SAN FRANCISCO VIOLENCE REDUCTION INITIATIVE
COHORT 3 PROCESS EVALUATION

I.   INTRODUCTION

This document provides an overview; process evaluation; assessment of program activities and outcomes; as well as a qualitative analysis of stakeholder perceptions of the **San Francisco Police Department's Violence Reduction Initiative** (SF-VRI), formerly CONNECT–You, in fulfillment of the California Violence Intervention & Prevention (CalVIP) Grant Cohort 3 evaluation requirement.

This document is organized into the following sections:

- Section II contains executive summaries of the SF-VRI process evaluation and the related qualitative analysis of stakeholder perceptions.

- Section III provides a more detailed overview of the development and implementation of SF-VRI (Cohort 3 process evaluation); including VRI participant characteristics; key program activities and violence reduction outcomes, prepared by the California Partnership for Safe Communities (CPSC).

- Section IV provides an in-depth analysis of VRI managers, staff, client and community stakeholder perspectives, based on qualitative interviews and analysis conducted by the Crime and Justice Policy Lab, University of Pennsylvania (CJP/UPenn).

II.   VRI PROCESS EVALUATION: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SF-VRI strategy combines concepts from several evidence-informed strategies to reduce violence. The group violence reduction strategy (also known as focused deterrence) serves as the primary framework and incorporates elements of police-community trust building (through procedural justice) and community violence intervention (CVI).[1] Focused deterrence is supported by a significant body of research evidence, while CVI and procedural justice are also supported by growing research evidence. This combined VRI strategy sought to accomplish three goals: (1) reduce gun violence in the areas of San Francisco where it was implemented; (2) reduce recidivism, victimization and provide support and opportunities for community members at the highest risk of violence, and (3) build trust and collaborate with community actors concerned about violence in the communities of focus.

The key elements of a focused deterrence strategy include:

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[1] Cite campbell collaborations on FDV; procedural justice; USAID meta-review.

- Identify a priority crime problem – in this case non-fatal shootings and homicides in San Francisco.

- Problem Analysis: Systematically analyze that problem with input from front-line police and other practitioners with working knowledge of street and violence dynamics.

- Direct Communication: Together, police, community partners and service providers meet directly with individuals and groups most likely to be impacted by violence to inform of their imminent risk; express care and concern for their well-being and make commitments to keep them safe and free.

- Support and Opportunities: This partnership includes outreach/intervention partners capable of serving this population who engage in ongoing follow-up with these individuals.

- Focused Enforcement: This strategy also requires focused enforcement follow-up with individuals who persist in engaging in violence.

- Devoted Management: National experience shows that focused deterrence strategies are difficult to implement well and require an effective management team with a devoted focus.

Figure 1: VRI Strategy Cycle

Reducing Violence Through A Focused Cycle

The Violence Reduction Initiative was originally born out of ongoing discussions beginning in 2018 between CPSC, Police Chief William Scott and University of Pennsylvania Professor Anthony Braga, with the goal of enhancing and strengthening SFPD's efforts to reduce gun violence in San Francisco. Chief Scott believed that SFPD would benefit from systemizing and coordinating various violence reduction efforts and partnering more effectively with community stakeholders in an effort to build community trust in SFPD. He sought to incorporate elements of the focused deterrence, procedural justice and community violence intervention frameworks that CPSC employed in both Oakland and Stockton, California; as well as build on Prof. Anthony Braga's long-term working relationship with SFPD.

The development of the SF-VRI strategy was also heavily informed by the growing national movement for police reform that began with the officer-involved shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 and precipitated with the Black Lives Matter movement. San Francisco experienced several of its own officer-involved shooting incidents in the years that followed. San Francisco's VRI program was intended to help SFPD further reduce violence through a data-driven and partnership-based approach. With CPSC's support, the City applied for and secured a CalVIP Cohort 3 grant in July of 2020 for the amount of $1.5 million. This grant would provide devoted funding for life coaching/intervention support for highest risk community members; a research and evaluation component led by Professor Anthony Braga of the University of Pennsylvania and provide CPSC with training and technical assistance (TTA) resources to guide the CalVIP project.

The initial stage of VRI design work was significantly impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic in March 2020. By mid-April 2020, national think tanks published white papers discussing how policing would need to adapt to new conditions as a result of the pandemic.[2] In the midst of these challenges, the nation also experienced a surge in gun violence, with over 70% of major American cities experiencing an increase in homicide.[3] Gun-related homicides increased by 35% between 2019 and 2020.[4] The Bay Area was not immune. Reporting from this period notes that the increase in gun violence continued to predominantly affect low-income Black and Brown communities across the region.[5] Historically, gun violence in San Francisco is most disproportionately concentrated in Supervisorial District 10, which includes the Potrero Hill, Bayview/ Hunters Point, and Visitacion Valley neighborhoods. These neighborhoods became the primary focus of the VRI initiative.

Despite Chief Scott's stable tenure at SFPD, he faced some challenges in gaining support for the VRI strategy. The VRI strategy required SFPD to partner in very specific ways with community

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[2]https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/04/07/how-covid-19-is-changing-law-enforcement-practices-by-police-and-by-criminal-groups/; https://www.americanprogress.org/article/policing-coronavirus-pandemic/

[3] https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/interactive/2022/gun-deaths-per-year-usa/

[4] https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/10/health/cdc-gun-violence-pandemic.html

[5] https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/sep/28/san-francisco-bay-area-gun-violence-murders-2020

leaders and stakeholders who have relationships and credibility with the population of young men directly impacted by violence in these communities. When engaged by VRI leads during the project design phase, several community leaders shared concerns about the sustainability of SFPD's commitment to reducing violence in this way. For some, VRI was the latest in a line of strategies that gained SFPD or the City's momentary attention and then quickly eroded or dissolved when political priorities shifted.

VRI also faced various management challenges. While a management team was charged with implementing VRI, managers sometimes lacked clear direction, needed authorization, and accountability for implementing the VRI strategy effectively. Concurrently, the City was and still is, facing a fentanyl and homelessness crisis that redirected City and Department efforts, impacting the operationalization of this work. During this reporting period, roughly 2,700 people lost their lives due to drug overdose. Therefore, in the first two years of the VRI project, these dynamics impacted the VRI team's efforts to launch and sustain the VRI strategy.

Despite these significant challenges, the SF-VRI strategy shows significant promise. During this period of time, San Francisco had one of the lower rates of homicide of comparable major cities. The current VRI management team has significantly strengthened the quality of implementation starting in late 2022. Once the VRI strategy became fully operational in early 2023, the focus community (District 10) experienced reductions in fatal and non-fatal shootings. The number of highest risk individuals identified and engaged by the strategy continues to grow. Stakeholder interviews and internal documents also reveal a number of instances where retaliatory violence was effectively diagnosed and addressed through the SF-VRI framework.

Due to both the extended timeline of VRI launch and challenges with data quality in the early years of implementation, the ability of the technical assistance (CPSC) and research partners (CJP-UPenn) to analyze certain aspects of the VRI work was limited under Cohort 3. It was not possible, for example, to perform rigorous analysis of the role of VRI in violence reduction impacts at the community level or to assess individual victimization or recidivism outcomes of VRI participants. For this reason, this report focused heavily on a process assessment of implementation; a qualitative analysis of stakeholder perceptions and preliminary review of select implementation indicators.

Fortunately, the SF-VRI work continues under a CalVIP Cohort 4 grant through 2024. A shared goal of SFPD, CPSC and CJP-UPenn is to incorporate a more robust analysis of these impact measures in the SF-VRI Cohort 4 evaluation.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The VRI qualitative analysis offers a multifaceted analysis of the Violence Reduction Initiative in San Francisco. The study's findings are derived from qualitative, in-depth interviews, encapsulating diverse perspectives from VRI clients, city officials, SVIP staff, and law enforcement officers. The qualitative analysis addresses four main objectives, each assessing different aspects of the San Francisco Violence Reduction Initiative.

Research Design Summary
This portion of the VRI Case Study Evaluation, conducted jointly by the California Partnership for Safe Communities (CPSC) and the University of Pennsylvania's Crime and Justice Policy Lab (CJP), employed a qualitative research design to assess the San Francisco Violence Reduction Initiative. Data collection took place in October 2023 and involved 15 hours of ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews with 23 SF VRI implementers and stakeholders, including law enforcement officers, city officials, outreach workers, community partners, and VRI clients.

Using the grounded theory approach[6], a methodology that involves systematically gathering and analyzing data to develop theories or explanations for a given phenomenon that are 'grounded' in the data itself, the research team conducted ethnographic observations of key VRI activities and sites to complement semi-structured interviews. This approach provided diverse perspectives on events and behaviors in real time, enhancing the depth and richness of the data. Interviews were pivotal in exploring participants' subjective experiences with the VRI, offering nuanced insights into implementation and impact.

Data analysis followed Saldaña's two-cycle coding process[7], enabling the identification of recurring themes and patterns. The study's findings, presented below, are organized into methodology, findings, and conclusion sections, and provide comprehensive insights into the perceptions, experiences, and recommendations of VRI implementers and stakeholders.

Findings Summary
Objective 1: Explore Perceptions of Gun Violence and Political Will
The study sought to uncover VRI implementers' perceptions of the underlying causes of gun violence in San Francisco. Participants attributed this violence largely to intergenerational trauma, neighborhood disputes, and interpersonal conflicts. According to respondents, the city's street violence dynamics followed race-moderated patterns: Hispanic gangs, including Norteños, Sureños, and MS-13, reportedly engaged in violence primarily related to conventional gang issues (i.e., territorial disputes, control over illegal activities, and rivalries with other gangs). In contrast, in Black and Samoan communities, respondents asserted that

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6   Strauss, Anselm. 1987. Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists. New York: Cambridge University Press.

7 Saldaña, Johnny. 2015. The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

the violence tended to focus more on neighborhood disputes and interpersonal conflicts, with some cases spanning generations. A crucial aspect of these findings is the identification of personal vendettas and a desire for retribution, especially in response to harm inflicted on family members, as a catalyst for shootings. Participant perspectives point to the complex and distinct nature of group violence dynamics in San Francisco, challenging traditional conceptions of gang involvement and highlighting the need for nuanced intervention strategies.

Objective 2: Examine the History and Evolution of San Francisco's Gun Violence Reduction Efforts

The second objective delved into the historical context of San Francisco's efforts to reduce gun violence. Respondents provided insights into the San Francisco Ceasefire program (2008-2011), which struggled initially due to insufficient support from both the community and law enforcement. This lack of buy-in was attributed to Ceasefire's enforcement-centric tactics, which alienated many community members. Respondents further advised that the failures of San Francisco Ceasefire had profound effects on the implementation of the VRI (2020-present), particularly in its ability to garner community buy-in, as residents of target communities were said to harbor cynical views of the VRI due to the history of the San Francisco Ceasefire program. Nevertheless, respondents argued that vital lessons were learned from the prior San Francisco Ceasefire (2008-2011) effort, with the central aims of the VRI implementation being to adopt a more community-friendly approach and focusing on inclusivity and effective community engagement. This shift towards collaborative strategies marked a key evolution from the Ceasefire program, reflecting a deeper understanding of the need for comprehensive community involvement in addressing gun violence.

Objective 3: Evaluate SF VRI Implementers' Experiences and Perceptions

Respondents disclosed the view that the VRI's implementation had several positive aspects but was also fraught with challenges. The initiative's direct contribution to saving lives was a notable achievement, demonstrating its proactive and life-preserving approach. However, challenges such as rushed implementation, the impacts of COVID-19, personnel recruitment and retention difficulties, governance structure issues, and a lack of buy-in from SFPD officers posed significant hurdles. These challenges underscored the complexities of implementing a multifaceted initiative like the VRI in a dynamic urban environment.

Objective 4: Gather VRI Implementers' Recommendations for the Future

Looking forward, participants suggested a series of comprehensive reforms to the VRI. Recommendations included refining hiring processes, ensuring team members' commitment, and shifting management to a neutral city agency like the Mayor's Office to enhance partnerships with other city agencies and criminal justice institutions, facilitate information sharing between strategy partners, and avoid the stigma associated with police-led initiatives. Enhancing the capacity and infrastructure of the Street Violence Intervention Program (SVIP) was also emphasized, highlighting the necessity of follow-up, accountability, and substantial support for outreach workers.

Overall, the qualitative analysis underscores the importance of a strategic, cooperative approach to violence reduction. Stakeholders highlighted the need for community involvement, culturally attuned strategies, and robust support for front-line workers. The study's insights may prove useful in shaping future violence reduction efforts in San Francisco, emphasizing the need for thoughtful planning, effective implementation, and sustained community engagement.

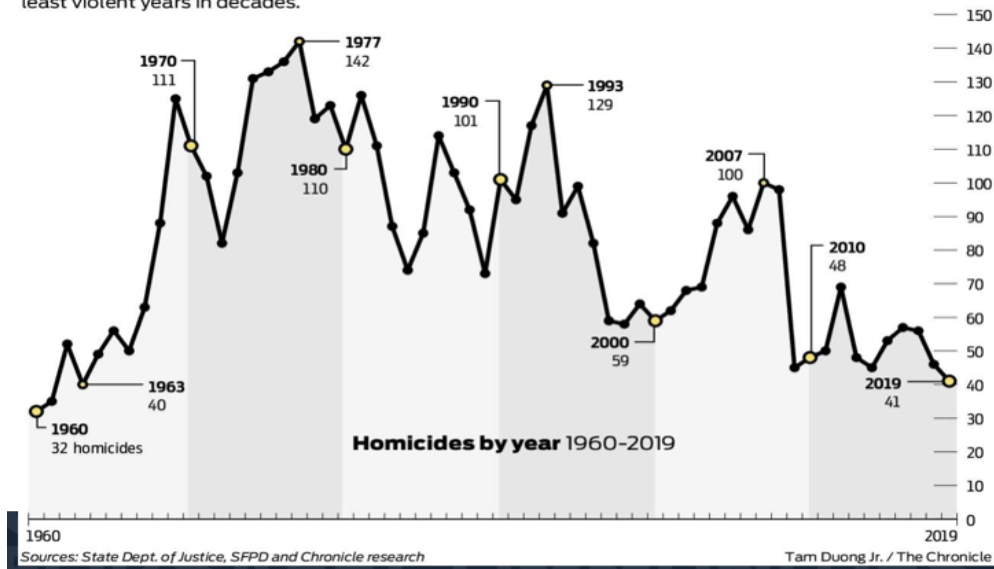III.   **SF-VRI PROCESS EVALUATION**

This section describes in greater depth the design and implementation of the San Francisco Police Department's Violence Reduction Initiative (SF-VRI) strategy from conception in late 2019 through June of 2023 (the end of CalVIP Cohort 3). It is based on a thorough review of public documents, meeting minutes, working notes, implementation assessments and a detailed timeline of key events and milestones developed by The California Partnership for Safe Communities (CPSC) in partnership with SFPD VRI leads.

In January 2017, Chief William Scott was sworn in as only the third chief hired from outside of the department in its 167-year history.[8] The hire was lauded by law enforcement watchdogs, who believed a new leader would bring a necessary perspective to implement the DOJ's recommended reforms following a series of officer-involved shootings by SFPD of civilians in San Francisco. By 2019, San Francisco had reached its lowest homicide rate in decades (Figure 2: San Francisco Homicides 1960-2019). In this context, some internal and external stakeholders raised questions about launching a new violence reduction strategy. For some, the value add of a VRI-type strategy was unclear, given the low levels of violence relative to historical trends. Despite historically low levels of violence, Chief Scott and his executive team continued to consider how SFPD and the city overall might strengthen violence prevention and reduction efforts already underway both within SFPD and with community organizations.

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[8]https://www.sfchronicle.com/crime/article/New-SF-Police-Chief-William-Scott-plans-to-earn-10876110.php

San Francisco homicides
The number of homicides in San Francisco has dropped over the past 50 years, and 2019 is one of the least violent years in decades.

Homicides by year 1960–2019

Sources: State Dept. of Justice, SFPD and Chronicle research

Tam Duong Jr. / The Chronicle

2020: SF-VRI Design

In 2020, CPSC and SFPD entered into a technical assistance contract together through a public solicitation process. CPSC's primary objectives were to analyze San Francisco's violence problem; assess SFPD and community intervention efforts to reduce violence; and make recommendations to strengthen these efforts. Right away, the COVID-19 pandemic and the social unrest following the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer produced a twin set of challenges that significantly impacted San Francisco and many American cities.

To lay the foundation for the VRI strategy, CPSC conducted a **problem analysis of gun violence** in San Francisco and assessed SFPD and the city's existing infrastructure for violence intervention and prevention work. The purpose of CPSC's problem analysis of gun violence in San Francisco was to establish a shared understanding of the drivers of local violence that could be used to guide and inform the city, community, and criminal justice leaders as they embark on the complex task of reducing violence.

A widely utilized tool in the violence prevention field, a problem analysis identifies the networks and individuals at the greatest risk of violence, the motives, patterns and context of violent incidents, enabling the community to tailor intervention efforts to reduce that risk. For their review, CPSC and SFPD examined all homicides in San Francisco from January 2017 through June 2020, and all shootings between January 2019 and December 2019. To facilitate the problem analysis, with CPSC's support, SFPD convened groups of SFPD staff from across different units with knowledge of and expertise in street crime, gun violence, and street groups. SFPD also provided a dedicated crime analyst to assemble materials for the network assessment and incident review.

