taken place). The counterfactual or “control group” is created from a composite of multiple weighted spatial units.^{vi}

Because the timing of each KI job differed, the synthetic control analysis was run separately for each of the three jobs. As stated above, the treated area was defined as those Census blocks falling fully or mostly within the 200-meter sausage buffers surrounding each job. Many of the Census blocks comprising the target areas, particularly for Jobs 1 and 2, overlapped. This was due to the targeted drug corners being relatively close in proximity. The remaining blocks in the city, except for those falling within a two-block

catchment area around the treatment blocks, were then considered the “donor pool” from which the synthetic control weights were calculated.^{vii} Multiple post-intervention time periods (i.e., 3-month, 6-month, etc.) were tested for each job. The time periods assessed vary and become shorter for each job to ensure that months associated with pandemic (March 2020 and after) are *not* included.

Table 5 displays the findings from the models. The values represent the total number of shooting victims after the takedown and up to each end point-in-time, as well as the difference between these observed totals in the treatment area and the synthetic control estimates.

Table 5. Synthetic Control Results, Shooting Victims, Jobs 1 - 3

| Job 1 | KI target area | Control | Difference | Significant? |
|--------------|----------------|---------|------------|--------------|
| 3-months | 9 | 3.9 | 5.1 | no |
| 6-months | 13 | 6.7 | 6.3 | no |
| 12-months | 20 | 12.7 | 7.3 | no |
| 18-months | 33 | 18.8 | 14.2 | no |
| Job 2 | | | | |
| 3-months | 1 | 3.5 | -2.5 | no |
| 6-months | 7 | 8.6 | -1.6 | no |
| 12-months | 20 | 15.5 | 4.5 | no |
| Job 3 | | | | |
| 3-months | 3 | 3.9 | -0.9 | no |
| 6-months | 11 | 10.99 | .01 | no |
| 8-months | 16 | 18.8 | -2.8 | no |

The research team used a one-sided significance test (p-value) to determine whether the differences reached statistical significance.^{viii} The last column in Table 5 indicates the findings regarding significance. Looking at the column marked “difference,” one can see that for Jobs 2 and 3, the treatment area witnessed fewer shootings for each of two outcome time periods, indicating positive changes after the intervention, but these differences were not statistically significant. Essentially, none of the target areas across the three jobs experienced a *significant* decrease in shooting victims for any time period compared to its matched synthetic control area. The next section of this brief addresses these findings, in context of the larger evaluation.

Understanding and Interpreting What Worked and What Didn’t

After synthesizing and analyzing the range of data collected by the research team, we concluded that, although the SCM models did not indicate that the initiative contributed to a statistically significant reduction in shootings compared to a matched control group, there were many important short and intermediate successes that were achieved. From interviews with KI stakeholders, we learned that success is defined in many ways across the stakeholders, and some individuals we interviewed stated they did not necessarily expect to see a stark change in levels of gun violence across the target area as the KI was implemented. Some stakeholders discussed that simply seeing drug organizations shut down would be a solid measure of success. Similarly, others mentioned that increasing public safety for the residents closest to the targeted drug corners would be a big win—that closing down active markets would bring some semblance of peace to the closest blocks due to reductions in shootings and open-air drug activity.

It is also important to note that although the SCM models are considered rigorous, there remain a number of caveats and limitations that need to be taken into account when discussing these results. First, the shootings that are aggregated into the buffer areas may not be related to activities and actions of the drug corner. For instance, a shooting that occurred in a job’s target area boundary could be a domestic shooting that had little to do with the drug corner. (The research team did not have access to motive data, but even with motive data, it is often difficult for law enforcement to decipher whether the shooting was related in some way to a corner’s drug-related activities.)

Second, some of the jobs included a boundary area that overlapped with another KI target corner (e.g., jobs 1 and 2), part of the target area of another job, or even a priority corner that was not targeted by a KI investigation. This means that even with the removal of all or almost all actors attached to one drug corner from a takedown (via arrest and incarceration), shootings in the area could be the result of a nearby corner’s drug-selling activities. Given the agglomeration economy—the large number of drug markets operating in close proximity to each other in a small area—it is certainly possible that in the aftermath of a takedown, shootings that occurred “post” takedown near the dismantled drug corner were spillover from another corner.

Third, dismantling a drug corner could theoretically drive up shootings in the near-term as other drug sellers vie for the corner and the consumer market left behind, as some research has shown (Brantingham et al., 2019; Tilman, 1994).

Regardless of these caveats, even a small percentage reduction in shootings in the treated area is likely meaningful to residents. Some of the stakeholders who are often on the blocks in Kensington noted that there are some blocks that are still quiet after takedowns that occurred over a year ago. One individual commented: *“Visually you can just see the difference. You basically don’t have people congregating and loitering and doing illegal activities. It’s great for the people living on the street, and also for the people using [drugs].”*

To this respondent and a number of others, each successful takedown demonstrates the strengths of the model because it disrupted the drug-selling market for a period of time, and alerted individuals in the area that larger-scale enforcements were taking place and law enforcement were working in the area. On one hand, this sends the message to residents that the city has not given up on their plight. Some respondents also commented that anything that makes life more difficult for drug dealers is a win; confiscating guns, drugs, and money from the street in any amount can be a strong blow.

