



# CITY OF STOCKTON

## OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

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Presiding Judge  
 San Joaquin Superior Court  
 222 East Weber Avenue  
 Stockton, CA 95202

### **CITY OF STOCKTON RESPONSE 2017-18 CASE NO. 0917 – SHINING LIGHT INTO THE DARK CORNERS**

The creation of an Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) was a recommendation made in the adopted Marshall Plan on Crime. The OVP works to significantly reduce violence in the City of Stockton using data-driven, partnership programs and strategies. The OVP was intended to be a long-term strategy and investment toward interrupting decades of generational gun-violence as well as the underlying factors that contribute to violence, including poverty, low educational attainment, unemployment, poor public health, inadequate housing, etc. The institutionalization of OVP and Operation Ceasefire are core violence reduction strategies for addressing the City Council's strategic target of public safety.

As stated in the Grand Jury Report, "the work of the Office of Violence Prevention in the City of Stockton is vital and necessary." As explained on page one of the Grand Jury Report, Operation Ceasefire is specifically "an attempt to reduce gun violence..." In June of 2018, the same month in which the Grand Jury report was released, crime had decreased from the previous year, with homicides down 21% and non-fatal shootings down by 42%. This is compared to 2017, a year that already represented the lowest total crime rate in 17 years. Given the stated purpose of the Office of Violence Prevention and the role the office plays along with the police department and other safety partners, it is clear that the Office of Violence Prevention is achieving success.

The City assessed the Grand Jury Report through four topics areas: metrics, staffing, operational changes, and communication. In general, staff agrees with the Grand Jury that communication and transparency related to the Office of Violence Prevention can be improved. The City also acknowledges that the work of Peacekeepers is "hard to measure" and that the work of the OVP is "largely unknown and unappreciated by the public." The City also agrees that there are opportunities to improve community partnerships in support of violence prevention. In addition, the City acknowledges that there are always ways to improve efficiency and effectiveness of operations. However, the City disagrees with several of the specific staffing, operational and logistical recommendations of the Grand Jury. Unfortunately, there are factual deficiencies and a

lack of full understanding of Office of Violence Prevention operations. The City's response to the Grand Jury Report is framed through the four topics areas mentioned above and clarifies factual discrepancies.

## METRICS

Despite the clear and demonstrated success of the office, several issues do, and will always, remain challenging in the implementation of this important work. The first obstacle is the metric of measurement. The City agrees with the Grand Jury Report that the work of Peacekeepers is "hard to measure" and that the work of the Office of Violence Prevention can be better appreciated. Unlike more traditional city functions like filling potholes, responding to emergencies, or serving children, which can be succinctly and decisively measured by how many potholes were filled, how fast we responded, or how many children participated in an event, the nature of this work is more complicated. As noted in the Grand Jury report, the issue of how to stop violent crime has long been prioritized by city leaders who "have made a number of attempts to address the situation over the years." In fact, Stockton is not alone, as nearly every city in America has invested brain power and resources to better understand this phenomenon. No one has yet identified the clinical factors that, if addressed, would guarantee outcomes and safe behaviors on the part of community members.

While there are a number of metrics worthy of consideration, each has limitations. Evaluating a program based solely on a single or small number of measurements does not accurately portray the program in its entirety, therefore, the selection of criteria is particularly complicated. For example, measuring the success of the Office of Violence Prevention based on statistics that include things outside the scope of the Office of Violence Prevention is of little use. Vehicular homicide or domestic violence, for example, are terrible crimes with victims who suffer needlessly, yet this is outside the scope of group gun violence for which the program is designed to focus.

Critics have simultaneously complained that they have no vantage point to evaluate the program, and complained that the program hasn't been effective because all violent crime has not been eliminated in Stockton. Coming from an admitted position of not understanding what's going on does not position a person well to then criticize what is or is not going on. In fact, applying that same pessimistic and skewed theory to the medical field would imply that the American Cancer Society, for example, is a failure because it has not yet completely eliminated all forms of cancer. This is an unrealistic measurement that does a disservice to the people who provide or receive services related to violent crime.

## STAFFING

Forming relationships with people who, by definition, are the most dangerous in the entire community is an inherently stressful task. It is also a necessary one, just like responding to uncontrolled environments in the middle of the night, counseling clients, and displaying a genuine concern for the well-being of very-high-risk individuals. These

are duties that most people would shy away from, but these are essential duties carried out every day by Peacekeepers.