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Problem Analysis Findings: The problem analysis[9] found that people most impacted by violence in San Francisco are:

- Older Adults: Suspects and victims of homicides and shootings in San Francisco were older adults with extensive histories of justice system involvement. The average age of victims and suspects of homicides in San Francisco was 37 years old.

- Heavily-justice involved: 70% of homicide victims and suspects had previously been arrested, and averaged 15 prior arrests at the time of the homicide.

- Violence in the city very disproportionately impacts men of color. The vast majority of homicide and non-fatal shooting victims and suspects (85%) were Black and Latino men, who comprise less than 10% of San Francisco's population.

- Few Youth: Youth 17 and under made up less than 2% of homicide victims and 3% of homicide suspects, and less than 4% of non-fatal shooting victims.

- The analysis also found that two main types of dynamics drove gun violence in the city: (a) group and gang dynamics, which constitute a majority of gun homicides (53%-70%) and non-fatal shootings (50-77%) and (b) street disorder, which constituted a significant minority of non-gun homicides and non-fatal shootings.

- The problem analysis found that street group dynamics were the primary drivers of gun violence in San Francisco but also that San Francisco had an unusually high number of non-gun homicides. The analysis identified 12 high-risk social networks (groups) involved in the majority of gun violence in the city.

- Based on this analysis, the population at greatest risk of being involved in gun violence as victims, perpetrator or both were Black and Latino men, ages 18-35 with extensive justice system histories and social connections to specific street groups and conflicts in San Francisco.

Taken together, this information indicated that a concerted effort to reduce retaliatory shootings could help reduce gun violence in the city and reduce victimization among this highest risk population. To do this, SFPD needed to sustain its focus on this specific violence dynamic and work in a strategic and coordinated fashion with community organizations able to help prevent retaliation.

Based on the problem analysis, CPSC recommended to SFPD that they convene a **weekly shooting review** at SFPD to continually update their understanding of the current violence

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[9] San Francisco Police Commission Presentation, March 4th, 2021:
https://sfgov.org/policecommission//sites/default/files/Documents/PoliceCommission/PoliceCommission031021-CPSC%20SFPD_ProbAnalysisExecSummary.pdf

dynamics and seek to identify opportunities to prevent retaliatory shootings, while continuing to share problem analysis findings with potential community and justice partners and develop the larger VRI strategy.

SFPD Seeks CalVIP Support for VRI

In June of 2020, SFPD applied for $1.5 million in CalVIP funding to support the developing SF-VRI strategy, including devoted funding for the Street Violence Intervention Program (SVIP), continued technical assistance from CPSC, and a research team led by Professor Anthony Braga to design, implement, and evaluate an evidence-based gun violence reduction strategy for the city.[10] The application focused primarily on District 10, which had the consistently highest concentration of fatal and non-fatal shootings of any of San Francisco's supervisorial districts, and sought to reduce shootings and homicides, reduce recidivism, re-arrest, and victimization, and build trust and legitimacy for SFPD specifically with individuals involved in or impacted by gun violence.

Building the VRI Strategy

In the Fall of 2020, CPSC and SFPD used the emerging information from the problem analysis to begin building the VRI strategy. With CPSC's support, SFPD considered options for strengthening its analysis, investigative and violence response efforts. SFPD also worked to increase collaboration between various other units in their efforts to reduce gun violence. CPSC also recommended that SFPD develop and empower a senior-level management team and management meetings specifically designed to prevent violence and reduce retaliation.

In late 2020, with CPSC's support, SFPD leadership began to engage a range of stakeholders to share the results of the problem analysis and seek their partnership for the work ahead. SFPD and CPSC leads subsequently met with The Street Violence Intervention Team (SVIP), the Mayor's Office, a select group of community partners, Adult Probation, the District Attorney, the Police Commission, key members of the Board of Supervisors, and the San Francisco Human Rights Commission.

Around this time, SFPD was also gathering input from street-level officers and units engaged in proactive policing and investigations about what a new and improved policing approach could look like. Several key themes stood out:

● First, the Gang Task Force that handled gang-related violence cases felt like they had little time for proactive intelligence gathering that could prevent shootings and to address retaliatory gun violence.
● Second, officers voiced both the need for and concerns about collaborating with external partners for the purpose of reducing violence given recent instances of intelligence leaks.

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[10] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RYovYXHhWRI1nPkyon8WfpJPBm5RDhj2/view?usp=share_link

- Third, existing weekly meetings that covered violent crime issues rarely assessed the retaliation risk of shootings that did occur in the city and often lacked a strategy for preventing future incidents.

Ultimately, CPSC recommended using the problem analysis to affirm/refine the department's focus on individuals at the very highest risk of violence and develop a devoted team and management meeting to address gun violence in San Francisco.
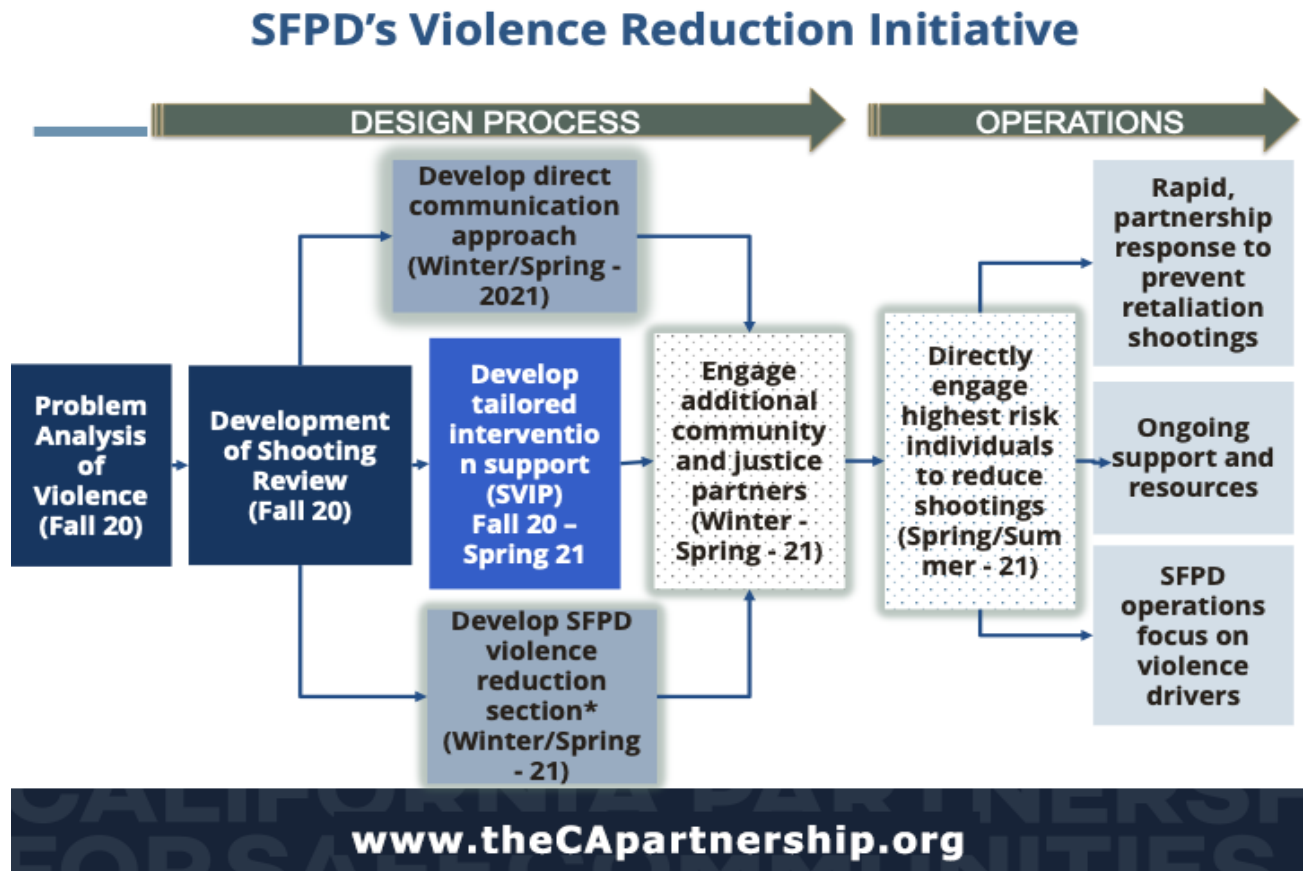
Management and Organization

In late 2020, three key decisions faced the department in the areas of management, policing infrastructure, and external collaboration. (1) Within SFPD, who would manage their violence reduction initiative? (2) Would the Gang Task Force and Crime Gun Investigation Center (CGIC) evolve to become a gun violence reduction section? (3) How would SFPD engage key partners and stakeholders in a new initiative? This marked an important shift from the analysis/design phase of VRI to the implementation/operation phase. For VRI to be fully implemented, SFPD would need a well-developed logic model; management team and process; working partners and performance indicators.

The developing shooting reviews played a key role in these early structural changes. Based on emerging national best practice, the shooting review was a weekly management meeting designed to help SFPD analyze patterns of violence and identify violent conflicts as they emerge throughout the city. Facilitated by GTF Lieutenant Scott Biggs and CGIC Lieutenant Derrick Lew, the shooting review provided SFPD with an opportunity to identify specific individuals driving violence and align a variety of internal units around a shared understanding of the most pressing near-term violence issues. From there, leadership could identify which individuals required enforcement attention; clarify who could be better engaged with community intervention efforts; and ensure clarity and accountability for results.

In the final stage of design, the SFPD management team established a coordination and referral process with intervention partners for highest risk individuals identified through the shooting review. SFPD, SVIP and CPSC worked to develop an intense, individually focused intervention model, for those identified in the shooting review process. By the end of the year, SFPD planned to launch initial VRI activities.

Figure 3: VRI Design and Launch

SFPD's Violence Reduction Initiative

DESIGN PROCESS → OPERATIONS →

Problem Analysis of Violence (Fall 20) → Development of Shooting Review (Fall 20) → Develop tailored intervention support (SVIP) Fall 20 – Spring 21

Develop direct communication approach (Winter/Spring - 2021)

Develop SFPD violence reduction section* (Winter/Spring - 21)

Engage additional community and justice partners (Winter - Spring - 21)

Directly engage highest risk individuals to reduce shootings (Spring/Summer - 21)

Rapid, partnership response to prevent retaliation shootings

Ongoing support and resources

SFPD operations focus on violence drivers

www.theCApartnership.org

2021: Moving To Implementation

In early 2021, While CPSC and SFPD continued working toward a full launch of the program, management challenges impacted the project. In March, SFPD was still working to move from design to implementation.[11] At this stage, CPSC had six recommendations for the department and partners to help move the VRI strategy from theory to practice:

1. Focus on building out the Shooting Review and the VRI management team within SFPD.
2. Complete the hiring and training process for life coaches at SVIP.
3. Develop the direct communication approach, including bringing several community partners to the table.
4. Strengthen the coordination meeting, referral, and tracking process to ensure integrity on the services and support commitments to potential clients.

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[11] https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZPe8pZDq5-pzhmperTncOB9eb55bAH06/edit

5. Engage Dr. Anthony Braga to begin the evaluation work related to VRI.
6. Continue cultivating and sustaining support with key political leaders and agency heads.

In the spring of 2021, San Francisco was facing an increase in shootings, and Chief Scott announced his plans to evolve SFPD's Gang Task Force, based on the developing vision for VRI.[12] The Gang Task Force was renamed to the Community Violence Reduction Team (CVRT), under the leadership of Lt. Scott Biggs, and provided with ten additional officers with community-policing experience.[13] Chief Scott heralded these reforms as a restructuring, stating that CVRT was expected to collaborate more closely with civilian gun violence prevention workers and an investigative unit that analyzes shooting data (CGIC).

By June, SFPD, CPSC and the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR) continued to develop the coordination meeting.[14] The coordination meeting functioned as the other half of a weekly management cycle, where SFPD VRI leads met with SVIP and other community partners to review shootings; discuss violent conflicts; share requests for intervention and support; and generate a specific near-term plan to prevent retaliation. Coordination meetings began to be held shortly thereafter.

Figure 4: VRI Management Process/Cycle

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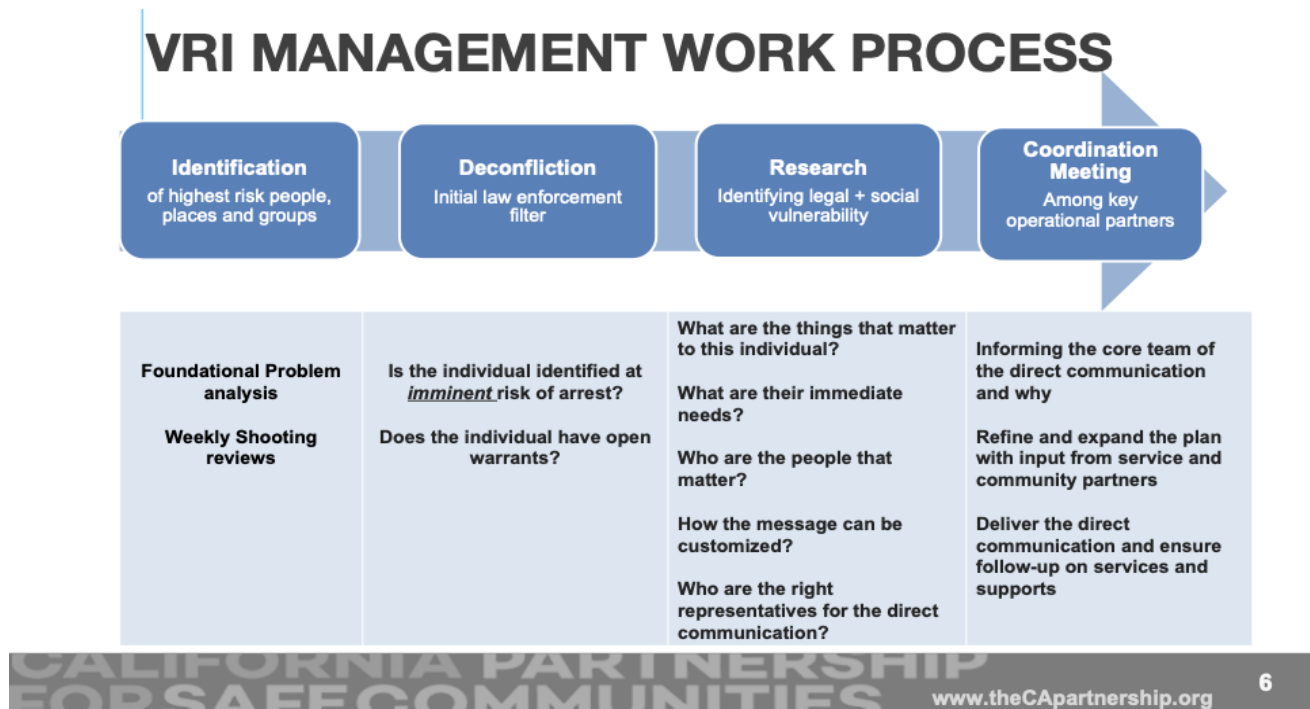
[12]https://www.sfexaminer.com/archives/faced-with-surge-in-shootings-chief-scott-reenvisions-sfpd-s-gang-task-force/article_e2059171-0a93-5d9d-8918-f898140f32cc.html

[13]https://www.sfexaminer.com/archives/faced-with-surge-in-shootings-chief-scott-reenvisions-sfpd-s-gang-task-force/article_e2059171-0a93-5d9d-8918-f898140f32cc.html

[14] https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pftuZ5jAT5GRlW5bp0N2cKf_c-oFTYUK/edit

With the coordination meetings up and running, SFPD, CPSC and SVIP worked to diagnose the violence problems the city was experiencing each week based on the shooting review.[15] While this process helped to identify individuals directly impacted by shootings and at high risk of retaliation, SVIP encountered initial challenges locating these individuals and tracking their engagement with potential clients. At the same time, internal and external political dynamics continued to pose obstacles for the implementation of the VRI. In June, San Francisco Schools cut ties with SFPD.[16] This followed a unanimous vote by the city's Board of Education to "no longer partner with or fund the San Francisco Police Department."[17] While not directly VRI business, these political dynamics continued to affect SFPD morale and agency focus.

Acknowledging Progress and Challenges

That fall, CPSC and SFPD Executives met to take stock of the initial implementation of SF-VRI. Significant progress was evident. The problem analysis and the initial design phase of VRI had been completed. A new VRI management cycle was in place, including an SFPD shooting review, a coordination meeting with SFPD and SVIP, a monthly performance review with Chief Scott, and the first performance indicators had been put in place. The Gang Task Force had evolved to become the Community Violence Reduction Team (CVRT) in March. CGIC and Homicide units worked to align their work more intentionally with the VRI, and the SFPD Executive team worked to strengthen the management cycle. The direct communication design work had been completed, and initial "test" meetings had taken place. At SVIP, one life coach was in place with a full caseload and SVIP outreach leads were supporting the VRI efforts.

However, there were still challenges impacting the VRI launch. The direct communication work was moving slowly, and with inconsistent quality. Between July and September, there were fewer than 10 "community safety meetings" with highest-risk people, although the goal was to conduct two to three meetings a week, and the quality and tracking of those communications were inconsistent. Second, because SVIP had only hired one life coach, there was a significant backlog of intervention referrals and challenges remained with follow through on deliverables and tracking performance data.