“Success from what I see is taking the organizations down after our investigation and causing disruption within them. If we are disrupting the hierarchies and finding the source of drugs, it is a success. It is just unfortunate because the drugs keep coming into the city. It’s hard—drugs will always be here especially in Kensington—but the success I see is taking DTOs down after months-long investigations and disrupting, finding out where drugs are coming in, how to combat it—so every takedown is a success in some way.”

Stakeholders expressed hope that the small successes would add up over time as the KI team moved through jobs, from one block to the next until a sizeable area had been positively affected by large-scale takedowns and the insertion of city services. In other words, seeing long-term reductions in drug use and gun violence in the Kensington neighborhood via systematic takedowns of the most prolific and violent drug-selling groups would eventually create a shift toward positive change.

Below we summarize other notable successes, and then follow with a number of challenges the strategy encountered.

(1) Strong, sustained support from the OAG, with well-respected leadership at multiple levels relevant to the KI.

As a state law enforcement agency, the PA OAG has the resources/personnel and jurisdiction required to oversee an initiative like the KI. The OAG is better suited than comparable agencies at other levels/positions like the PPD or FBI, and those without in-house prosecutors (to be discussed later in this section), to spearhead a long-term, collaborative, and resource-intensive initiative like this. The OAG’s capacity is an inherent strength of the KI.

The KI had strong, sustained support from the PA Attorney General himself and top leaders across the OAG who continued to allocate the resources necessary for the initiative.

In addition to sustained support for the KI, many stakeholders interviewed remarked how important good, trusted leadership is and was to the establishment and functioning of the KI. The individuals leading the initiative, particularly those at the OAG, are trusted by other agents and agencies, have long-standing relationships with many professionals in Philadelphia, and in general are supportive leaders for whom people like to work. As a result, many commented that the KI would not have been as successful, or even happened at all, without these individuals as leaders. They noted that it can be difficult to convince law enforcement to collaborate and share resources across agencies on an initiative like the KI. The experienced people in charge that fostered successful relationships between agencies and organizations made the KI possible.

“What relationships came together and worked together came from historical friendships. This in an anomaly in law enforcement. Building trust is tough.”

Similarly, a number of stakeholders expressed how important it is to have investigators with deep experience and leadership skills who are committed to a singular goal, but also know how and when to give less experienced investigators room to use their discretion. Essentially, the leadership style brokered respect and dedication across the team, and likely led to the long tenure and investment of the team of the investigators. One respondent stated: *“to make the KI work you have to be driven, respected, well liked. Have to be this way to make agents work harder to accomplish the goal.”*

(2) Integration of skilled intelligence analysts both within the OAG and across the OAG, PPD, and DEA.

The OAG employs intelligence analysts who work closely with agents on all aspects of intelligence-gathering for an investigation. These intel analysts are always available to agents to run license plates, identify individuals using social media, complete deconfliction forms, and otherwise assist with day-to-day investigative tasks. Many stakeholders commented on the importance of competent intelligence analysts and the value added to the OAG as lead agency because of these in-house resources that enabled strong working relationships.

“Having intel is huge, because then the investigators can do the street stuff; you don’t want them at the office all day on the computer. If you have an intel person on the case, it’s huge. Not typical.”

There is also a strong relationship between intelligence analysts at the OAG and other agencies like PPD. Intelligence analysts having access to information from more than one source/agency/database is important for their ability to build cases and take down larger DTOs. PPD has deeply experienced intel analysts who have been studying the Kensington DTOs for years and maintain a vast array of documents and information available to assist the KI jobs. The sharing of information has also fostered better relationships between agencies that, before, may have only shared intel if working on a common case. Information sharing between the DEA analysts and the KI team is also very seamless, with regular flow of information related to the drugs confiscated and the changing threats posed by different products.

(3) Involvement of prosecutor from the beginning of each investigation (target selection) until the end (prosecution of all cases and appeals).

A best practice noted by many was how the OAG embedded the lead prosecutor to guide and supervise investigations and be available to oversee all defendants’ cases from start to finish.

(4) Strong coordination and support between and among partner agencies.

A key element of the KI was the extent of collaboration between agencies including multiple law enforcement partners at the local, state, and federal levels. This meant a strong commitment by multiple partners to work together

on an investigation, from sharing intel to assisting with arrests. As stated above, collaboration is not always typical in the law enforcement community. Because of the support for the KI, the attention given to this initiative, and trusted leadership promoting it, multiple law enforcement partners were willing to work under OAG leadership to take down drug-selling groups and share in the successes and challenges that arose.

“The [...] big difference for the KI was getting different entities involved, as far as departments outside of OAG... there is a thought with law enforcement that you don’t want to share too much because you don’t want them to take over the investigation. But we were trying to work together, like this is a joint initiative.”

In terms of short-term, measurable success, stakeholders agreed the model was successful to the extent that it forged new working relationships between different agents and agencies.

(5) Cross-agency collaboration successes were quickly applied to other initiatives.

Related to the extent of collaboration discussed above, a number of stakeholders indicated that the wins related to collaboration in the KI were able to be directly applied to a smaller-scale strategy that began in 2021 in West Philly.

“We didn’t have this task force down here before KI; the fact that we now have this relationship with city officers and feds, there is so much info sharing going back and forth. We didn’t have that before. Some of our relationships have gotten stronger. Especially since we have the task force, we can work these types of cases because everyone can work well together.”