The Peacekeepers are not the typical city employee. The skill set required to perform those duties well does not align with traditional city requirements. It is common for cities, including Oakland, to employ these critical workers through non-profits rather than placing them directly on the city's payroll. This is, in part, because the often non-traditional backgrounds of effective Peacekeepers can be a great fit for obtaining and fostering the necessary credibility, trust, and relationship building, but less than ideal for a traditional and rigid city structure that is accustomed to background checks and office environment rules and norms.

In the course of fulfilling the duties of the Office of Violence Prevention, management must consider the balance between the two. If the primary goal is to have long-term employees who get along well, have no discipline issues, and won't run the risk of ever displaying undesirable behaviors, we should reconsider the recruitment and staffing model currently being used to satisfy onlookers who are uncomfortable with the harsh realities of this work. Alternatively, if the goal is to reduce group gun violence, the city must be willing to take some uncomfortable risks with the understanding that this work is always challenging and some feelings will be hurt in the process.

The city has opted to place the results and safety of this community ahead of the comfort and predictability desired by some people. This comes at a cost of internal tension and periodic staffing turnovers for which some people will continue to be alarmed. The upside, however, is that the people doing this work are good at what they do and are making a difference, as noted by the 42% reduction in non-fatal shootings referenced earlier.

## OPERATIONAL CHANGES

The Office of Violence Prevention programs revolve around people, so there will always be changes being considered or implemented in doing this work. The role of AB109 has been mischaracterized and misunderstood in relation to the Office of Violence Prevention. However, even if everyone were to work to achieve a solid understanding of that work, confusion will continue to exist. Changes to the public safety landscape didn't begin with AB109 nor will it end there. The environment in which these duties are carried out will continue to evolve and it is incumbent upon the Office of Violence Prevention to adapt accordingly.

Change is fraught with peril for those who are comfortable with the status quo. Someone inevitably loses when a course correction occurs. This leaves one group of people happy with the change and another unhappy, so the mere existence of a disgruntled person does not depict the true state of the organization or merits of the change. By virtue of even choosing to do this work, the city has decided to pursue the best available options for making this community safer. The cutting edge (or bleeding edge) of modern practices requires some level of risk. The only way to avoid the friction

that comes with change is to avoid change in favor of the status quo. Given the city's desire to pursue safety, taking the comfortable position is not an option. This means that, in the interest of safety, the Office of Violence Prevention will continue to change in a variety of ways. The Office of Violence Prevention is striving to become a learning, evolving operation.

## COMMUNICATION

The public has the right to know how their business is conducted. The city does, and should, continually strive to improve the transparency and communication with the public. There are always some areas where the complete and total sharing of information presents some conflicts with the mandated confidentiality laws and with the safety of individuals. Working with active gang members presents serious safety risks, not only for the Peacekeepers, but for the clients themselves. In some cases, a client's peers would not respond favorably to knowing a gang member was talking to a Peacekeeper. In other cases, the nature of those conversations could be sensitive (e.g. seeking to relocate or drop out of the gang, etc.). It would be irresponsible of the city to openly convey sensitive information that could jeopardize the safety or privacy of the very people with whom we are seeking to build relationships and improve long-term safety outcomes.

The dashboard, referenced in the report, is a recent example of how the city is trying to meet both needs. The city should, and will, continue to find better ways to tell the story of what the Office of Violence Prevention and the Peacekeepers do every day because we're proud of what they do and because the public has a right to know.

## FACTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Of importance is clarification that the shift by Peacekeepers from working with younger clients in a prevention capacity, to working with individuals at very-high-risk of gun violence, was not a result of the State AB 109 Realignment. Realignment addressed non-violent, non-serious offenders. Most Peacekeeper clients are not associated with AB 109. Instead, the shift in focus to very-high-risk clients came at the recommendation of the Marshall Plan Stakeholder Committee and by approval of the City Council in 2012 to address the acute gun violence at the time. The re-initiation of Operation Ceasefire precipitated the shift in focus for Peacekeepers. Operation Ceasefire is a nationally recognized, evidence-based strategy, that has produced multi-year, community-wide reductions in serious violence in cities across the country.

The Grand Jury Report also references that the "primary way Operation Ceasefire works" is by having outreach workers respond to violent crime scenes. The report also states that "call-ins are the main [only?] recruiting tool the OVP uses to gain new clients." For the sake of clarity, the OVP receives clients from a variety of sources. The principal source of OVP referrals is data analysis provided by the Stockton Police Department, which is used to invite participants to attend in Call-ins and other direct communication methods. In addition, Peacekeepers receive direct referrals from

Parole, Probation and other community organizations. Furthermore, Peacekeepers do respond to crime scenes and hospitals to work with impacted families and to prevent further retaliation, often resulting in new clients.