Steps to Strengthen Management

By the end of 2021, direct communications were still inconsistent, and referrals to service providers were still difficult to track and follow up on. As a result, the executive team began working to reconstitute the VRI management team to improve implementation and ensure that individuals referred to SVIP via direct communications were ultimately connected with services.

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[15] https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pmaNn3di4mealOMECWxeqTgIPL68ZA4A/edit

[16]https://www.kqed.org/news/11825991/as-sf-schools-cut-ties-with-police-state-education-chief-says-officers-still-needed-in-some-schools

[17]https://missionlocal.org/2020/06/san-francisco-unified-school-district-votes-to-cut-ties-and-funds-from-police/

That December, SFPD decided to apply for a CalVIP Cohort 4 grant, in an attempt to address the gaps associated with strategy launch. A larger CalVIP grant would provide funding to address the management gaps the VRI had struggled with throughout 2021. The SFPD executive team also agreed that Asst. Chief Redmond would take on direct management of the VRI in 2022. He would lead the coordination meetings moving forward, with CPSC's support, and NICJR would place staff with SVIP to support their management and tracking of the referral process.

2022: Moving to Full Implementation

In early 2022, the SFPD executive team, with CPSC's support, focused on "resetting" and fully launching the VRI strategy in order to deliver reductions in gun violence in District 10. To do this, they focused on four core issues: 1) addressing internal SFPD management, 2) enhancing the shooting review, 3) providing support for the coordination meetings, and 4) supporting SVIP to strengthen service and support follow-up on VRI referrals.

As planned, Assistant Chief Redmond took over management of VRI and brought on Lt. Alejandro Cortes to manage the direct communication work on behalf of SFPD. An intel officer was also added to CVRT to support the work and coordinate with regional law enforcement partners. James Caldwell also stepped in on behalf of the San Francisco Mayor's Office to help strengthen the coordination meeting and support SVIP's role. In addition, CPSC brought in Daniel Muhammad, former Director of the Office of Violence Prevention in Stockton, to help SVIP improve their follow-up with referrals, case management and data tracking. With Daniel Muhammad in place providing coaching support to SVIP and Lt. Cortes managing the direct communications on the law enforcement side, the direct communication work began to pick up and the VRI team was able to begin capturing data.

Staff and Management Transitions

While SFPD was taking these meaningful steps to improve VRI management and focus, the first of several key staffing changes took place when Lt. Derrick Lew, the CGIC Unit Commander, was promoted. Until that point, he had played a critical role, focusing the Crime Gun Intelligence Center's considerable analysis, investigative and operational work on understanding and addressing gun violence in partnership with CVRT. By mid 2022, a series of additional staffing departures weakened the promising management structure that had been assembled. In June, Assistant Mike Redmond, who had served as SFPD's executive lead on VRI, retired. In August, Tiffany Sutton, the civilian director of the VRI resigned in order to take a position with the incoming District Attorney's Office.

Despite these losses, there was no gap in executive leadership. In October, Lili Gamero was brought in as the new VRI Manager, and began to take steps to rebuild management infrastructure around VRI as well as improve SFPD's working relationship with SVIP. Throughout the fall, SVIP hired several more life coaches and continued to work in an outreach capacity to engage highest risk individuals in the community.

2023: Building Infrastructure, Achieving Full Implementation

Going into 2023, SFPD made a series of important moves to address the ongoing management challenges impacting VRI's effectiveness. Lili Gamero continued to direct the VRI strategy and implemented a series of changes to improve data collection; management fidelity; follow through on referrals by SVIP and strengthen the relationship between SVIP and SFPD. Manager Gamero's team included three analysts who worked on grant administration and VRI operations; data collection and analysis, and providing hands-on management support to SVIP respectively.

VRI - 2023 Management Structure
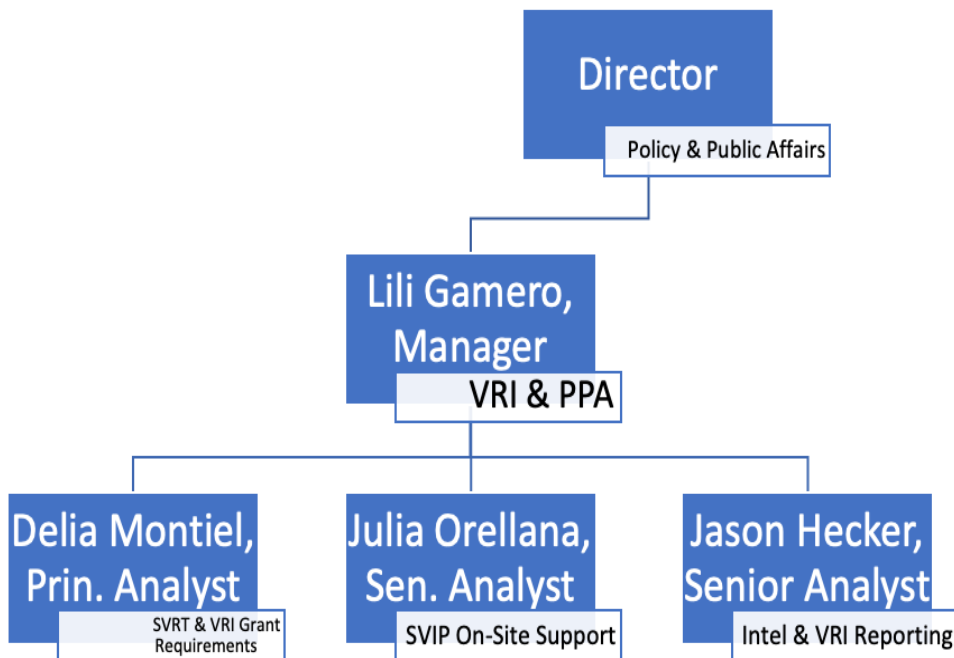
Together, between the Winter of 2022 and mid-year 2023, this team took a series of steps to strengthen VRI management, operations and tracking, including:

- The implementation of a new referral form and weekly management check-in with SVIP leads following the VRI coordination meeting.
- Re-established Mngr. Gamero's role as a co-principal in the weekly shooting review meeting.
- Re-launched the Street Violence Intervention Meeting; a companion meeting for external partners to facilitate collaboration, information sharing and supportive outreach to VRI candidates.
- In partnership with SVIP, helped establish a weekly case consultation meeting with SVIP doing collaborative review of case management clients for problem solving and support.

- Analyzing SFPD shot spotter reports and cross-referencing them with shooting review intelligence to identify individuals who may meet the VRI risk criteria for direct communication and supportive outreach.
- Performing case file audits; key performance indicator reviews and regular administrative training for both VRI professional and SVIP staff to ensure quality data capture of key VRI activities.

As a result of these and other changes, actual program activities and data capture of key performance indicators improved significantly from late 2022 through 2023, relative to the first two years of VRI implementation.

Figure 5 - VRI Direct Communications illustrates the growth in the capacity of the VRI strategy to identify and deliver the community safety meeting component of the VRI strategy in 2022 and 2023 relative to earlier program years. Major city events, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Week, and winter holidays impacted progress in the last quarter of 2023. However, the VRI is on target to complete a minimum of 200 Direct Communications by the end of 2023. Figure 5 reflects quarter breakdowns for Direct Communications from 2021 to year-to-date 2023. It should be noted that 15 total direct communications were conducted in 2021; followed by 149 direct communications conducted in 2022; and at the time of this report, 194 direct communications for conducted in 2023.
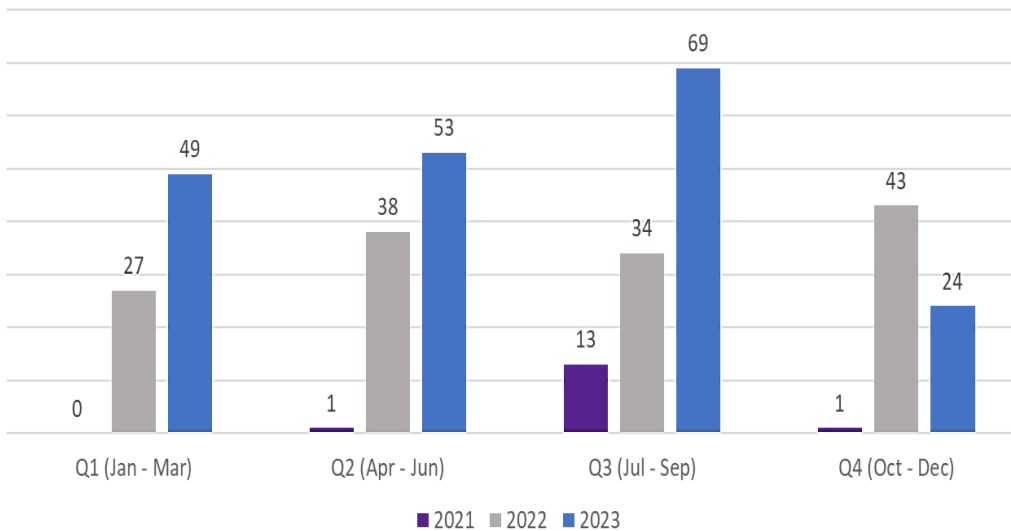

Figure 6 - Participant Characteristics describes the basic age, gender and race/ethnicity composition of unique individuals contacted by the VRI strategy and partners through direct communication and / or supportive outreach during the Cohort 3 grant period. Note that this age, gender and racial composition aligns closely with the problem analysis of violence findings.

Gender		Race		Age	
Male	**330**	AA	**308**	13-17	**48**
Female	**17**	Pacific Islander	**12**	18-24	**116**
Other		Hispanic/Latino	**23**	25-34	**135**
Unknown		White	**3**	35-44	**31**
		Mixed	**1**	45+	**10**
		Unknown		Unknown	**7**
Total	**347**		**347**		**347**

DESCRIPTION OF SVIP SERVICES

The VRI strategy focuses on stabilizing participant behaviors to reduce their at-risk activity. This is primarily done by building strong relationships with life coaches, who provide positive mentorship to VRI participants. As this relationship strengthens, participants become more resilient and build their autonomy to then be able to hold gainful employment or work towards other meaningful goals. However, working with high at-risk individuals also creates a need to have readily available resources and support. SVIP is able to provide immediate relocation assistance and connect certain individuals to warehouse employment, to offer safety for those in highly volatile situations.

For those participants that are reducing their at-risk behaviors, SVIP is a referral and support hub for the following services:

Education	• College support navigation and referrals to higher education support/ financial aid etc. • Grade school support & tutoring referrals
Employment:	• Assistance in resume making • Support applying to jobs • Career navigation and community referrals to job training programs
Mental Health:	• Trauma Recovery Center • Instituto Familiar De La Raza • Other mental health services
Safety Planning:	• One on one support and mentoring • Relocations Concerns
Housing:	• Assistance with applying for possible housing • Referrals to housing opportunities • Navigating possible housing programs • Assistance with financial support programs to obtain housing

Figure 7 - Community Violence Reduction Team (CVRT) focused enforcement attention to violence drivers, specifically groups and individuals most engaged in violence from January 21 through December of 2023.
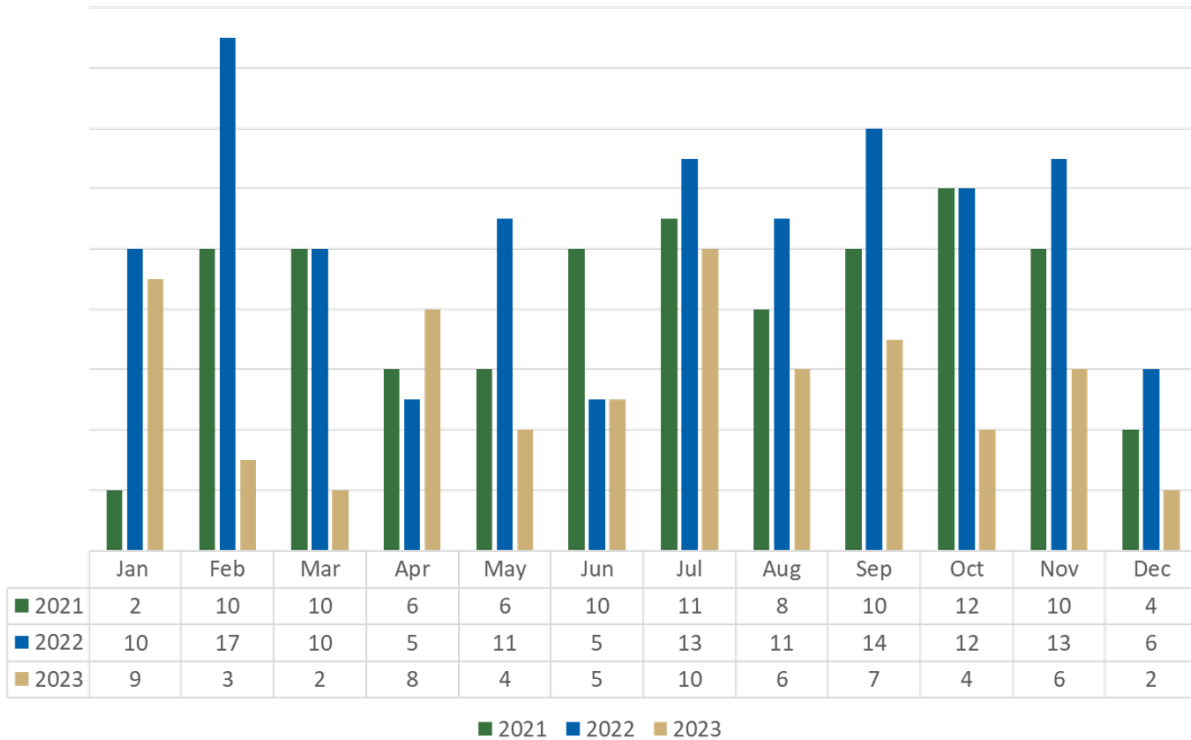
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
■ 2021	2	10	10	6	6	10	11	8	10	12	10	4
■ 2022	10	17	10	5	11	5	13	11	14	12	13	6
■ 2023	9	3	2	8	4	5	10	6	7	4	6	2

■ 2021 ■ 2022 ■ 2023

Figure 8 illustrates types of cases (arrests), led by the SFPD's Community Violence Reduction Team (CVRT) in 2022.

Type of Case	# of Cases	%
Possession of Firearms	73	57.48%
Wanted Subjects	38	29.92%
Homicide Suspects	8	6.30%
Att. Homicides/Shootings	7	5.51%
Assault, Aggravated w/ Gun	3	2.36%
Armed Robbery	2	1.57%
High Profile Cases	2	1.57%
Parole Violation	1	0.79%
Person of Interest	1	0.79%
Shooting into Inhabited Dwelling or Occupied Vehicle	1	0.79%
Total	**127**	**100.00%**

Figure 9 illustrates **Gun Violence Trends in The City of San Francisco 2018-2023.**

Gun Violence 2018-2023 YTD as of 12/17/2023

Year-to-Date through 12/17/23	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2022 vs. 2023
Homicides w/Firearm	22	22	30	42	34	33	-3%
Shooting Victims (Non-Fatal)	114	104	128	174	169	155	-8%
Total Gun Violence Victims	136	126	158	216	203	188	-7%

Year-to-Date through 12/17/23	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2022 vs. 2023
YTD Homicides	43	38	46	54	53	53	0%
Total Homicides as of Dec 31	46	41	48	56	56	0	

Disclaimer: All figures and data are preliminary and subject to further analysis and revision. Unless otherwise noted, crime statistics reflect "As IS" based on the requested data and data availability as of its search date. Information contained maybe sensitive in nature that requires additional safeguards against public dissemination, the media, or other personal who do not have a valid "right and need-to-know." Dissemination of this document and its contents outside the San Francisco Police Department is prohibited without approval from the SFPD Command Staff.

Figure 10 illustrates **Gun Violence across all San Francisco Police Districts**, including the two districts comprising Supervisorial District 10 (Bayview and Ingleside).

Year-to-date through Dec-18	216 Incidents		%	217 Incidents		%	187 by firearm		%	All Shootings		%
	2022	2023	Change	2022	2023	Change	2022	2023	Change	2022	2023	Change
Central	18	10	-44%	7	7	0%	0	2	not cal	25	19	-24%
Southern	13	18	38%	21	18	-14%	2	1	-50%	36	37	3%
Bayview	179	162	-9%	41	28	-32%	11	8	-27%	231	198	-14%
Mission	49	31	-37%	18	18	0%	3	3	0%	70	52	-26%
Northern	31	14	-55%	9	11	22%	6	4	-33%	46	29	-37%
Park	3	4	33%	1	0	-100%	1	1	0%	5	5	0%
Richmond	5	4	-20%	0	0	not cal	0	0	not cal	5	4	-20%
Ingleside	93	94	1%	14	9	-36%	6	2	-67%	113	105	-7%
Taraval	16	22	38%	6	5	-17%	2	1	-50%	24	28	17%
Tenderloin	35	33	-6%	26	20	-23%	3	11	267%	64	64	0%
Out of SF	0	0	not cal	3	3	0%	0	0	not cal	3	3	0%
Total Citywide Shootings	**442**	**392**	**-11%**	**146**	**119**	**-18%**	**34**	**33**	**-3%**	**622**	**544**	**-13%**
YTD Shooting thru 12/11/23		388			119			32			539	
Current Week Shooting Activities		4			0			1			5	

Violence Outcomes in District 10 and Citywide: Overall, SFPD data indicates that District 10 experienced a -27% net reduction in homicides and -32% reduction of non-fatal injury shootings (217s) from 2020 to 2023 as illustrated in Figure 10. Meanwhile, the City of San Francisco experienced -3% reduction in homicides (187s) and -18% reduction in non-fatal shootings during this same time period. While this Cohort 3 report cannot draw causal conclusions about the relationship between VRI implementation and these outcomes, this does indicate significant reductions in key gun violence indicators in the VRI communities of focus.

