GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF CRIME PREVENTION AND POLICY

Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program

Third-Party Evaluation SFY2024 Update

The following report is submitted by the third-party evaluators, Justice Innovation, Inc., funded by the Violence Intervention and Prevention Program grant. It provides an update regarding the evaluation of the programs funded by the grant during State Fiscal Year 2024. This evaluation is a requirement for all programs receiving funding through the grant, and the evaluators are tasked with providing an independent assessment of the programs' progress and effectiveness. Please note that this report is prepared and submitted by the third-party evaluators and reflects their progress, findings, and next steps. This report is being shared publicly as part of our commitment to transparency and accountability in the use of the VIPP grant funds.

March 24, 2025

Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (VIPP)

Comprehensive Program Evaluation of Activities for FY24

(10/1/2023–6/30/2024)

Center for Justice Innovation

VIPP-2024-0011

"The sub-recipient is required to submit to GOCPYVS/GOCPP a comprehensive program evaluation. A complete evaluation contains a narrative summary of all program activities for the funded year, a discussion of program successes and obstacles, and provides a cost estimate for continued program operation. Reported information should be both chronological and analytical in format. DO NOT send a compilation of previously submitted quarterly reports. An electronic version of the evaluation is required."

1. Summary of Program Activities

Project Startup: After receiving the award in October 2023, the Center for Justice Innovation's (Center) evaluation team met with the Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (now Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy, or MD GOCPP) in November 2023 to meet the GOCPP team, get additional background information on the VIPP initiative, and learn about the VIPP activities to date.

The Center's evaluation team then began gathering background information on each of the funded VIPP programs and compiling them into site profiles.

Contacting the Programs: Due to conflicting schedules between the numerous evaluation sites and the Center's evaluation team, coordinating meetings with each program required a significant amount of time and effort. Following this lengthy process, the evaluation team met remotely with the individual sites between December 2023 and January 2024. Initial meetings served multiple purposes: (1) introduce the site teams and the evaluation team; (2) document the history, background, and structure of the programs; and (3) begin to document data collection practices and capacity.

The Center's team then used the sites' funding applications and notes from initial meetings to develop new site-specific logic models where needed, or review and amend the other sites' existing logic models.

**A note about participating programs:* Originally, 10 sites were funded through the VIPP grant, and members of the evaluation team met with representatives from all 10 sites. However, since this initial contact, one program discontinued operations under this funding source due to difficulties in program implementation, and therefore will no longer be included in evaluation activities except for summative interviews documenting implementation strengths and challenges.

Amending the Evaluation Plan: Based on initial meetings with the 10 program sites, the evaluation team concluded that the original evaluation plan was not feasible. The 10 sites are implementing vastly different models, rendering our initial strategy of grouping programs by model type unachievable. In response, we developed a revised strategy emphasizing the distinct approaches implemented by each site (Table 1).

In addition to the significant programmatic variation across sites, initial meetings indicated that an impact/outcome evaluation would not be suitable for all sites. For example, sites that have faced significant start-up challenges or are early in implementation are not yet ready for an outcome evaluation. Evaluating the impact of a program prematurely may cause misleading and even harmful results by concluding no impact when the site simply requires more time to establish itself. In other cases, the geographic areas served by sites, along with the multiplicity of community violence prevention approaches offered, make the initially proposed impact evaluation unsuitable. In these instances, such an evaluation would be an ineffective use of resources.

As a result, we developed an amended evaluation plan. Under the new design, all sites will undergo an implementation/process evaluation, documenting their planning and early operations (Process). Six sites will receive an enhanced implementation/process evaluation (Process Plus), documenting early effects through interviews with program participants, community partners, and/or program observations. Three sites will also receive an outcome evaluation to document program impacts (Impact).

The evaluation team presented the amended evaluation plan to MD GOCPP and members of the VIPP Advisory Council in April 2024, and the revised plan was approved to move forward following this meeting. The breakdown of evaluation strategy by site is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Evaluation Strategy by Site

	Process[1]	**Process Plus**[2]	**Impact**[3]
Anne Arundel County VIPP	✓		✓
EMBRACE (UM Baltimore)	✓	✓	✓
Kingdom Kare	✓		✓
Lead4Life	✓	✓	
MedStar Washington Hospital	✓	✓	
MONSE	✓	✓	
St. Mary's County CVI	✓	✓	
Tree House	✓		
UMD PGC Hospital Center	✓	✓	
Wicomico County	✓*		

[1] Implementation/process evaluation documenting planning and early operations
[2] Enhanced implementation/process evaluation documenting early effects
[3] Outcome evaluation documenting program impacts
*Program is no longer in the evaluation

As initially proposed, we will conduct time-series analyses alongside the site-specific impact evaluations to assess program effects on violent crime and shooting incidents at the state and county levels.

Securing Program Data Initially, the Center had envisioned securing a single data use agreement (DUA) with MD GOCPP to span across all programs. However, due to the variation in program models and feedback from both the Center's legal department and staff at the Maryland Statistical Analysis Center, we determined that site-specific DUAs would be the most appropriate approach to securing programmatic data. Members of the evaluation team worked with the Center's legal department to draft the initial language for these DUAs. At the same time, the evaluation team engaged with key data points-of-contact at each site to better understand the data that sites are tracking and how they are tracking it.

Individual DUAs are being finalized for all nine sites, each including a comprehensive list of site-specific data fields the evaluation team will request. These agreements will be submitted to each site for review and contracting during the next quarter. Once the DUAs have been successfully secured, we will regularly receive, tabulate, and document program caseload and activities.