## **FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION**

In accordance with Sections 933 and 933.05 of the California Penal Code, the City Council of the City of Stockton offers responses to the Grand Jury Report on the above-referenced case as follows:

### **1.0 Division of the Peacekeepers has recently occurred.**

F 1.1 The division into two groups made Peacekeepers frustrated and had a negative effect on morale.

**Response:** *The respondent partially agrees with this finding. Managing change is always a challenging process. While some members of the Peacekeepers team embraced the realignment of the work, other members of the team found it more challenging. The Grand Jury Report states that the division of Peacekeepers occurred at the beginning of 2018. The realignment of Peacekeeper duties was assessed in Spring 2017 and training for Peacekeepers initiated in Summer 2017. OVP leadership analyzed the assumed impact of making change in comparison to the benefits of adjusting the program to have more impact on clients. OVP leadership also developed change management plans to address the challenges inherent in making changes. While the adjustment has been a challenge for some members of the team, this is outweighed by the benefits of exposing clients to a greater diversity of resources and the benefits of creating more intense client case management.*

F 1.2 The division was suggested by consultants who claim it is based on “best practices” in similar programs across the nation, but the Grand Jury found no evidence [*insufficient evidence*] for this assertion.

**Response:** *The respondent disagrees with this finding. The City has worked with the California Partnership for Safe Communities (CPSC) since 2012 when the Marshall Plan Stakeholder Committee and City Council recommended re-initiating Operation Ceasefire. The CPSC is the preeminent group violence reduction consultancy on the West Coast and a leading member of the National Network for Safe Communities. The recommendation from CPSC is based on an emerging best practice promoted by the National Network and modeled after comparable programs that have achieved success including Oakland, Richmond, Salinas, Los Angeles and San Jose.*

- R 1.1.1 The Grand Jury recommends the OVP reassess the division by December 31 with input from the Peacekeepers about whether it is effective.

**Response:** *The respondent agrees with this recommendation. The OVP regularly assesses all program elements to ensure that outcomes are successful. This assessment includes feedback from Peacekeepers and the full Operation Ceasefire team. The OVP will be assessing the effectiveness of the realignment of Peacekeepers as well as other factors between now and December 31.*

- R 1.1.2 In order for this and future policy changes to be effective and workable, the Grand Jury recommends that Peacekeepers be involved in the decision-making process.

**Response:** *The respondent partially agrees with this recommendation. As with any operation, feedback from frontline employees is invaluable. This is particularly true in the case of Peacekeepers. Peacekeeper feedback was solicited related to the realignment of Peacekeeper duties. The OVP regularly solicits feedback from Peacekeepers. However, it is the responsibility of OVP leadership and City leadership to dictate the operations and policies of the OVP at their discretion.*

- R 1.2 By December 31, OVP management show the evidence for the division as it goes contrary to the experience of the longer-serving Peacekeepers, and its validity is not self-evident.

**Response:** *The respondent partially agrees with this recommendation. As noted above, the OVP will be assessing the effectiveness of the realignment of Peacekeepers throughout 2018. However, there are several other program elements under evaluation within the same time period. The City will determine the correct timeline in which to evaluate program elements and report to the public. The City does commit to provide a statistical report at the conclusion of 2018 with measurement data for the OVP.*

## **2.0 Disharmony exists among the Peacekeepers.**

- F 2.1 Management has neither addressed the issues nor resolved them, leading to a tense office environment.

**Response:** *The respondent disagrees with this finding. OVP Management is well aware of the culture of the Peacekeepers unit. The City acknowledges that there has been disharmony and tension among the Peacekeepers at times. The work of group gun violence reduction is particularly challenging and emotional work. Peacekeepers work in tense and at times precarious circumstances while engaging the very highest*

*risk individuals in our community. OVP Management regularly addresses employee well-being, employee performance and team culture. As this topic intersects closely with personnel matters, the Grand Jury does not have full information and understanding related to the context for this finding.*

R 2.1 Management needs to establish a code of conduct and enforce it.