Process Evaluation Limitations and Conclusions

The VRI strategy was originally envisioned as a way to strengthen and systematize violence prevention efforts led by the San Francisco Police Department, in partnership with SVIP and other external stakeholders. The strategy sought to reduce violence, improve outcomes for highest risk community members, and strengthen police-community relations and trust.

In the first two years of project work, VRI faced various implementation challenges, including a political landscape impacted by the George Floyd murder and the Black Lives Matter movement; management transitions; initial tensions between intervention partners and key SFPD units; slow growth in key operational components (including direct communication, outreach follow-up and life coaching engagement) and poor data capture.

Despite this, the SF-VRI strategy shows significant promise. Once the VRI strategy was fully operational in early 2023, the focus community (District 10) experienced reductions in fatal and non-fatal shootings. The current VRI management team has significantly strengthened the quality of implementation and has steadily and consistently increased the number of highest risk individuals that are identified and engaged by the strategy. Stakeholder interviews and internal documents reveal instances where retaliatory violence was effectively addressed through the SF-VRI framework, and additional data is being collected to better understand the impact of this strategy, such as recidivism and victimization data.

Due to the extended timeline of VRI launch and challenges with data quality, the ability of the technical assistance (CPSC) and research partners (CJP-UPenn) to analyze certain aspects of the VRI work was very limited under Cohort 3. It was not possible to perform rigorous analysis of the role of VRI in violence reduction impacts at the community level or to assess individual victimization or recidivism outcomes of VRI participants. Fortunately, the SF-VRI work continues under a CalVIP Cohort 4 grant through 2025. A shared goal of SFPD, CPSC and CJP-UPenn is to incorporate a more robust analysis of these impact measures in the SF-VRI Cohort 4 evaluation.

Qualitative Analysis: Stakeholder Perspectives

Introduction

This qualitative study is part of the cohort 3 evaluation report examining the implementation of the SF VRI. Data collection for the study occurred in mid October 2023 to early November 2023 and included approximately 15 hours of ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews with twenty-three SF VRI implementers and stakeholders. The implementers and stakeholders of the VRI consisted of law enforcement officers, city officials, outreach workers, community partners, and VRI clients. Interviews with past and current VRI implementers were guided by the following objectives and research questions:[1]

Objective 1: Explore Perceptions of Gun Violence and Political Will Among SF VRI Implementers and Stakeholders

· How do both past and present implementers and stakeholders of the San Francisco Violence Reduction Initiative (SF VRI) perceive the nature and extent of gun violence in the city?

· What impact do these perceptions have on their beliefs about the political will in San Francisco to effectively address gun violence?

Objective 2: Examine the History and Evolution of San Francisco's Gun Violence Reduction Efforts And Their Impact On The Current SF VRI From The Implementers' Perspective

· How do past and current implementers and stakeholders of the SF VRI perceive the range of efforts undertaken to address gun violence in San Francisco, both historically and in the present?

Objective 3: Evaluate SF VRI Implementers' Experiences with and Perceptions of the SF VRI Implementation

· How do past and current implementers and stakeholders perceive the overall implementation of the SF VRI?

· What aspects of the implementation do they view as successful or problematic?

Objective 4: Gather VRI Implementers' Recommendations for the Future of the VRI

· What recommendations do past and current SF VRI implementers and stakeholders have for the SFPD and the city of San Francisco regarding future strategies for reducing violence?

· What key lessons or insights do they offer based on their experiences with the SF VRI?

The following report is organized into three sections: methodology, findings, and conclusion. The methodology section reviews the research design, sample, and tools used for data collection and

analysis. The findings section summarizes data from semi-structured interviews with SFPD VRI implementers and stakeholders, highlighting key quotes to offer a comprehensive understanding of their experiences with and perceptions of the VRI. The report concludes by discussing lessons learned to inform future steps in the continuation of the VRI, based on findings from the qualitative data analysis.

Methodology

Research Design

Using a grounded theory approach, the research team conducted ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews with law enforcement officers, city officials, community partners, outreach workers, and VRI clients to gain insights into their experiences and perceptions of the SF VRI implementation. Ethnographic observations of key VRI meetings (e.g., Street Violence Response Team (SVRT) meeting, shooting review, and coordination meeting) and study areas (e.g., target neighborhoods, SFPD district stations, and SVIP offices) facilitated informal conversations, supplementing the semi-structured interviews. These observations enhanced the understanding of the dynamics in those areas and aided in building rapport with potential interviewees, establishing a research presence. A major advantage of this approach was its provision of multiple perspectives on a single event, occurrence, or behavior as it unfolded in real time (Stuart, 2016), rather than solely relying on interview participants' descriptions.[2]

Semi-structured interviews played a pivotal role in enhancing the research design for this study, primarily by facilitating a deeper, more personalized engagement with study participants. This method allowed the research team to establish a rapport with participants, creating a comfortable environment conducive to sharing personal insights and experiences. By building trust and openness in these interactions, participants were more likely to provide candid, detailed responses, offering a richer, more authentic perspective on the subject matter.

The flexibility inherent in semi-structured interviews was particularly beneficial in this context. Unlike structured interviews, which adhere to a strict set of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews provided the flexibility to probe deeper into topics as they arose naturally during the conversation. This adaptability made it possible to explore complex issues in greater depth and to follow up on interesting or unexpected responses. As a result, the research team could gather comprehensive and nuanced data that might have been overlooked in a more rigid interview format.

Moreover, the use of semi-structured interviews was instrumental in exploring the lived experiences of the SF VRI implementers and stakeholders. It enabled the researchers to delve into the subjective, personal aspects of participants' experiences with the VRI, uncovering their perceptions, feelings, and motivations. This approach aligns with Orbuch's (1997) assertion about the importance of understanding how individuals perceive their social world. By capturing the diverse and multifaceted perspectives of various stakeholders, the research team was able to develop a more layered and nuanced understanding of the VRI's implementation

and its impacts. In essence, semi-structured interviews provided a vital tool for capturing the complex, often subjective realities of those involved in the SF VRI, thereby enriching the study's overall findings and conclusions.

Sample

The project involved 23 qualitative, in-depth interviews with various participants, including VRI clients, community partners, city officials, SVIP staff, San Francisco Police Department officers, and San Francisco Adult and Juvenile probation officers. Interview participants were recruited and scheduled with the assistance of CPSC, SFPD, and SVIP. The sampling method was purposive, as the primary goal of the study was to examine how SF VRI implementers and stakeholders experienced and perceived the implementation of the SF VRI. Participation in the interviews was voluntary and conducted both virtually—via Zoom—and in private offices provided by SFPD and SVIP. Respondents were assured of strict confidentiality. Moreover, personally identifying information of the study participants was not recorded, and pseudonyms are used throughout this report to protect the identities of the interview subjects.

Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews

The interview guide used in this study was a modified version of instruments used in prior implementation evaluations of group violence reduction strategies. The interview instrument consisted of a brief demographic questionnaire and an in-depth interview guide. Approximately half (N=11) of the 23 interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom, while the remaining 12 interviews were conducted in person during the Penn research team's data collection visit to San Francisco. Interviews typically lasted between 60 to 75 minutes. Each interview was audio-recorded, and the audio recordings were later transcribed in their entirety. These interview transcripts served as the primary source of data for this study. Prior to each interview, the research team administered informed consent, informing interviewees of their rights as research participants. Participation in the study was unpaid and voluntary, and all participants were assured strict confidentiality as a condition of their participation.[3]

Ethnographic Observations

The Penn research team conducted approximately 15 hours of ethnographic observations of key VRI activities and implementation sites. Observations were recorded using the process outlined by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011), with some modifications. This modified process typically involved typing up detailed and jotted notes on a smartphone or a Remarkable tablet—instead of using a paper notepad—via the Microsoft Word App. Recorded fieldnotes and jottings were then uploaded to a password-protected Google Drive folder in real time. In certain situations (e.g., meetings with social workers, outreach workers, police officers, city officials, and medical professionals), taking notes on a smartphone seemed inappropriate, as it

could give the impression that the research team was preoccupied with sending text messages or writing emails. In these cases, notes were taken by hand using a Remarkable tablet.

After each observation and interview session, the notes captured in the field were expanded upon in greater detail. When appropriate, these notes were used to craft extensive field narratives on a personal computer. For instance, after observing the SVRT meeting, the notes taken in the field were elaborated upon to create a field narrative regarding the information sharing between various agencies' representatives in the meeting. This narrative generated a series of questions and hypotheses which were then used to shape interview questions about perceptions of information sharing and any boundaries constraining information sharing between the SFPD and SVIP, as well as compromises made to maximize information sharing among VRI implementers. Arguably, without directly observing the VRI coordination meeting, questions regarding the boundaries and compromises around information sharing might not have been formulated for the semi-structured interviews. Taking notes via smartphone also proved more discreet than using a pen and paper notepad, thus making the note-taking process safer and less likely to draw unwanted scrutiny while recording observations in the field. Regular recording and real-time uploading of fieldnotes via smartphone and Remarkable tablet also minimized the risk of data loss, whether through losing notepads, pages in notepads, or memory of key observations.

Data Analysis
Grounded theory methods were used to analyze the collected data for patterns regarding the differences and similarities in experiences with and perceptions of the implementation of the SF VRI. Strauss (1987, p. 22), paraphrasing Glaser (1978), defines grounded theory methods as an analytic approach involving:

> *…systematically and intensively analyzing data, often sentence by sentence, or phrase by phrase of the field note, interview, or other document, by constant comparison, data are extensively collected and coded…thus producing a well-constructed theory. The focus of analysis is not merely on collecting or ordering a mass of data but on organizing many ideas which have emerged from analysis of the data.*

Data analysis was ongoing throughout data collection, which allowed for key concepts and emerging ideas to be developed as the study progressed.

Field notes and interview transcripts were analyzed using Saldaña's (2015) two-cycle coding process, specifically focusing on two main phases: initial coding and pattern coding. After reading the transcripts in their entirety, the initial coding stage began—breaking down data into discrete parts, closely examining them, and comparing them for similarities and differences (Saldaña, 2015, p. 115). Following the first cycle of coding, a second cycle of pattern coding was conducted—the process of systematically integrating codes and categories into recurring themes

or patterns in qualitative data to develop a more abstract understanding of the studied phenomenon (Saldaña, 2015). Findings from this analysis are reflected via quoted material in the report, which typifies the most common themes and subthemes identified in respondents' narratives.

Findings

Objective 1: Explore Perceptions of Gun Violence and Political Will Among SF VRI Implementers and Stakeholders.

Beliefs About Causes of Gun Violence in San Francisco

Study participants shared their insights on the underlying causes of gun violence in San Francisco, attributing it largely to intergenerational trauma, neighborhood disputes, and interpersonal conflicts. They described the violence in the Mission District among Hispanic groups like Norteños, Sureños, and MS-13 as traditional gang-related issues. However, for Black and Samoan communities, the violence was more about turf and neighborhood affiliations rather than formal gangs. Participants recounted incidents where long-standing feuds between neighborhoods, sometimes stemming from trivial disagreements, escalated into ongoing violence and multiple homicides.

> *In Mission, with the Hispanics, it's more Norteño and Sureño...MS-13...it's more like the traditional gang thing. But for Blacks and Samoans, it's where you live. It's like a turf thing. It's a neighborhood thing. It's not gangs. It's all about where you grew up...you got neighborhoods feuding...that got 20, 30 murders between them. You know what it started over? They used to be close...they went to a party...and one dude from another neighborhood stepped on someone's shoe and didn't say sorry. They got into an altercation and had a shoot out that night, and ever since, dudes from those neighborhoods hate each other. That's where it started from. And to this day, they're still shooting each other. (VRI Implementer #12)*

Participants also highlighted that many incidents of gun violence were driven by personal vendettas, particularly in response to harm inflicted on family members. The desire for retribution, such as avenging a shot brother or cousin, was frequently mentioned as a catalyst for shootings, making it challenging to interrupt this cycle of violence. For example, individuals from one neighborhood harbored strong negative feelings towards those from rival areas, often due to influences from family members like fathers or brothers. This situation fostered a sense of prohibition against entering certain neighborhoods, perpetuating division and hostility between different community groups.

> *I would say gun violence in San Francisco is mostly caused by neighborhood feuds and/or personal beefs to where, as far as neighborhood, it's like, I grew up in this neighborhood, and I can't stand that group down there. So, because of my father or my brother, I can't stand that group, and I won't go to that neighborhood because of this long-standing feud. It's just this situation where some of these people feel like, historically, my community can't go to that community, or they can't go to that part of the*

neighborhood. And then a lot of it, or a lot of what I hear when shootings happen, is personal. Someone's brother or cousin got shot, and they want to get back...and it's always going to be a hard time stopping them from that. (VRI Implementer #2)

Furthermore, respondents questioned the traditional notion of gang involvement in these feuds. They pointed out that while San Francisco meets the legal definition of having gangs, the nature of these groups differs from traditional gang structures seen in other major cities. The participants observed that individuals involved in neighborhood rivalries in San Francisco might not perceive themselves as gang members. Unlike structured gangs with clear hierarchies, such as the Crips or Bloods, the groups in San Francisco were more loosely organized, often forming around individuals who grew up together and developed unique signs for identification. This absence of a traditional gang hierarchy and mentality suggests a different dynamic in how gun violence manifests in the city.

I'm just not convinced that San Francisco has a traditional gang problem similar to some of our other larger metropolitan cities that we might be comparable to...we have the legal standard of what makes a gang, like two or more of the identifiers. So, in that sense, yeah, legally, there are gangs in San Francisco. However, I don't know if a lot of the people who are necessarily affiliated with these rivaling neighborhoods would call themselves a gang. And there doesn't seem to be this hierarchy set up in traditional gang culture where you have a shot caller, and then from the shot caller, you have the chiefs or the deputy or whoever is running...I think that there are individuals who grew up, who click, who have created some signs to identify with each other. But mentality-wise, they're not seeing themselves as gang members, and a lot of that may just have to do with back in the day how gangs were very clearly structured like, say the Crips or the Bloods. (VRI Implementer #2)

Additionally, participants noted that in some parts of San Francisco, violence was fueled by incidents dating back decades. Over time, the original causes of these disputes became obscured, leading to prolonged neighborhood beefs or turf wars. These conflicts were not typically associated with gang colors or symbols but were deeply rooted in neighborhood loyalties. The ongoing cycle of violence was often perpetuated by a single violent act, leading to retaliations that overshadowed the initial cause of the conflict. The primary concern in such incidents was the neighborhood affiliation of the victims, which then escalated into broader community violence.

In San Francisco, parts of the city are plagued by violence coming from something that happened over some type of romantic relationship 20 years ago...and over time, that actual story of why the beef started ends up getting kind of lost in the sauce. So, we have these decades-long neighborhood beefs driving the violence...we call them turf wars. We don't have [gang] colors and things like that...the actual stories of how all these beefs started is usually over some type of relationship...or relation to whatever neighborhood a victim was from, or any type of crime that happened, whether it's somebody being

robbed, shot, killed or anything like that… that action outweighs the initial problem that could have been squashed a long time ago…it's usually situations like that where the neighborhood ends up getting involved. So whenever someone gets shot out here, the first question people ask is, what happened, and where was the person from? And then it becomes a neighborhood thing, or a turf war like some people call it. (VRI Implementer #9)

Perceptions of Political Will Regarding Addressing Gun Violence in San Francisco
A recurring theme among respondents was the perception that gun violence in San Francisco is an under-recognized problem, particularly in areas outside of the city's tourist-centric areas. Respondents indicated that there is a tendency to focus on regions impacting the city's image and economy, such as the Tenderloin, which has long been afflicted by physical and social disorder issues stemming from the concentration of the city's unhoused and substance-addicted populations in the area, often overshadowing other neighborhoods where gun violence is more prevalent. This lack of recognition was also attributed to a combination of other factors, including the racialization of the city's gun violence, which respondents believed led to its minimization as a significant public concern.

It used to drive me crazy when we would flood our downtown with officers to respond to retail thefts in these stores…and I get it; they were being looted constantly. But we won't flood the areas that are suffering from gun violence. That drives me crazy. And we won't put command vans out there… the argument for them would always be like, well, the community doesn't want that heavy police presence. But we didn't even transition to other efforts either. So, in San Francisco, historically, the Tenderloin and the quality of life issues there will trump any gun violence. They'll make documentaries on the Tenderloin and…any other social issue that is happening in the city…but they're completely silent on the gun violence happening in some of these communities. (VRI Implementer #7)

For San Francisco to be as big a city as it is, a major tech hub, I don't think they broadcast the gun violence enough. It happens a lot…Has it died down in the recent years? Yeah, to a degree. But you obviously still have that element there. And I used to always think, why aren't they broadcasting gun violence so much? I don't know what that reason is. I think part of it is political…, and part of it is because of tourism…but whatever the reason, it happens quite often, especially in our black and brown communities out here. (VRI Implementer #6)

Regarding the political will to address gun violence, respondents expressed that it's difficult to garner. The city's policymakers often prioritize other visible and immediately pressing issues like homelessness and drug addiction. This prioritization makes it challenging to provide enough support and resources for an effective prevention program that can be sustained given the finite resources. The lack of strong political backing, as perceived by the majority of those

interviewed, significantly impedes the development and implementation of robust strategies to combat gun violence—including the VRI.

