IN BRIEF: Comprehensive Community Assessment
Seattle, Washington[1]

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In 2010, Washington State was home to approximately 300 street gangs, with an estimated 15,000 active members. In December 2015, findings from the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Needs Assessment identified a need for an overarching strategic plan to address youth violence. Specifically, the report suggested evidence-based strategies across a broad spectrum of prevention approaches, including group-specific interventions. In response to these findings, and concerns about increased violence, Mayor Ed Murray and the Seattle Office of the Mayor Innovation Team identified the Comprehensive Gang Model as an evidenced-based practice to address the growing issue of gun and group violence among young adults in the city.

This is a brief of the comprehensive community assessment – an important first step within the gang model. The purpose of the assessment is to provide Seattle's leaders and residents with an up-to-date snapshot of violent groups in the city, and allow stakeholders to make informed decisions regarding best practices. The main goal of the assessment is to analyze the nature of group related crime and violence in Seattle.

To accomplish this goal, we first analyzed census and crime data to learn more about community characteristics and offenders. *We found that across Seattle precincts, offenders were overwhelmingly male* (79 percent for violent offenses; 73 percent for property). Violent offenders in the South and East Precincts were more likely to be Black, at 59.2 percent and 47.5 percent, respectively, while violent offenders in the North and Southwest precincts were more likely to be White. Fifty-two percent of property offenders in the South Precinct were Black, compared to 28.7 percent of offenders in the West Precinct and 22.1 percent in the North Precinct. *Overall, the peak ages for violent crime offending in Seattle were 14-29, with a significant drop after age 30.* The West Precinct had the highest rate of known property and violent offenders. This was due to its status as the business and entertainment district, and its high daytime population (vs. residential population). *Of the residential precincts, the South and East had the highest rates of known offenders.*

The current assessment also involved conducting group audits in Seattle on May 24th and September 16th, 2016. *These group audits identified 42 groups and between 1,340 and 1,770*

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group members throughout all Seattle Police Department precincts. These groups were reported to be engaged in violence, not very organized, and are overlapping in regard to geographic area and social space. The goal of enforcement and intervention should be to reduce the density of these networks; that is, reduce the number of conflicts between groups over time.

Comparisons in risk factors between gang-involved and non-gang-involved youth, using a school-based study, were also made in the current assessment. These analyses indicated that gang-involved youth are considerably more likely to participate in problematic behavior than non-gang-involved youth. *Gang-involved youth are three times more likely to engage in physical fights, and seven-to-ten times more likely to carry a handgun on school property*. Students in gangs are also more likely to have attitudes and beliefs favorable to drug use, and engaged in binge drinking at significantly higher rates. Finally, gang-involved youth are less likely to be deterred by law enforcement and parental discipline than non-involved youth in regard to problematic behavior, such as illegally carrying a handgun.

A social network analysis of arrests and street checks in Seattle was conducted to identify the networks of individuals connected to gun violence. Findings indicated that victims of gun violence are more likely to be younger, Black, and male. Rates of gun crime victimization were highest between the ages of 16 and 20 and those who were victimized tended to be more connected to criminal associates. *The network analysis suggests interventions should focus on those from 16 to 24 years of age*. Research has shown that one's risk of becoming a victim increases the closer they are socially to victims of gun violence. *The current assessment found that individuals within two steps of a gun victim – an estimated 1000 people – were at high risk for being victimized*. Ideally, the networks identified in this analysis will be used to determine who is at risk for gun victimization, and direct prevention and intervention services to them accordingly.

Based on the findings of the current assessment, we came up with five recommendations to further address the gang problem in Seattle:

1. Develop an implementation plan for the Comprehensive Gang Model
2. Empower the management team to implement the plan.
3. Focus efforts on people and places highlighted in this assessment.
4. Examine the relationship between African immigrants and group violence.
5. Continue to collect and validate group related data.