National Best Practices Scan: The evaluation team has begun scanning the national best practices, and they are now approaching the project on two coordinated fronts. The first is a typical scoping review, following standard practice. We defined the scope based on the primary strategies employed by the sites, as well as other established evidence-based best practices. This involved identifying keywords, terms, and types of publications to research (e.g., journal articles and peer-reviewed evaluations published in credible journals, white papers, and reports). We created spreadsheets to track articles and reports, and are currently gathering and reviewing sources. Multiple reviewers are reading and summarizing these sources, noting methodology, findings, currency/frequency of citation, etc. The second is a scan of promising and emerging programs drawn from sources, including current Department of Justice CVIPI grantees and evaluators, leading funders and their grantees, and presenters at national conferences. These sources will be tracked systematically using the same approach outlined above. Findings from both activities will be synthesized into short, accessible one-pagers that sites can use to inform their approaches and strategies.

Process Evaluation Activities:

Logic Models. The documentation of program models, as described above, is the first step in process evaluation activities. As part of the initial outreach, the Center's evaluation team reviewed existing logic models, revising where they diverged from those in the sites' funding proposals, and developed new models for sites that lacked one. During site outreach, the evaluation staff assessed sites' interest in receiving technical assistance (TA) related to logic modeling. Such TA may be incorporated into site visit agendas where requested or deemed necessary.

Participant Satisfaction Surveys. The evaluation team also developed participant satisfaction surveys for sites where appropriate, given the nature of the VIPP-funded programs. The protocols for these surveys were submitted to the Center's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and received approval in June 2024. For sites that operate multiple VIPP-funded program components (e.g., mentoring and training), multiple participant satisfaction surveys may be implemented.

Six of the seven sites working directly with clients have received training on administering the surveys and have been provided with customized trackers to help identify when follow-up outreach is necessary (using pseudo-identifiers). The seventh site, with a complex program structure and high-risk, high-intensity engagement, has required intensive work to identify the most effective strategy for collecting participant feedback. The remaining two sites focus on capacity-building among organizations and stakeholders. Therefore, evaluation staff are designing a separate instrument and process to assess organizational satisfaction with system improvements. Evaluation staff are conducting regular follow-ups to ensure smooth data collection and troubleshooting as necessary to ensure follow-up surveys are administered.

Site Visits. Evaluation staff have begun scheduling the first of two rounds of site visits. Due to budget and timeline constraints, some visits will be conducted in person, while others will be remote. Even among the in-person visits, some stakeholder interviews will be conducted remotely to maintain budget efficiency. The first step in the site visit process included assessing which programs were best suited for remote site visits and which required an in-person presence. These decisions were made based on the model used, as well as the state of program implementation, staffing, and caseload. Next, the team reached out to programs to determine availability for site visits and to request rosters of staff members, allowing us to identify appropriate data collection strategies (individual or group interviews). Site meetings were then scheduled to confirm availability, discuss program scheduling, and decide which staff members were best suited for in-person versus remote interviews. The first set of in-person site visits will be scheduled in two clusters, considering factors such as geographic proximity, program complexity (e.g., programs with multiple components may require more time), and the necessary evaluation staff. All site visit instruments have been drafted, and once data collection protocols are finalized, the team is prepared to secure IRB approval.

Hiring: During the reporting period, we drafted, posted, recruited, and interviewed for the research assistant positions, transitioning staff from the New York City team to local, Maryland-based research assistants. We have hired one local research assistant, who is now part of the evaluation team and is assisting with the process evaluation activities and best practices scan. While the evaluation team maintains regular communication with site staff, annual feedback meetings will be scheduled once the first round of site visits is complete and program data transfer has commenced.

2. Program Successes and Obstacles

The primary obstacles during the FY24 reporting period were a series of unforeseen delays, which caused us to fall behind in the proposed project timeline. First, the variability among the VIPP-funded program models necessitated a change to the evaluation plan to allow for a more individualized approach. Fortunately, we developed an alternative evaluation plan that will enable us to capture the stories of program implementation at each site and, where appropriate, examine potential program impacts. The flexibility of MD GOCPP and the Advisory Council facilitated this smooth adjustment.

Second, working with ten sites means coordinating schedules across multiple stakeholders, many of whom are engaged in active, on-the-ground programming. While the programs have generally been responsive and cooperative, it often takes several attempts to secure requested documentation or find mutually convenient times to meet with key personnel to move evaluation activities forward. This challenge is typical in evaluations but has been amplified by the number of sites involved.

Due to the timeline delays, we were unable to conduct the first round of site visits during FY24 as originally planned. As a result, the travel budget allocated for Year 1 was returned to MD GOCPP. We are working to adjust the Year 2 budget to accommodate the first set of site visits, though this will place additional strain on the Year 2 budget.

Despite these challenges, there were several key successes in FY24, including the continued cooperation of the VIPP-funded sites; the development of DUA drafts for all sites; the implementation of participant satisfaction surveys at five sites; the standardized approach to the scoping review and best practices scan; the drafting of site visit instruments and protocols; the hiring of a Maryland-based research assistant; and the creation of systems to track the volume of data and activities across the ten sites.

3. Cost Estimate

The estimated costs for Year 2 were included in the budget submitted with the proposal for the continuation of evaluation activities during FY25. We have allocated a total of $300,000 for the upcoming fiscal year.