> *Right now, the substance abuse, the drug problems, the petty theft within the Tenderloin and some of the other areas within the city have taken a focus. While gun violence will always be a talking point in this city, it's not seen as important. We know from the analysis that California Partnership has done, and also our own experience as well, that gun violence is centered around the southeast corner of the city…that's where a lot of the shootings occur. And the feedback that we've gotten over the years from the community is they don't feel supported by the city because there's not a lot of investment. (VRI Implementer #7)*

Additionally, the influence of San Francisco's left-leaning politics on the city's approach to dealing with violent offenders was a point of concern among respondents. There's a common perception that the city's political stance leads to a more lenient approach towards offenders within the criminal legal system. This leniency is evident in instances where offenders are either not charged after an arrest or are released back into the community shortly thereafter. Such an approach has raised concerns about the effectiveness of the legal system in holding offenders accountable and protecting public safety. Moreover, the challenges posed by the city's legal system are compounded by issues of recidivism and the cycle of violence. The frequent occurrence of offenders re-entering society without adequate rehabilitation or support systems leads to a continued cycle of violence. This situation is exacerbated by a perceived reluctance to implement stricter legal measures against violent offenders, creating a gap in the city's strategy to effectively address gun violence.

> *In the current [political] climate, I don't think the punishment fits the crime for firearms, not in California…[here] you get busted with a gun, [and] you're out the next day. Does that teach you much? What's one day in jail? What's probation? [While] I'm not saying people need to go to jail...I am saying we have to find a better way. (VRI Implementer #17)*

> *I feel like there's not a lot of consequences for the violence that we're seeing today…Five, six years ago, if you had a gun case, you weren't going to go home on your first court hearing, and they're going home now. So, of course, the violence is getting worse and worse because there are no consequences…why would they change that behavior if they know they can go home? I worked with one kid that had about three or four gun cases in a matter of three months, and he's home…They're not really getting any time…I feel like the lack of consequences is perpetuating the violence... The violence is getting worse. (VRI Implementer #20)*

> *So one of the major challenges that we had in the [VRI Implementation] was our relationship with the district attorney's office…right when the new district attorney got there, they fired a lot of the good trial attorneys, and they wouldn't even recognize gang*

enhancements for any cases so we didn't have that leverage that we could use in our investigations…And it put a really heavy strain on trying to hold people accountable for shooting and killing people. It really felt like people were going in the front door and right out the back door…nobody was being held accountable for their actions. There was no accountability, you know, for all different types of crimes, but specifically for gun violence, there was zero accountability, and it was really unfortunate. (VRI Implementer #3)

Objective 2: Examine the History and Evolution of San Francisco's Gun Violence Reduction Efforts And Their Impact On The Current SF VRI From The Implementers' Perspective

VRI Implementers' Perspectives on San Francisco Ceasefire
Respondents reflected on the history of San Francisco's Ceasefire program (2008-2011) and its impact on the implementation of the VRI. They noted that Ceasefire initially struggled due to a lack of buy-in from both the community and law enforcement officers. Drawing from these lessons, the VRI aimed to avoid similar pitfalls by adopting a more community-friendly approach, focusing on inclusivity and effective community engagement, unlike the perceived heavy-handed tactics of the past.

> *My understanding is…San Francisco had dabbled a little bit with Ceasefire, and it kind of fell flat because they didn't get the buy-in, the community didn't accept it, and internally, they didn't get the buy-in from the officers in the department. So, we wanted to make sure that we didn't repeat those mistakes…I had heard about those problems from the first time they looked at Ceasefire here. And so, I didn't want to go down that road. So we tried to do it in a way that worked with the reform effort that we were going to do, but also convincing our officers, particularly the officers that worked what was formerly known as the gang task force, that there's a way to do this that's more community-friendly, that's more community inclusive, and overall probably going to be more effective because you're not alienating yourself from the community. The gang task force didn't have the best reputation in terms of in some communities for, you know, prior tactics and incidents, and some people saw it as a heavy-handed or old-school approach to gang violence. So we went into this saying, you know, we're going to retool, rebrand, and look at a different approach that will be more in tune with working with members of the community and people that actually need help. (VRI Implementer #11)*

Participants recounted incidents where the SF Ceasefire's (2008-2011) methods almost endangered outreach workers and damaged community trust, particularly due to actions like attempting arrests during outreach efforts. This approach led to significant resistance in the community, with many viewing Ceasefire as a police-dominated program lacking genuine community ties. As a result, the original Ceasefire left a negative impression, influencing how the community initially perceived the VRI.

Yeah, I remember Ceasefire. I remember they almost got somebody killed. They came saying we got a Ceasefire program; we're going to give some money so you guys can bring people in. So, they got a lot of outreach workers to bring people in. And the police started trying to arrest people. It got to the point where it almost cost the credibility of some outreach workers, and one outreach worker was actually threatened. Because they were really trying to take this one dude to jail, and he told the outreach worker, 'If I go to jail, you're going to have some problems.' That model will never work in San Francisco. San Francisco has different dynamics, and anybody can tell you that. (VRI Implementer #5)

I wasn't directly a part of it, but at the time, it affected the community I was working with…it was a Ceasefire program that was created out here. All I know is it was strictly directed by the police department. There were no community ties to it. So, at the time, it was definitely not accepted by the community. I know that that that ceasefire model did a lot of damage in the community. There was a lot of incarceration, and it didn't work because a bigger entity came into these communities and tried to run things. And the city doesn't work that way…so even now I know that the original Ceasefire has a lot to do with how people in the community are reacting to [the VRI]…I've been told, trying to get some work done in the Mission District…'you guys are just Ceasefire…you can't bring that in here; you can't do that. We'll do anything else with you. But we can't do that.' I can't even argue with them because the concept [of the VRI] is taken from [Ceasefire]…and that project really harmed a lot of communities…it left a bad taste in communities' mouths. (VRI Implementer #18)

I heard about San Francisco trying to implement the Ceasefire model. I wasn't involved in that, but I heard from the community, and it really resonated loudly while we were trying to build this VRI out that the Ceasefire model did not work in San Francisco. The community was not interested. It seemed like it was more of a setup where they would call individuals to the room and then be outside waiting to arrest people. At least, that was the perception. I don't know if that's reality, but it was made very clear that San Francisco did not want this ceasefire model. (VRI Implementer #2)

In addition to their observations, participants compared the VRI with SF Ceasefire (2008-2011), noting operational differences between the two initiatives. Some participants appreciated the VRI's focus on shooting reviews and data tracking, seeing these aspects as beneficial for addressing gun violence. However, others expressed a preference for the broader networking opportunities that Ceasefire provided, where the involvement of numerous law enforcement agencies facilitated a more comprehensive exchange of information. This contrast highlighted a divide in perspectives among participants, with some valuing the data-driven approach of the VRI, while others saw greater merit in the extensive collaboration and information-sharing characteristic of Ceasefire.

Ceasefire was way different than what they have now...although I don't know which one I like better. The shooting reviews are just so different for me because they've got all the numbers, and I'm used to the old school Ceasefire, where every law enforcement agency was there, and you kind of got it all around. There were a lot of people, but you had way more information because everyone was at the table, meaning every station and stuff like that. I feel like [the VRI] is so small and just different...Ceasefire worked better because everyone was exchanging information, and we were in person, and everyone was there. It wasn't every week...not to say that that's a bad thing, but I just felt like it was easier to network...Whereas with [the VRI], you're not really doing that much networking now. (VRI Implementer #20)

I mean, there was Ceasefire that happened in San Francisco prior to [the VRI]; from what I've heard, it was really a different way of organizing and really kind of having that collaboration amongst the cops themselves, which was very weird for the cops...But I wasn't really a part of it, so I don't really know how it was all set up, but I just remember, when I would work at the Bayview, that it was basically just a meeting...to talk about what was going on with the violence...But it was never brought to a level of [the VRI]...meaning the level of data tracking and...mapping out everything we did and tracking the violence week by week by week with the scorecard. (VRI Implementer #3)

This comparison between San Francisco's VRI (2020-present) and Oakland's Ceasefire program (2012-2020) extended beyond mere operational tactics, with participants noting significant differences in the focus and maturity of each program. Oakland's Ceasefire was perceived as more advanced and concentrated intensely on individuals involved in gun violence, offering a targeted approach that the San Francisco VRI initiative aspired to replicate. Participants observed that while the VRI drew inspiration from Oakland's model, it still faced challenges in achieving the same level of detailed focus and successful outcomes. Moreover, this difference underscored the need for San Francisco's VRI to adapt and evolve its strategies, taking into account the unique dynamics and needs of its community to effectively reduce gun violence.

I know that what we're kind of doing is a version of [Ceasefire]. From what I understand, Ceasefire is a lot more focused on individuals. And so, we're kind of the inroads to some of those individuals that Ceasefire would be focusing on, like, say, if you're in Oakland or something like that. So we do have directed meetings with these clients that are, you know, IDed as having gun violence issues. Either they're victims or the perpetrators, one of the two. So, we do a version of that, but it's not nearly on the scale of a place like Oakland, which I think is what we're working on. But that's, we have a version of it, but it's not nearly as successful, I would say, and it's not nearly as tracked. (VRI Implementer #4)

I've been to Oakland, and I've seen their Ceasefire, and the VRI program is kind of like theirs. They got the same CalVIP grant that we have, but they are probably a decade ahead of us. The way they do things is completely different than the way we do ours. I

mean, but it's it's the same gun violence reduction kind of initiative. So that's the only other exposure I've had. (VRI Implementer #1)

VRI Implementers' Perspectives on Previous Violence Reduction Efforts in San Francisco
In addition to discussing the impact of San Francisco's Ceasefire on the Violence Reduction Initiative (VRI), respondents shared their experience working on several of San Francisco's previous violence reduction efforts and their implications for the VRI implementation. They observed a significant shift from past approaches, which primarily emphasized enforcement, to the VRI's more comprehensive strategy. One participant pointed out that, in contrast to the VRI, earlier initiatives focused exclusively on enforcement and did not involve community-based organizations or provide follow-up support for victims.

The only ones that I can think of, and I don't even know what they call it, but it was all enforcement. It would be like go flood an area after a shooting. Or, it would be like what we call buy-bust operations…but it would always be enforcement-driven. I've never been part of anything like this where we kind of went outside the box and partnered with community-based organizations and other organizations in trying to do these community safety meetings and these direct communications. I've never seen anything like this or been a part of anything like this in my whole career…Everything that we did prior to [the VRI] in my tenure was just all enforcement-based. (VRI Implementer #7)

However, other participants reflected fondly on their past involvement in several of the city's community-involved crime reduction efforts.[18] For example, one participant recalled the Youth Opportunities of San Francisco (YOSF), a program that proactively engaged directly with community members, offering a more hands-on approach. This contrasted with the VRI's methodology, which tended to intervene post-incident. The success of the YOSF was partly attributed to its personnel, who were residents of the neighborhoods they served, fostering deeper connections and trust within the community. This aspect of YOSF highlighted the importance of community involvement and local knowledge in effectively addressing violence, offering valuable insights for the VRI's ongoing efforts.

Back in 2004, we had the Youth Opportunities of San Francisco; they called it the YOSF…it was outreach, and it was case management. And I think that the community was a little bit more receptive because people who were involved with it were living in the neighborhoods, so they were more hands-on, and they weren't operating based on the violence dynamics…they would go out and get people who were hanging in certain areas, [drug spots], and connecting with them…now, with the VRI, they're [referring] individuals that have no contact with any outreach workers until they actually get into some type of violence. (VRI Implementer #5)

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[18] While the programs described by participants were not explicitly focused on violence reduction, they referenced them because they perceived these programs as serving the same populations currently at risk of gun violence involvement and being targeted by the VRI.

Several homegrown, community-led projects, including United Playaz and Kamala Harris's Back on Track program, were also mentioned by respondents. These initiatives stood out for their emphasis on a community-first approach and their ability to secure city support after demonstrating effectiveness. Back on Track was particularly noted for its innovative strategy in diverting first-time offenders from the criminal justice system, offering them employment opportunities and case management. This program's success in providing alternative paths for offenders highlighted the potential for similar strategies in the VRI.

> *There have been several [violence reduction] projects over the years…every hood in San Francisco has had some violence prevention initiatives, homegrown community-led projects…one of the one of the biggest ones that I think is extremely successful and has done really well is the United Playaz. I think the reason it's worked is because it's a community first, and it continues to be. Of course, once the projects start picking up and they start being successful, that's when the city gets behind them and starts [them[supporting better…Kamala Harris also had a project back in the day…called Back on Track…To this day, I still think that was actually one of the best projects this city's ever had…it was for first-time offenders, and the idea was to stop the cycle before they got further attached to the criminal justice system…it was a diversion program where they would get referred to Goodwill Industries…the issue at the time was drug sales. And so, first-time drug dealers would get sent to the program, and they had six months to a year plan to [finish the program], and their conviction would be put on hold during that time. If they could get through this program successfully, then their charges would be dropped…Goodwill did a really good job because they offered a connection to employment. So, there was job placement. There was case management…So that project in itself partnered with a district attorney who was able to say we're going to hold off on the prosecutions, and we're going to trust that our community partners to do this level of work with these first-time offenders to get them on the right track…I know there are a few projects here and there that still exist. That one doesn't exist anymore, but that one in itself was one of those really innovative concepts. Let's work with the DA to not charge these young people. (VRI Implementer #18)*

Participants also recalled programs like Brothers Against Guns and SQUIRES, which provided unique interventions such as prison visits and experiences at San Francisco General Hospital to demonstrate the real-life consequences of gun violence. These programs offered impactful perspectives and preventative measures by directly confronting the realities of violence. Additionally, under Mayor Lee, the mayor's office implemented the IPO (Interrupt, Predict, and Organize strategy, effectively coordinating various stakeholders to address shootings, services, and community outreach. This strategy showed promising results in reducing gun violence and enhancing community safety until it was reallocated to specific city departments following Mayor Lee's passing. The discontinuation of the IPO strategy highlighted the challenge of sustaining effective violence reduction initiatives amidst political and administrative changes, underscoring the need for long-term commitment and support for such programs.

I remember years ago, they had the Brothers Against Guns… and they had SQUIRES (San Quentin Utilization of Inmate Resources Experiences and Studies)…SQUIRES was about going to the prison and talking about all the gun violence…the crisis team at San Francisco General Hospital also had a program where the youth would go there and see what could happen to someone who was shot; they'd take them to the morgue and things like that. (VRI Implementer #20)

I know the mayor's office, under Mayor Lee, had a strategy called IPO, which is Interdict, Predict, and Organize…They did a great job coordinating and bringing everyone in to talk about what shootings had occurred, what services were needed, and what CBOs were going to be out there talking to [high-risk] individuals…and they also had designated resources set out for some of those individuals that were identified as shooters. I think that that worked well for a while. But then, when Mayor Lee passed away, I think that strategy was dismantled. (VRI Implementer #2)

These reflections indicate that while previous efforts had varying degrees of success, the VRI represents a more holistic and inclusive approach, learning from and building upon the city's history of violence reduction initiatives.

Objective 3: Evaluate SF VRI Implementers' Experiences with and Perceptions of the SF VRI Implementation

Implementation Positives
Respondents highlighted several positive aspects of the VRI's implementation, emphasizing its role in community safety. A significant achievement was the initiative's direct contribution to saving lives. One respondent recounted a critical situation where the VRI team quickly moved an individual who was in imminent danger to a safe location, effectively preventing a likely fatal incident. This decisive intervention exemplified the VRI's commitment to proactive and life-preserving actions. Additionally, such actions by the VRI not only safeguard individuals but also contribute to reducing the cycle of violence and retaliation that often escalates in communities plagued by gun violence. These efforts underscore the importance of timely and targeted interventions in the realm of public safety and community well-being.

Yeah, I am very aware that we have saved at least one life…I know for a fact that we saved one very specific person. We got them out of the state just on a whim, just like that. We told him, 'Hey, you are being targeted right now…we're very sure that you're going to die because you have a bounty on your head right now. We know that for a fact. Do you want to leave?' He said yes, and then we got him out of the state…Thank God that he was identified, he has some kids, and now he's safe, he's set, and good to go. (VRI Implementer #4)

Effective management within the VRI emerged as a key theme in the implementation of the strategy. Participants praised a specific manager whose leadership brought about a significant positive change in the operation. Her commitment to accountability, consistent team meetings,

and meticulous documentation greatly enhanced the team's cohesion and clarity, making her a vital component of the initiative's implementation. This manager's ability to effectively coordinate various aspects of the program was instrumental in aligning the initiative's goals and strategies, thereby maximizing the initiative's impact.

> *The good thing that happened was when we got a good manager, we really like her…she's all about it and holds everybody accountable. We meet a couple of times a week, and everything is documented. Everybody knows what they're doing. She really is the glue of this whole operation. (VRI Implementer #7)*

The VRI's shooting review process and coordination meeting received high praise for fostering valuable cross-departmental collaboration. Participants appreciated these platforms for facilitating detailed discussions and coordinated responses to violence. This collaborative approach not only allowed for diverse perspectives and expertise to be brought to the table but also ensured that the strategies developed were well-rounded and effectively targeted the complexities of urban violence. Additionally, such interdepartmental cooperation fostered a sense of unity and shared purpose among various stakeholders, further strengthening the initiative's ability to address the multifaceted nature of gun violence in the city.