**Response:** *The respondent partially agrees with this recommendation. OVP Management is responsible for enforcing the City's policies related to employee conduct. However, a code of conduct does not need to be established. City employees are subject to the conduct required by the City Charter (in particular Article X), Citywide policies (notably HR-8, HR-15, HR-30, HR-64) and OVP employees are expected to abide by the conduct outlined in the Policy & Procedure Manual for their unit. OVP Management holds employees accountable to these policies and will continue to do so.*

### 3.0 The OVP has offsite Management.

F 3.1 The separation leads to a lack of close supervision.

**Response:** *The respondent disagrees with this finding. The Supervisor for the Peacekeepers unit is co-located with Peacekeepers. It is the Supervisor's responsibility to supervise the daily activities of the Peacekeepers. In addition, the work of the Peacekeepers requires a majority of their time spent in the field. Daily reports and other accountability mechanisms are in place to assist in the supervision of Peacekeepers. The OVP can expect Peacekeepers to demonstrate professionalism while representing the City in the field, with appropriate follow-up and accountability from the Supervisor. It is not necessary for the OVP Manager or other OVP employees to be co-located with the Peacekeepers unit.*

F 3.2 Bypassing the chain of command leads to distrust and feelings of favoritism among the Peacekeepers.

**Response:** *The respondent agrees with this finding. OVP leadership regularly communicates through the chain of command to ensure that messages reach Peacekeepers and that feedback from Peacekeepers reaches leadership. The OVP Manager regularly communicates the importance of the chain of command. While options must always be available to employees to express concerns about their supervisors to City leadership or Human Resources, following chain of command leads to the best results for regular operations and communication.*

- R 3.1.1 The Grand Jury recommends that all management and staff be in one location. As Stockton has purchased a large building on the Waterfront to serve as a new City Hall, when city offices move there, the OVP should be in one office or adjacent offices.

**Response:** *The respondent disagrees with this recommendation. As noted above, all OVP employees do not need to be co-located. The City will determine the most appropriate location for our staff based on a variety of criteria. Also, as noted above, Peacekeepers work primarily in the field and as such can be located distinct from City Hall offices.*

- R 3.1.2 The OVP Manager needs more frequent contact with the line staff.

**Response:** *The respondent disagrees with this recommendation. The OVP Manager has frequent contact with the line staff. The OVP Supervisors are responsible for the supervision of line staff and communication between the Peacekeepers and other OVP staff.*

- R 3.2 Peacekeepers should use the chain of command and filter their complaints through the supervisors.

**Response:** *The respondent agrees with this recommendation. As noted above, this expectation has been made clear to OVP staff. In addition, communication through the chain of command is established by City policy and is enforced accordingly within the OVP. When necessary and appropriate employees have access to management and Human Resources staff to bring up concerns that cannot be addressed by their immediate supervisor.*

**4.0 The Office of Violence Prevention has lacked metrics of success, that is, measurable objectives and outcomes.**

- F 4.1 Communication with the public is not happening, causing a lack of understanding of the work of the OVP.

**Response:** *The respondent partially agrees with this finding. While there is public information available and the OVP communicates regularly with particular constituencies, dissemination of information to the community at-large can be improved. The OVP can do more to share the challenges and successes of its efforts. For that reason, the \$428,000 Board of State and Community Corrections CalVIP grant recently awarded to the OVP includes funding for Faith in the Valley to conduct community engagement around the City's violence reduction strategy. Reinvigoration of the Community Engagement Coalition will build upon the high degree of communication that we have with our Operation Ceasefire partners. In addition, OVP has developed a web page and Facebook page to share*



*information with the community. Furthermore, the OVP has created a summary of outreach and case management measures to share with the Measure A Advisory Committee at each meeting. The Grand Jury Report states that the Data Dashboard was created at the beginning of 2018. The Data Dashboard was developed at the beginning of 2017, with client data being tracked as of January 1, 2017. In the September 2017 Measure A Advisory Committee meeting the OVP performance management framework was presented. In February and May 2018, the summary measures were published in the Measure A Advisory Committee agenda packet for client outcomes from January 2017 to May 2018. The OVP will continue seek ways to improve communication and education.*

- R 4.1.1 By December 31, the Data Dashboard be made available to Community-Based Organizations (CBO's) and the public.

***Response:*** *The respondent partially agrees with this recommendation. Elements of the Data Dashboard are already made available to the public through regular reporting to the City's Measure A Advisory Committee. Confidential client information in the dashboard will not be made public. By December 31, the OVP will make the public Data Dashboard information more accessible on the City's web page.*

- R 4.1.2 By December 31, the OVP put the Data Dashboard on the website and update it regularly.