Another stakeholder indicated: “[Before KI] we tried to get different partnerships with other law enforcement agencies, but it was difficult. But as the KI became more successful, we had more success with partnerships.” It is commendable that an aspect of the KI, namely open information sharing between agencies, has become best-practice in Philadelphia and speaks to the strength of this component of the initiative, both as designed and as implemented.

(6) Enforcement success achieved with the middle ground between short-term, reactive investigations and years-long efforts aimed at top suppliers.

The resources and attention afforded to the KI allowed the initiative to take on larger-scale investigations, spend more

time on investigative tasks, and focus on making a bigger impact than previous/recent initiatives.

“Because we were in that middle ground, [PPD] were doing low-hanging fruit, quick arrests of the low-level guys on the street, not taking down the leadership. The feds are going after the leadership, the cartels, and taking forever. The idea for [KI] was to get into that middle ground, where we could do undercover ops and use grand juries... But ideally, we are doing it within average 30 days and then taking them down.”

The KI brought resources, attention, and extra press to the OAG team working on KI jobs in Kensington. While grant funds were not used directly to buy equipment, pay agents, or otherwise provide more resources to the KI, the OAG was willing to allocate extra time and resources to the KI because of the amount of support for the initiative in the law enforcement community. Having a grant to evaluate the initiative similarly raised the stakes and drew attention. Many stakeholders, especially agents, named this ability to request whatever was necessary throughout an investigation – from more agents to video and tracking technologies, and so on – as a strength of working on cases under the KI banner. Access to additional resources is not always available to agents on regular cases. One respondent specifically mentioned the extent of funds needed to make meaningful undercover buys:

“I think the resources are there, basically I compared it to the PPD field unit, obviously if you want to go up the ladder, you have to spend more money on undercover buys, in the field unit you would have enough money to buy a couple bundles of heroin, that’s a couple hundred bucks, but then you are limited by the funds. [At PPD], they are not able to spend as much money, if needed, I think the funds are more readily available for BNI, which makes it easier to get to the upper-level suppliers.”

(7) Utilization of data-driven problem-solving and a range of investigative best practices (e.g., strong intelligence information) with cross-agency collaboration that resulted in successful takedowns, minimizing overt surveillance and general over-policing. These practices also gave investigators unique opportunities to intervene in impending violence.

A number of law enforcement respondents commented that the structure of, and resources afforded to, KI allowed the investigators to be both proactive and reactive and utilize intel, data, and technology in a way that enabled them to intervene without overt surveillance or police presence that

is often associated with over-policing. One respondent commented:

“So, the simple idea of being data driven means you can be proactive and covert, so people don’t feel oppressed by law enforcement. I think that piece is really important because I think it will make [the KI] successful; identifying key people who are disproportionately responsible for crime.”

Respondents also noted that there were a few instances in which investigators were able to be proactive and use new intel to stop an impending violent incident, including at least one shooting.

“Yeah, and another thing to look at that we haven’t done the best job of evaluating, is the intelligence we are able to get. So I think the KI overall has been extremely successful in debriefing lots of people and intervening in violent situations, and passing that info on to the PPD. Even during the pandemic, that’s a big piece of what the KI brings, and I don’t think it’s talked about that much.”

(8) Increased general awareness of the range of options for helping people through drug crises.

Interview respondents commented that some of the short-term and intermediate successes of the KI included the increased level of awareness among stakeholders that there are different options available for connecting residents and people buying and using drugs to services. Historically, connection to services from the law enforcement side meant arrest and diversion, with few options for pre-arrest diversion or a pathway without law enforcement intervention. A full range of stakeholders are now aware of options for social services when taking down a drug corner or otherwise carrying out an enforcement in a high-crime area. This means awareness of pathways available that do not involve the criminal legal system.

Much of this awareness came from the fact that the Resilience Project, and later the ORU, had weekly meetings where representatives from different city agencies, including law enforcement, would report out on what was happening with different efforts to reduce the opioid crisis.

Challenges

Along with the successes of the KI, there were challenges and hurdles to full implementation as originally envisioned, as well as challenges with regard to achieving stated goals.

(1) The longstanding social and economic issues facing Kensington, including the agglomeration drug economy, are intense and complex.

The Kensington neighborhood is complex. To quote one stakeholder, “Kensington is not one problem.” Any initiative meant to address the needs of Kensington residents must acknowledge the interplay between poverty, lack of opportunity, widespread homelessness, addiction, open-air drug markets, violent and non-violent crime, intergenerational networks and alliances between drug-selling groups, and more. Some of these issues predate the opioid epidemic; some coincide; others still are the result of the open-air drug industry.

In particular, the high volume of drug sales, when entwined with gun violence, create serious impediments to substantive change. We cannot emphasize this point enough. As one stakeholder put it, the violence makes it difficult to address the opioid epidemic: “We cannot do effective prevention, intervention, and treatment when people are ducking bullets.” Addressing one street corner at a time may make a dent in the violence on that particular block, but given the agglomeration economy of drug-selling corners and the entrenched opioid market, taking down individual blocks without consideration of their place in the overall landscape of Kensington is not likely to lead to significant, sustainable reductions in violence.

(2) As another layer of Kensington’s challenging context, the structure of DTOs themselves is complex and changing.