> *I like the VRI…I think the shooting review is invaluable. And I think it really gives a good platform to come together across different departments and have a conversation about what we can do to address the violence. I also like SVRT…I think it's also good to know how things operate from the wraparound services side. (VRI Implementer #17)*

Furthermore, securing funding and receiving support from Chief Scott were highlighted as crucial factors in the VRI's implementation. Participants recognized the importance of the Chief's involvement, noting his dedication to understanding and actively participating in the program. His commitment to the VRI, from securing resources to engaging with team members, was seen as instrumental in advancing the initiative's goals. This level of engagement from top leadership was seen as a significant positive, changing some participants' perceptions and reinforcing their commitment to the VRI.

> *One of the positives was that we were able to secure that grant money to even get [the VRI] off of the ground. Another positive is that we had the support of the Chief throughout the entire implementation of the VRI, which has been crucial in terms of putting people in positions to be able to carry this strategy through. The Chief really took the time to meet with folks, hear them out, and devote an incredible amount of time and energy to get this thing off of the ground, and I think that's huge. Without that support from the Chief, I'm not sure we would've been able to implement the VRI. (VRI Implementer #2)*

> *I've had the honor of spending some one-on-one time with Chief Scott and hearing his ideas and thought processes behind this program. And I was really impressed because I feel like I've worked with organizations where the [Executive Director] has no clue what's*

going on at the bottom of the organization. It's like they're just kind of signing off, but they're not really connected to it. And to be honest, when I came on to the project, I was like, man, the San Francisco Police Department is so big, I can't imagine that the Chief even knows who we are or what we do. But after my meeting with him, after having these conversations with him, I was completely sold...like this Chief is really coming at this from a different angle...It actually changed my mindset that this is just another project under his belt, and this is something he has really bought into. He actually believes in this work. That made me feel more comfortable being part of the VRI. (VRI Implementer #18)

Implementation Challenges

Rushed Implementation

Study participants identified several challenges during the VRI implementation, with a central issue being the hurried and somewhat unprepared rollout of the program. One participant noted that the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) committed to the initiative without being fully prepared for the necessary requirements, resulting in significant time lost. This sentiment was echoed by other participants who likened the experience to "flying the plane before they finished building it," indicating that the VRI was put into action before it was fully ready. They observed that many of the problems encountered later in the program's implementation could have been anticipated and addressed earlier. This lack of foresight led to various technical and operational issues that were only recognized and addressed after the fact.

SFPD signed up for this without being ready for what was needed. And we lost a lot of time. (VRI Implementer #7)

There are a lot of challenges here...my description of this since I got here has been they started flying the plane before they finished building it. That's literally what we're doing...And the reality is, a lot of the problems that we're facing now, I have to ask myself, how the hell did they not think of this? I wasn't here at the beginning part of [the VRI], and I don't know who or what their thought process was when they got this started. But there are a lot of little technical pieces that were, quite frankly, just missing before I got here. (VRI Implementer #18)

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced additional complexities to the implementation of the VRI. Participants noted that the shift to remote working conditions, coupled with an observed increase in violence during the pandemic, significantly impeded the progress of the initiative and altered its dynamics. Additionally, they highlighted the challenges faced in adapting to the post-pandemic environment and in implementing changes that had been previously discussed. Moreover, the pandemic's impact on community engagement and outreach efforts was a critical concern raised by participants. The restrictions and health risks associated with the pandemic limited direct interactions with the community, a vital component of the VRI's approach, thus hindering the effectiveness of these efforts. This highlighted the necessity for innovative methods to maintain community connections and continue violence reduction work

despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. Consequently, the VRI had to navigate not only the operational hurdles brought on by remote working but also find new ways to sustain its core mission of community-based violence intervention during a time of unprecedented social and health challenges.

> *There were definitely some obstacles that didn't make it easy for us to get this thing off the ground. And COVID was one of them. Number one, the remote working conditions kind of slowed everything down. And it took us a minute to kind of get in a rhythm...We eventually got things going, but COVID-19 hampered us somewhat. And then the dynamics of the violence changed, you know, and I think it was probably nationwide. Here, we started to see an escalation in violence in late 2020, and it continued into 2021. And it was probably pandemic-related because things were just kind of chaotic. (VRI Implementer #11)*

> *Remember, as this launched, we were at the beginning of the pandemic. So, we decided right off the bat we wouldn't do certain things, like having the call-ins in group settings. And then, as time went on and we got out of the pandemic, we started having discussions about making certain changes…but by then, it was time to start the process of getting the next grant, and I don't know how many of these changes we discussed were actually implemented. (VRI Implementer #2)*

Personnel Recruitment and Retention Issues

Study participants have shared critical insights into the challenges of personnel recruitment and retention within the Violence Reduction Initiative (VRI), highlighting the impact of these issues on the initiative's overall effectiveness. One of the primary challenges identified by respondents was the difficulty in attracting and retaining life coaching staff for the San Francisco Violence Intervention Program (SVIP). A key factor contributing to this challenge was the disparity in pay between nonprofit organizations like SVIP and other city agencies. Respondents noted that when SVIP offered a lower salary compared to other opportunities in the city, it inevitably led to a loss of personnel. This situation was further complicated by the organization's structure, possibly including union constraints, which limited the flexibility in offering competitive salaries for the VRI component of SVIP.

> *Initially, one of the barriers to getting the life coaching staff that SVIP tried to hire was a lack of interest…One of the issues in San Francisco is that nonprofits in the city pay a lot less than the city. So, SVIP was losing personnel to other opportunities. And I can't fault anybody for that…if you're going to pay $60,000 and then there's somebody else that offers you $70,000, you're going to take the $70,000. So, we met with them, and we told SVIP that given where we are within the grant, we asked if they wanted to make changes, and one of the changes I suggested is that if you're having issues with retaining staff, and you have a balance, see whether or not you're able to increase the amount of pay…for example, let's say that you're funding six positions, but you only have five filled, and you can't fill that sixth one. Well, you could have basically given all those five a*

twenty percent raise, right? So, you know, we were kind of trying to think about those strategies. And I don't know whether or not it ever worked out for them because I can think of one barrier in that as an organization, I think they're a union shop. So it's like if you have whatever classification, let's say that they have other life coaches if they're paying their regular life coaches $60,000, I don't know what capacity they would have or if they have the option to go, Hey for this program, we're going to pay these guys $70,000. Because then that's going to piss off the other guys that they have. (VRI Implementer #7)

Additionally, participants discussed the high turnover of personnel within the VRI, particularly in key leadership roles. The departure of influential leaders, such as an assistant chief deeply involved with the VRI, was seen as a significant setback. The replacement of such figures, despite being competent, did not fully mitigate the disruption caused by their departure. This turnover not only affected immediate operations but also underscored the need for a sustainable system that could withstand changes in personnel. The realization that the VRI needed a robust infrastructure to support continuity, regardless of individual staff changes, was a recurring theme. Respondents acknowledged that having the right people for the job was crucial, but they also recognized the importance of creating a framework that could endure beyond the tenure of any single team member.

We had a lot of personnel turnover. We had a lot of people resigning and leaving…some of our folks in key leadership positions ended up retiring or going to do other things, like the assistant Chief who was involved with the VRI …so we had to be pretty strategic in moving people around and filling some of the roles in the VRI. And even then, the officer who replaced our assistant chief was a really good leader; he did an excellent job of pulling all this together. But he ended up leaving, not during COVID…he left last summer. And I think after that, we realized we had to try to create and put in place the right infrastructure… obviously, you always have to have the right people to do the work. But we realized we needed to create a system that would outlast all of us so that the strategy could survive and keep going after all of that turnover. (VRI Implementer #11)

Governance Structure Issues

Study participants expressed concerns about the governance structure of the VRI, highlighting issues related to project management, leadership changes, and the organizational differences between participating entities. Respondents emphasized the importance of having a knowledgeable and dedicated project manager to oversee the VRI. They shared experiences of transitions between project managers, noting that a lack of continuity in this role led to unrecognized issues behind the scenes. The impact of these transitions was felt particularly in areas where consistent oversight and strategic direction were crucial.

A project manager has to be on board and has to understand the overall strategy. And they have to be able to oversee what's going on. The only reason why I say that is

because I've gone through two project managers, and I didn't realize some of the stuff that was going on behind the scenes until there was a transition. (VRI Implementer #7)

Study participants also discussed the challenges posed by changes in management, particularly at higher levels of leadership. They recalled instances where supportive leaders, such as an assistant chief who was highly involved and prioritized gun violence reduction, were replaced by others with different priorities. This shift in leadership focus was seen as detrimental to the VRI's progress, as it made it more difficult to maintain momentum and secure the necessary support from top-level management.

I wish we had a better organization for what we were doing. Better structure, better tracking. I think we were also negatively impacted by management change…when managers would change positions, I found that it was a bit more difficult to hold on to what we had without support from the top. For example, we had an assistant chief who left and was really supportive of the program. And he was there with us every single day of every week. And then he retired, and a new assistant chief came in who didn't see gun violence as a high priority…his focus was somewhere else, which became pretty challenging for us because prior to him coming on board when we needed to get certain things done we could just go to the top and get it done. But that management change made it really difficult to accomplish what we were doing and what we were trying to do. (VRI Implementer #3)

Furthermore, respondents highlighted the administrative challenges faced by SVIP. For example, they pointed out the stark contrast between the operational styles of nonprofits and the police department. The police department's more structured, military-style approach was seen as differing significantly from the more flexible approach typically employed by nonprofits. This difference in operational mentality was identified as a hurdle, particularly in managing administrative tasks and maintaining accountability and documentation. Respondents acknowledged weaknesses in this area and expressed a commitment to improving management practices to better support the VRI's goals.

I get it…we haven't done a perfect job of managing the crew with all of the administrative tasks that we need to do. I'll be the first to admit that…[and] I'm sure you'll hear a little bit of that from the SFPD side. 'Hey, these guys can do this a little bit better.' We need to be able to have that accountability and documentation that shows the work that we're doing. And that's the part where I feel we are weak in showing that, you know, because our guys, they have a hard time with it…So, I mean, that's something that we have to fix on our end. I think the hardest part is the difference between a nonprofit and the police department…they've got this military-style setup and mentality, and we don't; we can't operate that way. It's from one extreme to another. (VRI Implementer #14)

SFPD Officers' Perspectives on SVIP Service Delivery Issues

Several officers involved in the VRI shared their perspectives on the service delivery challenges faced by the SVIP. These insights highlight issues related to responsiveness, administrative capacity, and the effectiveness of SVIP in fulfilling its role in the VRI. Officers noted that while they are actively engaging with individuals on the streets and finding them receptive to the information provided, there is a disconnect when these individuals turn to SVIP for further assistance. A lack of responsiveness from SVIP was frequently mentioned, with officers recounting instances where individuals reported not receiving callbacks or follow-ups from SVIP. This gap in communication and service delivery not only undermines the efforts of the officers but also affects the credibility of the program, as the community perceives a lack of follow-through on promised services. Furthermore, the officers observed that some SVIP members were not fully committed to their responsibilities, describing them as lacking initiative and motivation. This attitude was seen as detrimental to the overall effectiveness of SVIP, although it was acknowledged that there were dedicated individuals within SVIP who were doing commendable work. The inconsistency in performance across SVIP staff was highlighted as a significant issue.

> *If our job is to go outside and reach these individuals, which we are doing, and these individuals are receptive to the information we give them, and then they go to SVIP, and on that side, they're not holding up their end of the bargain. It makes us look kind of crazy. (VRI Implementer #13)*

Building a productive relationship between SFPD officers and SVIP was described as a "work in progress." Officers recognized that SVIP's involvement in case management and outreach as part of the VRI was a new role for them, diverging from their prior focus on maintaining peace at shooting incidents and family support. This shift in responsibilities implied a learning curve for SVIP, which some officers felt was progressing slowly. The officers suggested that this might be due to a lack of adequate training or educational resources for SVIP staff, many of whom come from non-traditional backgrounds. Officers also expressed concerns about the internal challenges within SVIP, noting that although improvements were being made, such as the appointment of a dedicated supervisor, there were still issues that needed addressing to enhance SVIP's service delivery and responsiveness.

> *I will say that building our relationship with SVIP has been a work in progress. And no shade to them because they're just getting involved with this case management stuff that wasn't part of their main duties prior to getting involved with the VRI…prior to the VRI, they used to go out to shootings, talk to families, try to keep the peace, maintain some type of order in the community. So, there's really no shade to them…however, I feel like they could do a lot more. Now, they're in this role, case management and outreach… I would say they're kind of slow…and [maybe] that's an educational or [training] thing because obviously, you got people from the streets doing this job. But when we are out here doing outreach, [that slowness] creates a problem for us…Most of the time, we go out and do the initial outreach…and we provide SVIP with the*

information on the guys we contacted…then it's their turn to reach out to them and follow up. But when I go back on the streets again, I'll hear, 'Hey, nobody ever contacted me.' And now it puts us in a situation where we told these guys all these services could be available through SVIP, and now they look at us like we've lied to them…I think they're doing better with it now because they have a supervisor who's really on it…But at the same time, they have their own issues that they're struggling with internally. (VRI Implementer #6)

Other SFPD officers shared perspectives that were more sympathetic to the service delivery challenges encountered by SVIP. These insights reveal key areas of concern regarding the operational capabilities and resource limitations of SVIP. Respondents highlighted that SVIP was primarily designed for outreach purposes, focusing on communication with individuals on the streets to deter them from a life of violence rather than intensive case management, which is the role they were tasked with performing as part of the VRI. Indeed, these officers noted that SVIP lacked a structured system to provide comprehensive services, such as assistance in obtaining a driver's license or job placement. This lack of structure was seen as a significant challenge, as SVIP had to internally develop capabilities beyond their original scope of work. Moreover, examples were given of SVIP's technological limitations, like relying on paper-based documentation instead of digital methods, which was seen as hindering their ability to expand and enhance their service delivery.

I want to be politically correct here…But we had a really hard time with services in our city, and to be fair, SVIP was not built to provide that…they were just mainly for outreach and to go out there and talk and communicate with these guys out on the street and try to get them out of the life. But they didn't really have a place that individuals could go to really try to get them services and help them…whether that's getting a driver's license or getting a job or whatever it is, they weren't ever structured like that. So, they themselves had to build internally in that direction, which was very, very challenging. Just to give you an example, even something as minor as everything they did, they would write on a binder paper rather than use a computer. So I think they had some technical challenges, like technology and things along those lines, that probably hindered their ability to do more work from their point of view. And that's not a negative dig on them. I just think it was more like they were just never structured to do some of the work that we were asking them to do. (VRI Implementer #3)

Additionally, officers expressed concerns about the lack of diversity in service providers. They observed that SVIP, being the sole service provider partnered with the VRI, faced difficulties in meeting the extensive needs of the program due to limited resources, including having only a few life coaches available—one officer claimed that at the outset of the VRI implementation, SVIP only had one life coach dedicated to the program. This scarcity of resources was perceived as a bottleneck, restricting the range of services offered to individuals involved in the VRI. There was

a sense of frustration that, despite the city's awareness and support of the VRI strategy, no additional groups or resources were mobilized to supplement SVIP's efforts.

SVIP Perspectives on Service Challenges

<u>Services & Resource Access, Challenges working with Extremely High-Risk Clientele, & Referral Disinterest in Services</u>

Our qualitative analysis investigated the challenges that service providers in the SVIP program faced, drawing insights from interviews with SVIP staff. The primary issue was the difficulty of accessing services. Respondents called urgently for the establishment of effective connections and resources, highlighting the challenges of navigating bureaucratic processes. They stressed the importance of relationships that could help bypass red tape, worsened by the physical inaccessibility of services for certain client groups.

> *As far as [the services] that are available for our people to get… it's all about making those connections and having the resources available…Our guys are learning what those resources are…so we're still in a state of flux…We're flying the plane as we're building it… But I think it's really knowing what the resources are and being able to have the relationships to bypass some of the red tape or waiting around for some of these services…what I want to [be able to] do is bypass our guys into the front of the line we need that for everything...Because right now, our guys are just like everyone else waiting in line… another piece that a lot of people don't talk about is where the services are sometimes where our clients cannot go…and a lot of agencies won't go to where they need to go to provide them with services…(VRI Implementer #14)*

Respondents also noted a significant gap between the available resources and the actual needs of clients. They argued for a more proactive, tangible approach to service provision, such as speeding up housing assistance, material support, and job placement. Respondents critiqued the slow, cumbersome process of accessing funds, which often resulted in missed opportunities and reduced client trust. And, they expressed frustration with what they perceived as a disconnect between how the program details and resource allocation were described before implementation and how they actually played out.

> *When these types of programs are explained to the outreach workers in them, they have to be fully explained and understood. Before you put those feet on the ground, you have to really let the workers know about what they're getting themselves into and what everything entails. One of the biggest issues we have here is understanding where the resources are and where we get them from. I don't think there's enough money to get some of these guys out the day of… there are some guys who are willing to change their*

lives, and it takes too long to get those little things that they need…even if it's just a week…To a lot of these guys, a week is too long, especially when they feel like they could die tonight. There have to be more open allocated funds for certain things where there's not such a hold-up…it's because of how the VRI is set up. You have to go through so much red tape and get so many signatures… just to get something small paid for…the only thing that I've heard of that has been quick is relocation. And it's because that's just so blatantly about being in danger. They need to be relocated by tonight, so they're going to. But like a phone bill or just something small…to be able to get that phone call about a job interview that we just spent weeks getting stuff together to prepare for, takes weeks to get paid because *redacted name* has to sign off on it, then it has to be submitted a certain way because it has to be deemed appropriate and a necessity before *redacted name* will approve. And by the time all that happens it's too late...and we lose our credibility with our clients. There's a lot of credibility being lost… (VRI Implementer #9)

Addressing the challenges of working with extremely high-risk clients was another significant concern. Respondents described the complexities of dealing with clients still engaged in dangerous activities or unable to work in public spaces due to safety issues. They also identified the challenges of relocating clients who often returned to their familiar, risky environments. Lastly, respondents shared anecdotes regarding the barriers—such as stringent eligibility criteria— their high-risk clientele faced in accessing services meant to rectify issues such as homelessness and joblessness.

First of all, we've got [clients] that are still [gang] banging…some of these guys, even the ones that are out of the life, can't work in the public sector or on the street because they'll get shot at. Some of these guys need to start a new life...they need to move out of the city. But then there's the other problem…what I call the magnet. You have someone move out of the city that can change their life. But then they get bored…maybe they get homesick…and they want to come back to the city…it's like being in the witness protection program…they get put out to pasture in some suburb, boring as hell…And what happens? They come back to what they're comfortable with and they wind up getting hurt. (VRI Implementer #14)

One of my clients, his sister put him out…his parents are dead, all he's got is his sisters and a few friends. After his sister put him out…he ended up sleeping in his car. The car ended up getting towed with him in it…and all I could do for him was send him information about different places…I found out that the Section 8 list was open, so I told him to go get Section 8...that didn't work. Then, I tried to get him housed in an apartment. But he had to have a certain level of income to move into that place, and he

didn't have a job, so that didn't work. Then I tried to send him to a job, but he didn't fit the criteria…we have to work through so many of these barriers, but unfortunately, people want these guys to change right away, and it doesn't happen quickly… (VRI Implementer #10)

I tell these guys, people, places, and things will get you caught up… The people you mess with, the places you go, and the things you do. You got to change the people you hang with, you got to change the places you go to, and you got to change the things you do. But for a lot of [our clients], it's hard…especially when they've been doing them their whole life. I'll give you an example, we met with a young man at the probation office for the VRI. While I'm talking to him and explaining the program, he lifts up his shirt, shows me his gun, and tells me 'I don't go no where without this'…while we're in the probation office. And [the police] wanted me to give him a life coach. I told them no…he's too risky. But I did give him my number and told him call me if you need anything…but in the same token, I knew he wasn't ready. In that same conversation…he told me they put him into transitional housing, a halfway house, while he had a [bounty] on his head…he told me he didn't even feel safe driving his car with his son in it…I talked to him a few times and tried to get him to relocate, but he wouldn't listen…he ended up getting killed in the same place where I warned him not to go…(VRI Implementer #12)

Finally, SVIP respondents highlighted the varied responses to service offers. Some clients declined services due to deep involvement in dangerous activities or mistrust towards service providers. Respondents also emphasized the challenge of building trust with clients skeptical of the offer of services and the motives of service providers.

Some people will say no to the services…some people are going to tell you that they're 100% not interested. The ones that say no are usually not ready to change their lives and don't want you in their business…When I say not ready to change their life, I mean they're in deep on something…it can be something violent…like I'm not ready to stop until the killers of my brother are dead. Or, I'm not ready to stop until I get $1,000,000…Or, I'm not ready to stop because talking to you might aid an investigation that I might already be involved in. Some people will say I don't want people to think I'm talking to the police…They have a no police involvement policy tolerance in their head, no matter who you are. I've had some say thank you, we know what you do. We know you're not the police…But still not [interested]…I've had people referred to me that don't know me, they'll be from a different neighborhood…and now [to them] I'm this stranger trying to tell them to change their life, and it's mysterious [to them] how I know all their business…that's why you also get a no as well. I've had people ask me 'if you don't work with the police, how do you know all this information? How do you know I was involved

in a shooting? How do you know my boy was involved in a shooting and that I'm in a music video with him with the same gun? How do you know that?' So, certain things are too mysterious for people to join. (VRI Implementer #9)

Altogether, these insights stressed the complexity of delivering services in high-risk environments and underlined difficulties faced by SVIP in recruiting referred candidates onto their service caseloads.

<u>Service Needs, Service Provision, and Client Dissatisfaction with Services</u>

Client dissatisfaction with available services was another key theme. For example, one SVIP life coach described encouraging clients who were homeless to utilize shelters despite recognizing the reluctance and stigma associated with shelter living. This respondent acknowledged his clients' preference for the relative freedom of living in their own spaces, like cars, over the restrictions and judgments of a shelter. This reluctance was often rooted in a history of being let down and a consequent lack of trust, leading some clients to resort to desperate measures, including committing crime, for survival.

> *I've encouraged all of my clients who are homeless to go get in one of these shelters for a couple of weeks. But who wants to live in a shelter? Amongst people who are probably a little more down on their luck than you are. Even if you are homeless and you're living in your car, that still gives you a certain level of freedom to do what you want to do…and there's the stigma of being in a homeless shelter…like you feel bad about people looking at you because you're homeless. He's been let down by so many people that, you know, he don't know who to trust. So he's got to stand on his own two feet. And if that means he has to rob and steal, that's what he's going to do. (VRI Implementer #10)*

<u>Issues with SFPD Outreach</u>

SVIP respondents also shared their experiences and concerns regarding outreach efforts by the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD), revealing critical issues related to their safety and credibility in the community. One major issue identified was the undermining of the safety and credibility of SVIP life coaches. Respondents described uncomfortable situations where their interactions with plain-clothes police officers on the street jeopardized their safety and standing in the community. They recounted instances where clients questioned their affiliation with the police, especially when outreach officers approached these clients shortly after interactions with SVIP life coaches. This led to significant frustration among the SVIP staff, as they had to emphasize to clients and the community that they did not work for the police. Respondents described how certain actions of the police, such as inquiring about specific service providers or insensitively describing the VRI strategy in the community, put SVIP staff in

a difficult position, forcing some to withdraw from community outreach temporarily to maintain their credibility.

> *So there are certain things that I don't like…It looks really bad for me and my safety when the police see me out on the street, and they stop and jump out and talk to me in plain clothes. I've even heard this from the clients' perspective; they've asked me, do I have to talk to [this officer], and I'll tell them no…And [outreach officers] have gone out there and approached them afterwards… It's highly frustrating. I've had clients call me and say, 'Hey, I'm not going to say his name, but this cop who was on the VRI, he's out here walking on foot asking people about you…One time, they were trying to get a client that I had already told them said no to me. I told [the police] I have to go back to these communities, I've already told them I don't work for the police…so why are you guys going out there preaching the program? That puts me in a crazy position…so I said, I'm not going to go out there for a few weeks…because I'm telling them I don't work for the police. So, if you go out there mentioning my name…you make me sound like I'm lying. I said, you can tell them about the VRI, that's fine. You can even tell them about SVIP... That's your job, which you're supposed to do, but there's a way you can say it without undermining us…it is a very fine line. And I think that the people that work for the police, they're not going to understand the safety aspect of it from [our perspective]…So I had to drill that into them…it was a big thing. I told them I'm offended that you guys went out there like that, like I have to go back to the community. That person said no to my face three ways under the sun…give it a break…and I don't know if it's part of their job to go out, maybe it is, maybe they have to do some hours on the block. I have no idea. That's not explained to us. But the way they're going about it puts us in danger. (VRI Implementer #9)*

Additionally, respondents acknowledged the sincerity of the few police officers they worked with but highlighted the persistent stigma associated with them being cops. Moreover, there was a sense that the community's distrust stemmed from some of the CVRT officers' reputations, particularly those known as 'jump-out boys' or plain-clothes officers. These officers, known for arrests and other purportedly aggressive actions, had established a certain reputation, leading to a general lack of trust from the community members.

> *The few police that we work with…I believe they're sincere in what they're doing. But there's still the stigma of them being cops…And some of them have been known as being jump-out boys (plain clothes officers). So they already got a certain reputation in the community…whether they've arrested people or they've done other things…so people don't trust them. (VRI Implementer #10)*

These findings highlight the delicate balance and the challenges faced in collaborating with law enforcement in community outreach, underscoring the need for sensitive and thoughtful approaches that consider the perspectives and safety of both SVIP staff and community members targeted by the VRI.

<u>Feeling Misunderstood and Undermined by Other Strategy Partners</u>

Lastly, SVIP respondents shared insights into how they felt misunderstood and undermined by other VRI partners which they attributed to a limited understanding of their work and the role they play in the strategy. Firstly, respondents expressed a belief that while the leaders of the strategy were sincere, their experience in dealing with the population targeted by the VRI was limited. This lack of understanding posed significant challenges, especially regarding trust. Respondents emphasized the critical importance of trust and the need for leaders to deliver on promises. They highlighted that their community, having been let down frequently in the past by the city's civic institutions, harbors a deep-seated cynicism toward the police and city government. The respondents stressed that if they, as service providers, make a commitment, especially to a population with a history of being disappointed, it's crucial that these commitments are fulfilled to maintain trust.

> *Some of the people who are heading the ship, they are sincere in their hearts, but their experience with dealing with [our population] is pretty limited….so I think they really [struggle to] understand the work we do…I stressed to them that trust is important. I stress that [our clients] don't trust the government, or some of these city services. But the important part is if I say I'm going to do something, especially with our people, then I need to deliver because they've been let down so much, that they're always on guard, and so distrustful that if you break even the smallest promise you can lose them forever. (VRI Implementer #10)*

City Official Perspectives on SVIP Service Delivery Issues
City officials involved in the Violence Reduction Initiative (VRI) provided insightful perspectives on the service delivery challenges faced by the San Francisco Violence Intervention Program (SVIP). Their observations highlight a range of issues, from structural to operational, affecting the effectiveness of SVIP's role within the VRI framework. Respondents pointed out the problematic nature of SFPD leading the strategy while expecting SVIP to handle community engagement independently. A lack of inter-agency support was identified, with officials suggesting that more assistance should have been provided to SVIP in navigating city systems and providing resources to agencies. This gap in support was perceived as hindering SVIP's ability to effectively engage with and assist individuals in the community.

When we started this, I was told that the community piece belongs in the community and the police department shouldn't be doing that piece. And I got it. And I understood it. But yet, SFPD was still leading the strategy…so at the end of the day, whatever community agency we had was going to rely on us because we were leading the strategy. But whenever I raised the issue of providing more support for SVIP, I would get this pushback…it was just always, 'That's not our job, the community piece in terms of going to talk to the individuals; that's all SVIP. That's not us.' And I do understand that the life coaching piece or the working directly with services is SVIP. They hold that work…Maybe I didn't have a clear understanding of the strategy, so I'll take some onus, but it was also my belief that it was our responsibility to help SVIP be successful in getting and working with these individuals. So, if SVIP didn't have resources or know how to navigate certain systems, I feel like it was our responsibility to support them, and that wasn't happening. (VRI Implementer #2)

City officials involved in the VRI highlighted the significant challenges faced by the SVIP in engaging high-risk individuals. They underscored the inherent complexity of SVIP's work, which involves interacting with individuals entrenched in high-risk behaviors and unrealistic expectations for rapid behavioral change. These individuals often have long-standing and complicated histories, making immediate changes a difficult and often unrecognized endeavor. Officials noted that criticism of SVIP for not quickly or effectively changing these behaviors is unfair and overlooks the deep-rooted nature of issues such as chronic violence, poverty, and systemic challenges that are not easily resolved. Additionally, they expressed concerns about the misalignment between the expectations placed on SVIP and the actual resources and support provided. This discrepancy indicates a broader issue within the VRI framework, where frontline organizations are tasked with demanding objectives but lack the necessary tools, training, and support to effectively meet these challenges.

I think they did a good job getting some of the right people from SVIP to do the work. They go out there, and they can touch people. Not everybody can touch a shooter. It is not easy to convince a shooter to sit down and have a conversation or even agree to get on a caseload. But the fact is when that doesn't happen, and certain people think it is so easy for it to happen, they want to point the finger. So, SFPD's lack of understanding of the outreach piece is a [weak point in the implementation] for me. I think it's unfair to say that the outreach failed because you didn't get the result that you wanted…They had SVIP go after these high-risk guys, and then they got mad at [SVIP] when none of them came to the table. You gave them ten high-risk people who have been shooting people, and you want them to come sit down and change their lives overnight without having the realization that some of these people are not going to be able to change their lives unless they leave the state. Some of these guys have killed someone; they've taken somebody's loved one's life. A lot of these guys, referred to SVIP, are always going to have a target on their back unless they go somewhere else…So, how do we put the resources together to give them the support system in another city and not just

somewhere close where they can get back to San Francisco? I don't think PD really thought that part through; they just thought we'd connect these guys to a mentor and offer them services, and everything would work out fine, and that just hasn't been the case. (VRI Implementer #5)

Furthermore, officials highlighted structural and administrative challenges within SVIP. They observed difficulties in handling administrative tasks and maintaining adequate documentation, common issues in the nonprofit sector. The pay hierarchy was mentioned as a significant challenge, with SVIP often unable to offer competitive salaries compared to city, state, and federal agencies. This pay disparity was seen as affecting SVIP's ability to attract and retain skilled personnel, thereby impacting both their administrative and operational capacities, including life coaching services.

I think we really need SVIP to be able to strengthen their structure. There's a piece of like having life coaches, but then there's also an administrative piece, which I think they need some more support on. We've had conversations with them about some of the requirements. And insofar as nonprofits go, it's not that uncommon for them to not always be on top of the admin stuff or be aware or even be trained on those things…Like, we tell them here's all of the things that you have to document or here's all of the things that you really need in order to support the operational side of things….Oftentimes, the challenge that these nonprofits will always have is that, in comparison to a lot of other agencies, there's this pay hierarchy. At least in San Francisco. The city of San Francisco, we generally pay the highest pay rate. Next in line is probably the state, the feds, and then the nonprofits. So, from that pay hierarchy, if you're trying to hire capable, sharp people, those are your competitors. And that's ignoring everything in the private sector. And so, if you're relying upon being able to pay $0.50 on the dollar to fill some of these roles, you're always going to be at a disadvantage. I think that's part of the issue that SVIP has in strengthening the administrative support side to get things done in a timely fashion. And to some extent, I would say on the operational side as well, like having the life coaches. At one point in time, they only had one life coach, and then when they hired two, one of them left in the span of a month, so it has been a real challenge for them. (VRI Implementer #7)

A Lack of Buy-in From SFPD
Study participants identified a significant lack of buy-in from SFPD officers as a critical challenge to the initiative's implementation. They emphasized the need for comprehensive understanding and commitment across the department, extending beyond just the top leadership. These participants recounted instances where, while executing their VRI duties—such as meeting with shooting victims at hospitals—they encountered colleagues who were completely unaware of who they were or what they were doing. This lack of awareness highlighted gaps in internal communication and understanding of the initiative's objectives and activities.

Another thing, too, is there has to be a complete buy-in, not just from the Chief, but the whole department has to understand what we're doing…so that when we come out there, cops aren't like, 'Who are you guys?' There's been a lot of times where I've gone to the hospital to meet with victims, and there'll be cops there like, who are you guys? They have no idea what we're doing. (VRI Implementer #7)

According to respondents, the VRI initially encountered resistance within the department due to its innovative approach, which included new processes like shooting reviews and enhanced community collaboration, a departure from previous practices. Investigators expressed wariness towards these new methods, especially concerning the confidentiality of their investigations.

I think early on, we definitely had some buy-in issues. I think institutionally, it was something new…the whole process…like the shooting review, bringing people together and sharing information, even sharing information with the community…that was something very new for the department. What I found over time is that some of the investigators…were wary about the whole process. And rightfully so, because they're trying to protect their investigations that are confidential. (VRI Implementer #3)

Participants also observed burnout and desensitization among officers, particularly those with extended service in challenging neighborhoods, leading to skepticism about the effectiveness of such initiatives. This skepticism often translated into a lack of genuine engagement, with officers participating in the VRI more as a procedural obligation than a true commitment to its goals.

I feel like there's not a full buy-in from the cops…I think it comes down to the amount of time that some of these cops have had a relationship with these neighborhoods…I think there's a certain amount of burnout that just comes from being a cop in general in certain neighborhoods to where this type of initiative doesn't make sense to them…they've seen so many negative things go down out there…some of these cops have been here for such a long time that they're desensitized to the needs of the neighborhood…so sometimes there's a blatant lack of buy-in on their end. And they're just kind of doing it because it's here, and they're being told to; it's part of their job, but you can tell that they don't really want to be working with us. (VRI Implementer #9)

Furthermore, respondents voiced concerns about the department's tendency to engage in VRI activities just to meet requirements rather than committing meaningfully to the initiative's deeper goals. They feared that the VRI might not realize a meaningful impact on the community due to this superficial engagement from officers. A lack of buy-in from SFPD officers was identified as a barrier to successful implementation. Study participants discussed the resistance within the department to new initiatives like the VRI. This resistance was attributed to a combination of institutional culture and a lack of meaningful engagement with the initiative.