Through our weekly KI meetings, stakeholder interviews, and informational meetings with the PPD DVIC analysts, we regularly heard that the structure and operations of DTOs in Kensington are often difficult to pin down. Drug-selling groups in the area operate on overlapping blocks and otherwise in very close proximity to each other. Sometimes, groups operate on multiple corners at the same time. Groups are also networked and may work together to move product, avoid prosecution, and remain safe from violence, etc. Others still may be feuding or have longstanding issues with another DTO which can engender violence. Even with good technology and intelligence-focused resources, it is

difficult for law enforcement to remain abreast of these inter-group dynamics. This hampers law enforcement agencies’ ability to sustain the wins after taking down one group or block.

DTOs are also currently almost all polydrug sellers, meaning they do not tend to specialize in one drug type. There are also newer drugs on the scene like xylazine, or “tranq” which is finding its way into the supply. In sum, a number of aspects of the drug economy are different now than they were even a few years ago. These changes in the nature of the drug trade in the area in recent years pose issues for investigators as well. For instance, when people from other parts of the city began engaging in the drug trade in Kensington, it made it more difficult for patrol officers and relevant agents to get to know the people and networks in the neighborhood. This was echoed by stakeholders we interviewed.

One stakeholder said the following:

“If you are speaking of drug trafficking in Kensington specifically, it is possible, but daunting, to get to all the supply and distribution chains that feed the beast down there. I say that because drug trafficking has evolved. It’s not so much a hierarchy as a network, and there are multiple sources for supply. Twenty-five years ago, you bought from YOUR guy, now it’s a more distributed enterprise. There are a number of non-Kensington residents who are engaged in retail-level drugs. There are people from all over the city who are dealing in Kensington. Twenty-five years ago this was not the case.”

Another stakeholder indicated:

“Maybe 5 or 6 years ago things changed in and around Kensington. Victims of shootings, defendants in cases, addresses were popping up in all parts of the city. To be clear, there are still plenty of residents who are part of the street drug trade, but there are plenty of other actors as well. The thing that is not being acknowledged that wasn’t 25 years ago, is the presence of gangs that were kind of competing for turf. We naively back then just saw them as retail drug trafficking orgs, but there is more to it now. Whether it was evolutionary, I don’t know. I guess the challenging part is, part at patrol officer level, if you are doing the job right, you are getting to know the people in the neighborhood (you know the good guys/bad guys, etc.), but when you have this churn of folks from other parts of the city, you don’t get the opportunity to ‘know’ people.”

(3) Also related to the complexity of the illicit drug trade and resultant violence is the introduction of fentanyl in late 2016.

Fentanyl led to a shift in retail drug operations and drug use patterns that happened relatively quickly. Many stakeholders indicated that this has made it more challenging to address the demand side of the drug trade (but one stakeholder reported that both supply and demand has remained relatively steady since fentanyl came onto the scene). Drug selling is extremely lucrative, and demand remains high especially in Kensington (people know drugs are available here, easy to find in an agglomeration economy, etc.). Only a small amount of fentanyl is required to achieve a high, which sellers and users know well. Law enforcement can, and does, remove large amounts of the drug from the street, but it appears to do little to reduce overall supply since such a small amount is needed to get high. One law enforcement leader commented:

“I would say before 2014, there were very few changes in the drug supply. It was almost generational, you would have to wait a long time for the drugs to change. It was pretty consistent; heroin and cocaine and meth were always here. And then fentanyl and analogues started and every day since then it’s been ‘what’s new today?’ It’s changed so fast so that we hear about new drugs every day; most are linked to fentanyl.”

Another stakeholder said:

“The thing that makes fentanyl so difficult is that you only need a tiny amount. So in terms of the impact on the street, it’s really hard to reduce supply because there is so much you can do with a single kilo. This is a complicating factor with fentanyl.”

(4) Although KI prosecution was highly successful achieving longer sentences than would have been achieved with local prosecution, some judges are not supportive of sentencing high-level DTO members to long sentences. This creates a challenging environment to achieve long sentences, as judges’ overall sentencing schemes and managerial practices affect plea agreements (King & Wright, 2016).

Some stakeholders discussed the challenges related to knowing that even with a strong prosecution case, every defendant takes a plea agreement which results in a shorter sentence than would have been given if the defendant had been successfully prosecuted for the initial charge. Defendants rarely, if ever, get the sentence that follows the

sentencing guidelines. This could be a function of jail overcrowding, Covid-era court delays, and other forces in Philadelphia that have sought shorter sentences for non-violent offenders. A few stakeholders mentioned that this message of leniency seems to have reached street-level dealers who do not fear a long prison sentence if apprehended.

One respondent said the following:

“There is no reason for them to stop drug dealing. Because they survive with doing it—and short jaunts in jail don’t seem to have an effect. There is no carrot or stick. The stick doesn’t seem to work. Is it a matter of longer jail sentences? I don’t know. Maybe people just don’t care if they end up in jail.”

(5) Lack of local political will to combat the extent of issues in Kensington.

A number of stakeholders believed that the KI could have more of an impact if there were more of a commitment (both funding and a general voicing of commitment) and a focus on Kensington from local policymakers. One stakeholder addressed the chaos that the fight over safe injection sites has created, indicating that political lines have fractured, likely leading to fall out and inaction. That being said, most of them understood that the pandemic interfered with the potential for the commitment of city resources beyond those related to the PPD. However, many stakeholders believed that, even with the pandemic, given the extent of violence and drug-related overdose deaths, Kensington should have remained a priority.

“This has been an extraordinary few months with the pandemic, protests, there is an awful lot of noise out there. I am very frustrated that we cannot get solid political attention on harm reduction, substance use prevention, never mind enforcement.”