Part of getting this program to where it needs to be…better buy-in than what we have now. At the minimum, with communication and information sharing…The department does a lot of things just to check off the box. But it is meaningless. It doesn't carry any substantive weight to it…They're really just speaking to the bigger processes and the bigger piece that this department should play, but with actual earnest and meaningful commitment and what that looks like. I don't honestly see this thriving in a meaningful way. I'm sure we'll make gains. I'm sure we'll have data and candidates and stuff. But, what this is really supposed to mean and what the work is supposed to do for the community, I don't see that necessarily happening. (VRI Implementer #19)

Lack of buy-in from other San Francisco Criminal Justice Agencies and Institutions
Study participants identified a significant gap in engagement with the VRI from other criminal justice agencies and institutions in San Francisco, emphasizing this lack of buy-in as a major barrier to effectively implementing the strategy. They stressed the need for a holistic approach, acknowledging that gun violence stems from deeper issues beyond the scope of law enforcement alone.

I don't think there is enough buy-in for the strategy in San Francisco. And I think we can't talk about gun violence without talking about everything else. Because you don't start with carrying a gun. You start with other things. So, you can't solve gun violence without addressing the root cause of it. I think with the VRI, we're doing better, at least at sitting at the same table with mental health, with law enforcement agencies that are now seeing the whole problem and the root causes, and knowing that we want to address the problem...but I don't know how serious the courts or some of the [city's other criminal justice agencies] are about it. (VRI Implementer #17)

Moreover, participants asserted that, despite some progress in collaboration between mental health and law enforcement agencies, the commitment of the courts and other justice agencies to the VRI remains questionable. They specifically pointed out the District Attorney's Office as a crucial but insufficiently involved partner, focusing more on data and messaging rather than actively implementing the VRI's strategy.

When the VRI was first implemented, of course, there was this whole strategy to talk to as many city agencies or city departments that dealt with this type of work to try to get their buy-in, to have them partner, and/or understand what it was we were trying to do. The DA's office would have been a critical partner in that, considering that you are trying to not necessarily have this carrot and stick approach, but at least have some kind of aligned sense or shared vision around the gun violence and how both agencies were collectively going to deal with that. I don't think that ever got off the ground with the District Attorney's Office in that prior administration. They were more focused on the data and the messaging that was being sent out versus the actual strategy itself. And then, as far as this new administration…I haven't seen a lot of interaction in terms of the police department really strategically making space and bringing the new administration

in. I know that we've talked about it, but I haven't seen it go anywhere outside of a conversation. (VRI Implementer #2)

Furthermore, the relationship with the DA's Office was characterized as tenuous, with operational collaboration falling short of expectations. Although there was some support, such as endorsement letters for the VRI's grant application, the depth of collaboration in practice was limited. The participants expressed a need for greater involvement from criminal justice agencies like probation and parole, which are essential in focused deterrence models but not yet fully integrated into the VRI. Additionally, they highlighted a unique cultural dynamic in San Francisco and the broader Bay Area, marked by a reluctance to aggressively tackle gun violence and partner with the police department. This cultural aspect presents an obstacle to forming effective partnerships and a comprehensive strategy to combat gun violence in the region.

When we started the VRI, we reached out to all the criminal justice agencies here in San Francisco, the DA's office, Public Defender's Office…we actually did a like a 10, 15-minute presentation at all of them, saying 'Hey, this is kind of what we're doing. Here's how you can help.' And some of the agencies had written letters of support to get the grant... But that relationship with the DA's office was, to put it mildly…tenuous. And so it just didn't click as it should have…But I do hope that at some point, there'll be more collaboration…for instance, the DA's office has services, and we have a good partnership with the D.A. now, but they can probably play a larger role in bringing some to the table…a lot of these people that were targeting with the strategy have been touched 13 to 15 times before they even get involved in gun violence...our recidivism rate is high. So, what part could the D.A. play in that? In terms of how these cases are handled, in terms of is there anything preventative that we can do together? So, I think there's more work to do there. Same with probation, in most focused deterrence models, adult probation plays a huge part because they can compel these guys to come in for direct communications…we haven't really done a whole lot with that here. I think there's more work to be done with that. We have a new probation chief; she's been in place now for over a year, but I think there's more room to work there. Parole, we don't really have a really tight relationship. But it's the same thing: if we're going to be reaching out and trying to get people to these meetings, parole can help because they can leverage their supervision to get people into the meetings. I think, when it comes to gun violence, San Francisco's a little bit different…the culture here around addressing gun violence is not very aggressive…I think it's been this way for a long time. It's just a whole different dynamic…people, in many circles here, don't want to deal with partnering with the police department. And I can't explain to you why…It's just a cultural thing. And I don't think it's just San Francisco; I think it's the Bay Area in general. (VRI Implementer #11)

Objective 4: Gather VRI Implementers' Recommendations for the Future of the VRI
Respondents provided a range of recommendations regarding the future of the VRI based on their experiences and insights. A common theme was the desire for a comprehensive overhaul of the program. This overhaul would entail addressing initial oversights, refining hiring processes, and ensuring that team members possess both a deep understanding of and a strong commitment to the initiative's goals. Some respondents suggested shifting the program's management to a more neutral city agency, such as the Mayor's Office, which would have the authority to enforce the strategy, command participation, and facilitate information sharing among various city agencies and departments. Such a shift could mitigate the enforcement stigma often associated with police-led initiatives, a factor believed to make city agencies and community partners hesitant to participate in police-led gun violence reduction strategies in the city of San Francisco.

> *Honestly, I wish we could hit a reset button. Like, stop the whole thing and take care of these little details that are actually big details that weren't taken care of in the beginning so that maybe we'd able to re-implement it and start it again…I would love to be part of the hiring process of the entire team…I've got a lot of love for the people that do this work. I know a lot of them, but I don't know what the mindset was when hiring or even preparing the people that got hired. Because I think that there's a lack of understanding, on both sides, of what the project is and what it's supposed to be doing. (VRI Implementer #18)*

> *I wish we were able to shut down the program and train everybody the right way. We realized too late that we should've done our homework before we committed to this. We should've found out what other folks are doing that's good and that's bad. Because once you commit, you're stuck. And that's a mistake that we made. (VRI Implementer #14)*

> *What I've learned over time is that a more neutral agency has to hold this work. The police department can't hold it because of the role that they play in it. So, a body that has the strength or the body that has the command to make other city agencies and partners come to the table. For example, if the mayor's office says, I want A, B, and C to come and participate, you're going to get, you're probably going to get the participation of A, B, C, and D. If the police department says it, it doesn't hold the same weight because there's always this sense of this is enforcement, and folks in this city are wary of working too closely with the police department. So, I think if anything had to change, it would be to have a more neutral agency and one that has some type of authority or some type of ability to bring the parties together to enforce the strategy. (VRI Implementer #2)*

> *We've proven that this program could exist with a law enforcement agency as the administrator of it, even having the supportive services component to it. But it might not make the most sense…especially with some of the city's political dynamics…It might be better suited living somewhere else, maybe under the mayor's leeway or something like*

that. Just because there is this very intentional wall, that definitely makes us dance around some of the information sharing. (VRI Implementer #19)

From a law enforcement perspective, respondents emphasized the critical importance of active engagement from top city leaders in efforts to reduce gun violence. They advocated for clear communication, regular updates on gun violence statistics, and stronger partnerships with criminal justice agencies, such as probation and the District Attorney's office. The necessity of follow-up and accountability was also highlighted, especially in managing identified individuals involved in gun-related incidents. Additionally, there was a strong call for enhancing the capacity and infrastructure of the Street Violence Intervention Program (SVIP), recognizing its vital role in providing support, administering services to high-risk individuals, and building trust within communities. According to respondents, this enhancement would include allocating more resources and training for SVIP staff, ensuring they are better equipped to handle the complex challenges of their roles.

> *One, I would like all the heads of the city to come on board. They have to be fully in, who want really, are really about gun violence. Like really in. And I'd like to get the heads, whoever the head is, like, get in. Like, okay. Go completely through the strategy and let them know what their expectations are, what their roles are, and the importance of the work we're doing... to make sure they understand that when we come and ask for resources, whether it be I need intel, I need like probation, can you let all your probation officers know that we need to talk to this person? There's not going to be pushback like, you know, like the mayor's office, like, you know, housing, relocation, like, can we have it already? Once we get to that point, they're all in, in, in our department, too, so we can constantly be checking in with each other. Doesn't have to be weekly, but it could be every few weeks. Let them know what's going on in the city, let them go through the shooting review and the stats, so they can be constantly reminded of the importance of gun violence, because if you don't remind them, they're not going to, they're going to be caught up somewhere else. I would start there. Second…the most important thing is we have to get more community-based organizations. We have to have more life coaches. We have to have that upfront. I think if we had more life coaches, we probably would be able to sign up more people. (VRI Implementer #7)*

> *I'd love to change that service component…if I had a magic wand where I could just wave a wand and give them the infrastructure they need, that would be the first thing I'd change. Number two…I think we can be stronger with partnerships with partner agencies, probation, and even the DA's office. (VRI Implementer #11)*

> *When we have our meetings every week, we see all the hotspots…but we don't necessarily see the victim side of things because that's just not what we're focused on. We're focusing on the other half. Our victim meetings are in the morning. But when we do see these people just with their mugshot pop up on the screen, it's like, Yeah, but what are we doing with that person? Like, clearly, this person is connected to this*

shooting. We know that for a fact because their face wouldn't be up there if not. Where are we going with this one person? Is this an ongoing investigation? Where's this going? And I'm sure someone knows that…I don't. But if there was a clear action on what we're doing with the individuals that are up there, and I would assume strictly just off hopes and dreams that there is something that's going on with those people, I just don't know what it is. So, if it is awesome, but if not, then there definitely needs to be some more follow-up on the individuals that are being identified. (VRI Implementer #4)

For the VRI overall, I think they should push probation more…they signed this agreement of participation. So make them participate…I don't know what they do with other agencies, how much other agencies are involved with this, what they participate in, or what they share and don't share. But like hold probation accountable… and try to get more support from more agencies, the more support that they can garner, the more people they can bring to the table, people that can enact change and say, yes, we're on board with this. But there just hasn't been that high level of support that I think we need to really make this work…And I don't think that's necessarily VRI's fault. I think we just had a lot of staff change, we had a lot of turnover… So it's not VRI's fault, but if they could somehow garner more support and get the momentum going, then we could make this thing a lot more effective. (VRI Implementer #1)

There's no follow-up. That's a huge issue for me. Some kind of accountability on [SVIP] so that they would stay on top of following up with their clients. Communication and follow-up, because I don't know what happens after our clients get connected to them, and I wish we did…we just make the connections happen, and then it's radio silence…and maybe on our part, we can reach out and ask, too. (VRI Implementer #20)

From SVIP's perspective, respondents emphasized the need to lay solid groundwork and undergo comprehensive training before launching initiatives. They called for enhanced physical protection for outreach workers, improved transparency in funding, and heightened police accountability in program activities. Moreover, respondents stressed the importance of fostering better communication and understanding between police officers and outreach workers. Additionally, establishing a culture of mutual respect and shared objectives between police and community workers emerged as crucial for the sustained success of SVIP's violence intervention efforts. Lastly, respondents suggested a reevaluation of how success is measured, focusing on the impact made on individual lives rather than broad statistics.

More physical protection for the outreach workers, more transparency around the funding and usage of the funding, and how employees can apply that funding to the needs of the clients. I also think that there needs to be a little bit more police accountability as far as showing up to some of these meetings. I've worked here for a while, and I didn't know who was on the VRI team… I know they say they have this acceptance of the program, but I think even their superiors may not see this as an effective program. And I can tell…sometimes they give off this attitude that they have

better shit to do… some of the police involved in the VRI are doing other SFPD-related duties, and it feels like they treat this as an afterthought, I just wish they saw this work as important as the other stuff they're doing…for us as adults and workers in this, we should be talking with y'all a little bit more…there should be some time set aside to help everybody believe in the program a little bit and just kind of talk about what's going on… I just think that right now, there are some officers that take this work super seriously, and then there are some that are more like, let me just get through the day. (VRI Implementer #9)

I think we need to change our definition of success because I think success is if you have 20 youngsters and you save two, it's a success. But a lot of people say that's a failure. But it's not… sometimes I think PD looks at our program and says, 'Oh, it's a failure because this guy in the program got caught with a gun.' But that's not on us; that person made a choice to do that. What about the one who made the right choice? I say if you change one life, you're affecting other people's lives. You are affecting his kids' lives, and you are affecting him by stopping him from shooting somebody else. You can't base the program on saving everybody…because you can't save everybody. I also think that they don't always think about the people doing this work…the life coaches. We've got lives…we go through stressful shit every day. And there's no support for any of that. There should be more understanding of the work we do and more support for all the stressful shit they put us through with this work. (VRI Implementer #12)

Respondents consistently emphasized the necessity of follow-up and accountability among the strategy's partners. They stressed the need for more support for outreach workers, highlighting the importance of training, education, and mental health support due to the high-stress nature of frontline violence reduction work. This support was deemed essential for maintaining the well-being and effectiveness of those involved. Additionally, respondents advocated for the creation of a feedback system to monitor the progress and impact of interventions, ensuring continuous improvement. They also called for regular meetings and collaborations between various partners to facilitate the sharing of insights and best practices. Furthermore, the establishment of a comprehensive support network for outreach workers was suggested, aiming to provide them with the resources and guidance necessary to navigate the challenges of their roles effectively.

More emphasis on the resources…Not just the conversation about them, but the availability of the resources to, at the very least, stabilize people who come into the program…that's part of the reason why they are offending because they're unstable. Making sure that the people who are involved in the program have the proper insight into what they're doing and how to do it. I personally didn't have any case management" experience" before I started working here. I've been helping people. I understand what a person may need to get their lives in order or move on a different track. So, I come from that standpoint, but I have no tactical experience or education doing that work. I just

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have the heart to do it. Give some more training and education for the workers…because most of us don't have the educational piece…we're coming from the street, and we sincerely want to help…So, I think some more support and resources for the people doing the work is critical…our safety is another concern. I feel safe doing this work, for the most part…but we work with the police, and not everyone feels okay with that…we're also dealing with people who have mental health issues…I have no vest to protect me. Most of our clients come through the police department, meaning that they were a shooter or they had this mentality of being willing to shoot someone. So, what do we do if we don't get along at the moment and a client starts popping off? My safety is a concern at that point; how do I handle that? I personally had a client talking recklessly to me and making threats…I ignored it as best I could. But I can't dismiss what he's saying because he came to this program because he's associated with gun violence. So, I can't just ignore what he's saying…and still have to try to get him some help because it's my job, but not at the expense of my life….Doing this work can be challenging…because we show up to scenes and break up fights. I've had coworkers jump in front of guns and people with guns...I sincerely believe that there's no way you can do this work sincerely without being traumatized… Most of us here have at least one story of someone that we know being shot and killed…and most of us have not healed from that. We've been pushing the conversation here a little bit around doing some mental health stuff or counseling for the staff…we need it, and I think that it should be mandatory…Just a debrief, just to get a sense of relief, because we still have lives going on, too…So, it's very important that we get some mental health support. Just to make sure you don't find yourself having a mental breakdown or you get to the point where you've had enough and someone says the wrong thing to you, and now you're a perpetrator or a victim. (VRI Implementer #10)*

Overall, participants emphasized the crucial roles of coordination meetings, shooting reviews, and effective information sharing between SVIP and the SFPD. They identified coordination meetings as essential for fostering collaboration and aligning efforts between the SFPD and SVIP toward a cohesive violence reduction strategy. According to participants, shooting reviews play a pivotal role in uncovering the root causes of gun violence, leading to more effective interventions. They also highlighted the importance of information exchange between SVIP and SFPD for understanding the dynamics of community violence and facilitating coordinated responses. Participants expressed their belief that reinforcing these key components is vital for the future success of the VRI. By strengthening these areas, they suggest that the VRI can significantly enhance its strategy and impact on reducing violence.

However, participants also highlighted several critical gaps and areas of the strategy that need immediate attention. They identified the need for intensive case management training and professionalization within SVIP due to the current team's skill and capability gap. There was also a call for more robust information sharing between the SFPD and VRI leads, with some participants expressing frustrations over current communication shortcomings attributed to the

SFPD's internal culture. Participants called for significant improvements to the custom notification process, which appears to suffer from inefficiency and redundancy in some cases. Participants also emphasized the importance of establishing a clear separation between the VRI's outreach and enforcement components to avoid alienating the community and undermining the strategy's legitimacy.

Numerous implementers highlighted the need for more community engagement in the VRI strategy, with participants noting a disconnect between the initiative and the community it aims to serve. Despite the strategy's goal of improving police-community relations in San Francisco, efforts to broadcast the strategy or its outcomes to residents of the target communities still need to be increased. Participants stressed the need for enhancing strategy buy-in among the SFPD and other city agencies, pointing to a need for more internal support and commitment. Frustrations were expressed by both SFPD officers and SVIP life coaches about the lack of buy-in from SFPD as an agency to the broader VRI strategy.

Finally, integrating more city agencies and institutions into the strategy was seen as crucial for a more comprehensive and collaborative approach to violence reduction. Addressing these areas for growth will be essential in the future to maximize the efficacy of the VRI, ensuring it effectively meets its objectives and garners the widespread support and understanding necessary for lasting impact in violence reduction in San Francisco.

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[1] The initial list of research questions was drafted in consultation with CPSC and SFPD. The Penn research team later revised the research questions to reflect the type of information that could be gathered through interviews and ethnographic observations with the VRI implementers and stakeholders recruited for the study.

[2] For example, as will be discussed in the findings section, descriptions from several interviewees regarding the information sharing between SVIP outreach workers and SFPD officers involved with the VRI suggested that no information sharing was occurring at all. However, direct observations of interactions between SVIP and SFPD officers during the SVRT and coordination meetings contradicted this narrative.