A few stakeholders commented on the lack of focus on front-end prevention by city leaders, questioning how one could expect long-term change without investments in reducing demand from individuals battling addiction. One stakeholder’s comments summed this up:

“With regard to resources, it takes a lot of money to run and sustain initiatives. Money for law enforcement, social services, the physical improvement, they are all big beasts. I think the thing that, if I could go back to 1998, 1999, 2000, that I would do also is to find money to put into some sort of neighborhood-level education, for lack of better word, overall, to ensure this doesn’t come back. Prevention. I don’t think we spent nearly enough

money on that. I know there are some efforts that exist. There are good community meetings and such. But I don't know if there are any action steps that are leading to change. The other part is political will."

Another respondent mentioned that, sometimes with long-term strategies, the focus gets interrupted as other crises or hot spots emerge and local leaders feel the need to go where the immediate spotlight is. Local leaders move on or get pressured by others to spread the resources to other problem areas (outside of Kensington) despite Kensington remaining the city's largest hot spot for opioids and its associated violence.

(6) There are/were many other initiatives/organizations/agencies working in Kensington – overlapping target areas and missions – but they were not coordinated. This was true even for law enforcement efforts alone.

A range of collaborative efforts and dozens of social service agencies work in Kensington to varying degrees and have for many years. Over the course of our evaluation, we talked with stakeholders about other partnership-based strategies that had state, local, or federal funding (and some with private funding) to improve public safety in Kensington; but none of the strategies were connected to a larger picture or coordinated plan and most were not aware of the others. More than a few stakeholders we interviewed brought up the need for a master plan for Kensington with careful and sustained coordination across all relevant partners working in the area. Some even mentioned that law enforcement agencies were likely duplicating efforts or at least not tackling the problem with coordinated effort, which was seen as necessary to make large gains in Kensington. We share a range of comments illustrating these points:

"I know the city was doing the KI, but at the same time, they were doing Resilience [Project], and same time doing Operation Pinpoint. ... there needs to be one plan; or at least one master guiding plan."

"We need community engagement, and lot of public/private investment to start to create an anchor for positive change. We've all been talking about it, I don't think everyone is working together on it. If they think they are, the evidence is that they are not. Need a lot of public and private investment to try and create an anchor for positive change."

One stakeholder said the city should handle Kensington like we would an area after a natural disaster with immediate and comprehensive attention to all facets of the problem, and

sustained support at that level until the problems could be adequately assessed and addressed.

"They need to treat this area [Kensington] like it's an emergency/disaster zone. Too many hands in the pot- everyone has a program and agenda that they want to put their name on, the reality is none of us has enough resources to get a grip on the problem. There needs to be a unified command, unified access to the resources. Even within the PPD you have narcotics operating not in concert with patrol operations at times. So as long as everyone is operating independently it's not going to make a dent."

(7) Turnover in key partner positions at the beginning of the grant lessened the focus on the original strategy plan/theory of change.

Soon after KI began, the FBI agent who developed the initial plan was transferred to a different region. This key individual, who had built in a number of evidence-based community policing and intelligence-driven practices to the intended model, was subsequently not involved in the KI. In addition, there were changes in key staff at the city level, under the MDO umbrella.

(8) There was no mechanism to "hold the block" against drug dealers long-term after a takedown.

The sustainability of job successes was mentioned by a number of stakeholders as a challenge. Once a job was completed and the Project Director asked MDO/ORU staff to begin focusing on city services on the relevant blocks, there was no further effort (or ability) to hold a block against drug-selling groups post-enforcement. As a result, some of the targeted blocks were backfilled with competitors looking for new turf within days or even hours of the KI takedown. When we asked stakeholders who should have the responsibility of maintaining public safety/peace on the blocks, suggestions included adding a component that engaged the residents on the blocks in a meaningful and sustainable way. Others indicated there were so many needs related to physical street block improvements that it wasn't likely that residents themselves had the resources to sustain the gains made by law enforcement. Some respondents suggested that it could be the role of local law enforcement because it was not the role, or within the jurisdiction, of state or federal law enforcement agencies to have a daily police presence.

One stakeholder described how a post-enforcement police presence could look:

“Increase the police presence; have a stationary presence; have a car; fix lighting, remove trash; cleanup lots; environmental design stuff; have the officer be there stationary. The KI is going for the DTO, so if the whole organization is removed, there should be no stragglers there; but it also creates a vacuum, so maintaining a presence will keep them out, at least for a time.”

(9) The MTL – designed to be an important part of a data-driven strategy – was not updated in real-time nor used as originally planned.

Although there was a list of priority corners established early, there was no focus on keeping the master list updated and returning to it regularly assess overall progress and changes across the DTOs on the priority list. It is hard to know whether establishing a true MTL as it was envisioned in the original strategy paper would have had more benefit for the strategy. The KI team created their own list of each group’s structure at the time they decided on each (i.e., the next) target. But best practices in intelligence-led policing suggest potential benefits of an MTL would be to have this information formally shared back and forth across law enforcement operations in the area and to utilize it to continually assess the larger picture of gun violence and best determine how all shootings across Kensington were related to each DTO, triangulating intel to result in a focus on the groups that consistently generate the most gun violence.

“...we also help them for targeting. A lot of targeting [in general] is source led, what the KI is trying to do is be less source led, more like, what’s the plan? [Go by some overarching strategy] Let’s do the upfront hard work of targets. I think the easiest thing for investigations is ‘I have a good CI there’, that’s the easiest, for anything to be successful [they] have to do more than that.”

(10) A priority focus of completing city services related to environmental improvements on the blocks after a takedown did not appear to be consistent, nor were data regularly monitored by the city on service requests/delivery of services post-enforcement (specific to targeted blocks).

Because there is a long-standing relationship between OAG and MDO employees, enforcement information was transferred regularly for action between the OAG and Resilience Project/ORU partners. There is no formal

documentation, however, to understand how services differed from “business-as-usual,” types of support requested, which requests were satisfied (and when), and why some requests might not have been satisfied. This type of information, especially address-level information, would have been invaluable to the evaluation efforts and, in general, would help both agencies understand progress and shortcomings of their approach to addressing the needs of Kensington residents.

Some indicated that turnover in key MDO positions in 2018 and 2019 negatively impacted the city resources delivered to KI targeted blocks, and their capacity to maintain data on their activities. Others suggested that focus on Kensington was lost when the city’s executive order related to the opioid epidemic lapsed and the Resilience Project ended.

(11) Over time, the DTOs learn that Kensington is the focus of deep investigations, so drug dealers change their method of operations to work around law enforcement.

One stakeholder indicated that operating the KI strategy is becoming more difficult as each large drug bust is publicized and DTO members figure out how to work around undercover operations and evade surveillance.

(12) The Covid-19 pandemic created a vast array of challenges on all fronts.

The impact of the pandemic on life in general has been significant and will continue to affect society for years to come. Its impact on law enforcement and the Kensington Initiative cannot be overstated. Almost every stakeholder with whom we spoke indicated some facet (or all) of the KI was affected. As a result of the pandemic, public health efforts in the city were forced to shift their resources and attention toward pandemic-related issues. The lockdown and subsequent months of pandemic precautions meant agents, and governmental and non-governmental service providers, engaged in fewer face-to-face interactions. This included fewer street-level arrests, undercover/CI buys, knocks on doors post-enforcement, and providers to administer Narcan and support those at risk of overdosing on the street. In-person meetings were also suspended for a period and check-in meetings in general were not prioritized. Weekly “Huddle” meetings originally proposed by the KI never happened systematically among all KI partners/agencies.

The pandemic did not stop investigations and enforcements completely – but it did slow them down, especially at the beginning. Only the first three jobs were not touched by the pandemic. While investigative activities (as of May 2022) have returned to normal, things were far from standard during the KI evaluation period.

Perhaps the largest impacts of the pandemic on the criminal legal system relevant for the success of the KI are the amount of time individuals were forced to wait for a court hearing post-arrest and the increase in the likelihood that non-violent defendants would not be jailed at all before their case was heard. Philadelphia courts were closed for a significant period of time. As a result, many cases were delayed and continued for many months, even years, before disposition. Because of these long wait times and the recommendations of the ACLU and similar national organizations, defendants typically awaited their court dates in the community. Attorneys could file motions electronically to argue for bail reduction and other considerations (e.g., no pre-trial detention).

While unavoidable, this allowed for the potential for continued criminal behavior in the same community from which they were originally arrested. This also meant that, at times, officers would see a person they arrested that morning back on the street in the afternoon, which was frustrating and affected morale among officers and reduced their confidence that the city would properly prosecute individuals they had worked hard to arrest.

Although many stakeholders commented that some consequences of the pandemic could not be avoided, and they understood that decisionmakers had to make tough choices regarding resource allocation, a large number of stakeholders still believed more focus and resources could have remained on the public safety issues in Kensington.

Recommendations for Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Stakeholders

Bringing together the results of the evaluation, strengths of the initiative, and challenges faced, the research team developed some recommendations for stakeholders involved in community change in Kensington and around the city of Philadelphia. These recommendations are also relevant for stakeholders working in other jurisdictions who hope to reduce gun violence and overdose deaths associated with high-volume drug trafficking organizations. We start with recommendations that are aimed at the relatively small scope of the initiative itself and lead agency (i.e., the OAG)

and key partners, and then move outward to discuss more comprehensive recommendations focused on achieving larger, sustainable increases in public safety in Kensington.

Strategy/Approach

- **Establish a coordinated strategy to maintain public safety on the block(s) after a successful enforcement takes place.** A sentiment echoed by more than one stakeholder during their interview was that little attention was given to keeping a block clear after a KI enforcement (and associated actions by the ORU partners). By not supporting a cleared area post-enforcement, the initial investment in that block and any gains made as a result can be lost.
- **Establish and maintain a procedure for obtaining input and feedback from residents.** Early in the KI strategy, members of the Resilience Project had regular contact with residents and had been training residents to conduct short quality-of-life surveys. These activities ended when the Resilience Project ended alongside the city's Executive Order on the Opioid Crisis. Moreover, resources were re-allocated due to Covid-19. Without knowing from residents what "success" looks like to them, and their perceptions of quality of life after the drug markets were shut down, meaningful outcomes may be overlooked, and strategy efforts misplaced. Involving residents would also build capacity on the blocks to maintain gains after the takedowns and make important changes from the ground up.
- **Select drug market targets using data and analyses that are regularly updated and systematically reviewed, with constant reflection on how the previous job fits into overall progress.** Many law enforcement stakeholders suggested that working from a regularly updated, dynamic master list of groups and individuals (referred to in the model as a master target list, or MTL) could be beneficial for a strategy like the KI. Regularly updating and reviewing the MTL and the individuals attached to each group would offer the different law enforcement agencies a method to stay up to date (as much as possible) on the characteristics of each group, its members, their involvement in violence, situations that could engender more violence, their sources of distribution, and the networks that span corners, as the landscape changes over time. And as stated in the "challenges" section, the MTL could then serve as a mechanism to focus scarce resources, track and monitor gun violence (and drug distribution) trends at the group level over time.

- **Maintain a middle-ground timeframe for investigations.** Like the OAG has done and was prescribed under the KI model, continue conducting investigations that are shorter than traditional federal investigations (multiple months, even years) and longer than the largely reactive investigations conducted by local law enforcement (PPD). A strength of the KI was the timeline it employed, taking down entire DTOs and reaching the source of supply with investigations that lasted between six and eight months. These intensive, shorter-than-federal investigations also allowed the OAG to interrupt future violence in some cases and compile intelligence on how things were changing on the ground. Stakeholders also mentioned that having even more time (while still keeping an investigation shorter than a federal investigation) could allow for a larger impact within and across DTOs by permitting agents to work harder to get the head or boss of a group or uncover supply/distribution channels.
- **Periodically, but systematically, assess and re-assess resources needed for successful takedowns.** Despite having access to more resources than is typical, an approach like the KI may still need additional resources to create an impact across DTOs. This means more money for buys and overtime hours for officers, additional intelligence analysts willing to share information across agencies, a larger capacity for wiretaps, more agents with knowledge of the area, and more time to spend on an investigation if needed. This could potentially also allow the investigative team to take on multiple corners/groups/jobs at the same time and create a plan for preventing groups from backfilling post-enforcement.
- **Increase state funding dedicated to drug law enforcement, with a specific focus on high-volume, high-violence DTOs.** It is important to note that the OAG did not use grant funding to pay for manpower/additional investigators, because federal funding is not sustainable, meaning that any “new” grant-funded positions would likely be terminated when the grant ended. In Pennsylvania, hiring additional law enforcement agents (or increasing their pay) would require an increase in budget funds from the state to the OAG under its Drug Law Enforcement program.

Stakeholder Commitment, Leadership, & Staffing

- **Seek support and maintenance of partnerships across every level of government (local, state, federal).** The original plan for the KI included a strong partnership with the FBI, ATF, DEA, HSI, OAG, PPD, and MDO. Many of these partners became less involved

over time. In addition, at the outset of the KI, the collaborative had an attorney cross-designated to the US Attorney’s Office to prosecute cases at federal level, but for various reasons, the KI never had the opportunity to utilize that path. Future initiatives could benefit by solidifying strategy leads or co-leads early on and clearly articulating roles and responsibilities of all partners; across law enforcement agencies discussing and determining the organizational practices that maximize the respective contributions of the different agencies and help ensure the best teamwork, will go far in reducing the potential for tension around jurisdictional issues.

- **Establish an effective administrative structure that includes regular meetings across the collaborative partners both at the executive level and middle level.** While part of the original plan for the KI, executive team-style meetings did not take place (mostly because of the pandemic and a shift in priorities to focus on reducing the spread of the Covid-19 virus). A comprehensive initiative should maintain periodic meetings of executives/agency and strategy leads, and institute regular and frequent meetings for the management staff working on the ground. All meeting minutes should be kept and maintained by an individual charged with this responsibility and should be circulated among members after each meeting and reviewed in later meetings. Within the administrative structure, the leader or co-leaders of the strategy could help coordinate resources and activities across all partners in Kensington – whether that means finding internal resources to do so or hiring staff specifically tasked with resource and meeting coordination. A process such as this could help sustain a priority focus each of the three prongs of the KI.

Data & Analysis

- **Track/maintain data and share it in real time with the partnership. Public safety efforts should always include data collection and analysis.** Establishing up front which performance measures will best capture outcomes and how best to obtain and report on those outcomes would go far in creating an important feedback loop where the partners could routinely assess what was working and not working. Because of the many moving parts (with different agencies responsible for components) and the difficulty the research team had with accessing a variety of data, it was not easy to see the big picture of progress in a timely fashion to support program modifications if needed. A strategy like the KI could benefit from having data managers from each agency who dedicate at least

some small portion of their time each week to discussing performance measures for the KI with managers from other partner agencies. These data managers could access, clean and submit data to a centralized staff person responsible for strategy performance measurement. In general, collecting data on performance helps programs (and leaders) be accountable, and is one pillar of building equity into policing practices (Goff et al., 2019).

- **Support additional research and intelligence analyst staff positions within the PPD** that are dedicated to linking shootings and other crime and drug incidents across all drug markets. The staff of analysts at the PPD are remarkable in their institutional knowledge about the violence emanating from DTOs and corner markets in PPD's East Division. Their work, however, is extremely resource intensive. With an increasing number of shootings and (new) drug sellers who appear to be coming from other police divisions into East Division, analysts may not have the time to collect the historical information that would assist them and, in turn, law enforcement, in obtaining details about networks of local drug distribution and how those networks influence violence, who they are feuding with, what they have been historically responsible for, etc. Coupling additional analysts with statisticians (skilled in network analysis and causal modeling) devoted to understanding these factors and having them be part of any KI-like collaboration, would not only help inform the target selection process, but also could assist the investigations and prosecutions by contributing additional good and reliable intel and analyses. In a time when a vocal percentage of the public is calling for reductions in police budgets, it would be highly detrimental to withhold funding for skilled analysts and advanced research statisticians who know how to conduct data-driven analyses and apply findings to guide evidence-informed violence reduction. These researchers and analysts could be available to provide support for any master plan for Kensington, should such a plan be realized (see below).

Recommendations Focused on Achieving Larger, Sustainable Increases in Public Safety across Kensington

- **View and address the social problems within greater Kensington as a whole, taking a big-picture view of the targets, problems, and solutions.** The KI, while collaborative, was designed as a targeted initiative to address gun violence in micro-locations across Kensington. It was operating as one small piece of a bigger puzzle, largely disconnected from

all the other efforts designed to improve neighborhood well-being and reduce violence in Kensington. As the KI continues, efforts to collaborate with a larger range of stakeholders could help integrate its work on blocks and corners across the target area. With regard to gun violence, almost every stakeholder with whom we spoke indicated that it is extremely difficult to improve the whole area without a coordinated approach across an array of stakeholders that spans residents, community nonprofits, law enforcement, social services, city leaders, and private foundations and businesses. All entities with an interest in Kensington should be on the same page and collaborate to co-create a neighborhood master plan. To work toward true community policing partnerships, law enforcement agencies should carefully assess the needs and wants of the social groups that typically have been absent from strategy table – residents and community groups. In addition, putting aside the suggestion of a larger collaboration that spans a wide range of stakeholders, a number of partners suggested Kensington could benefit from one larger strategic *law enforcement-led plan* for the geographic area, with coordination across all relevant partners (and across federal, state and local levels) and a clear picture of what progress and success look like from a law enforcement perspective. Importantly, though, a coordinated, law enforcement-led plan would still engage the community in a dialog to work toward collaborative strategic action.

- **Seek innovative funding sources that can be dedicated to a long-term Kensington master plan that spans mayoral terms.** The scale of the social and economic issues in Kensington are likely beyond the ability of government alone to address. The number one ranked response from stakeholders when asked what is needed to reduce gun violence and overdose fatalities in Kensington was “resources.” If resources are not forthcoming from city and state leaders, then committed Kensington stakeholders should work together to seek private funding sources to enable innovation and evidence-informed strategies supported by residents to saturate the neighborhoods.

Conclusion

The results of our evaluation show that there were a number of process-oriented successes that were the result of careful and coordinated efforts to investigate and prosecute the entire operation of targeted DTOs in Kensington. Foremost, having a dedicated prosecutor who was involved in all investigations, all aspects of prosecutions and across all KI jobs, resulted in strong cases, with close to

100% success in achieving a guilty verdict. Although the KI did not include efforts to “hold-the-block” after the law enforcement takedown, reports from investigators, from our analyses of the video footage, and the descriptive outcomes related to shootings showed that there was more pro-social activity on the blocks after around Jobs 1 and 2 after the takedown and some reductions in shootings.

Implementing any type of violence reduction program or strategy in a large geographic area where simultaneous crises are ongoing (violence, opioid overdoses, homelessness) is an enormous challenge, let alone implementing or attempting to sustain an initiative during a pandemic.

The recommendations above suggest incorporating law enforcement and non-law enforcement partners into a comprehensive, carefully-coordinated master plan; adding resident buy-in and opportunities for resident-led block improvements; allocating more resources to existing investigations; adding data managers and dedicated staff to oversee data collection and analysis; and more. Without solid attention to best practices for multi-agency partnerships in community violence reduction underpinning the strategy, it is unlikely any initiative will achieve *sustainable* reductions in violence in Kensington. The approach must be well-conceived and intentionally comprehensive with a clear path to success that all stakeholders agree to follow.

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² PA Office of the Attorney General

ⁱ With the exception of Kensington, neighborhood boundaries used for this table are those defined by the Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) and are groupings of 2000 Census tract boundaries.

ⁱⁱ Corrupt organizations, commonly referred to as "Pennsylvania RICO" or PACO, is a first-degree felony typically charged in addition to drug offenses. The state attorney must demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt that the arrestee received any income from racketeering activity or was involved in an organization that conducted racketeering activity. [18 P.S. § 911]

ⁱⁱⁱ A Title 3 wiretap refers to Title III of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (Pub. L. 90-351; 6/19/68), also known as the "Wiretap Act."

^{iv} The unit used for aggregation of counts is the Thiessen Polygon, centered on the priority corner and radiating outward to include blocks leading to the far corners.

^v <https://www.phila.gov/departments/philly311/>

^{vi} The *microsynth* package in R was used to run the SCM. The procedure uses survey weighting techniques to create weights for untreated cases that collectively

equal the number of treated units. The *microsynth* package creates weights for the untreated units to match the "treated population" as closely as possible. Weights for matching were calculated based on a vector of time-invariant characteristics and pre-treatment counts of the outcome variables. Shootings were aggregated into 3-month intervals to facilitate matching. After making these adjustments, the *microsynth* procedure was able to create a weighted control area that perfectly matched the treatment areas for each job.

^{vii} A two-block-wide buffer area directly outside of the sausage buffer outline was excluded from the donor pool because that area might witness displacement.

^{viii} A p-value of ≤ 0.05 is a commonly used criterion for determining whether an observed difference is "statistically significant" or not. While it does not take into account the possible effects of bias or confounding, a p-value of ≤ 0.05 suggests that there is a 5% probability or less that the observed differences were the result of chance.