***Response:*** *The respondent partially agrees with this recommendation. As noted above, by December 31, the OVP will make the public Data Dashboard information more accessible on the City's web page. This information will be updated on a quarterly basis.*

- R 4.1.3 The OVP find a way to inform the public about its work on a regular basis, either via its website or reports to the city council.

***Response:*** *The respondent agrees with this recommendation. As noted above, there are multiple initiatives underway for improving dissemination of information to the public, including a community engagement campaign, reinvigoration of the Community Engagement Coalition, online tools, and regular reporting to the Measure A Advisory Committee. The OVP will continue seek ways to improve communication and education.*

**5.0 The OVP and the Stockton Police Department hold quarterly "call-ins" under the Operation Ceasefire program.**

- F 5.1 It is unclear who is in charge of running the call-ins, resulting in confusion among the CBO's.

**Response:** *The respondent disagrees with this finding. The OVP Manager has specific responsibility for organizing and managing Call-ins.*

- F 5.2 “Extra” attendees at the call-ins lead to consternation among the CBO representatives who attended the planning meetings about who makes the final decisions on whom to invite.

**Response:** *The respondent partially agrees with this finding. OVP leadership acknowledges that uninvited attendees can cause challenges. For that very reason, attendance is tightly monitored and controlled by the OVP Manager. Other Operation Ceasefire partners must approve any Call-in invitations through the OVP Manager. The OVP Manager may invite guests as deemed appropriate to Call-ins, and should notify community partners of attendees to reduce confusion.*

- R 5.1 The call-ins have a clearly-designated chair, either: 1. the OVP Manager or the Police Chief, 2. both as co-chairs, or 3. another designee as chair.

**Response:** *The respondent agrees with this recommendation. The Call-in co-chairs are clearly established as the Chief of Police and a Faith Leader in the community, typically a faith leader representing the Faith in the Valley coalition. The OVP Manager is the host and responsible for organizing the Call-ins, while the co-chairs facilitate the Call-in dialogue with participants.*

- R 5.2 The people who plan the call-ins should keep tight control on the number of attendees with only essential CBO representatives attending.

**Response:** *The respondent agrees with this recommendation. As noted above, the OVP Manager is responsible to keep tight control on the number of attendees. This has been the practice over the past 5 years and will continue to be the practice.*

**6.0 No clear system exists for meeting immediate financial needs of clients.**

- F 6.1.1 No system of pre-approved expenditures exists to meet the immediate needs of clients, making it difficult for Peacekeepers to provide these needs.

**Response:** *The respondent disagrees with this finding. The City has very clear and distinct processes for procurement. In particular, the City has developed additional processes unique to the OVP to streamline and allow pre-approval for certain expenditures to allow for more timely purchases for Operation Ceasefire clients. This includes weekly trust building meals with clients, client incentives to help them become work-ready, and*

*reimbursement for government issued documents. This has been challenging as government procurement systems should include protections to safeguard public assets. The streamlining process has been achieved by ensuring that appropriate checks and balances and controls are in place, while expediting the approval process through time commitments agreed to by the approving parties. While these processes do not meet all client needs, it allows the City to move more quickly for certain purchases while balancing stewardship of public resources.*

- F 6.1.2 Peacekeepers often must rely on the willingness of Community-Based Organizations to meet clients' pressing needs.

**Response:** *The respondent partially agrees with this finding. As noted above, there are processes in place to make appropriate expenditures for Operation Ceasefire clients. City procurement processes are not always best-suited to the needs of very-high-risk clients, which can emerge rapidly. However, there are some client needs that are best met by Community-Based Organizations due to their specific mission or their ability to make timely expenditures. Because the City of Stockton does not provide funding for Community-Based Organizations in exchange for this work, the OVP strives to create productive partnerships based on the shared mission and goals of violence reduction.*

- F 6.2 The reimbursement for their own funds Peacekeepers spend on clients is slow and cumbersome.

**Response:** *The respondent partially agrees. Peacekeepers are well-aware of the processes and timelines for reimbursing funds spent on clients. As noted above, the City has worked to develop a streamlined reimbursement process unique to the Office of Violence Prevention. Reimbursement timelines are more timely than other work units in the City. However, it is critical to maintain appropriate approval processes and maintain other controls to ensure stewardship of public resources.*

- R 6.1 The OVP should set up an adequate fund in its budget easily accessed by the Peacekeepers with supervisors' approval.

**Response:** *The respondent partially agrees with this recommendation. The OVP has already set aside Operation Ceasefire client services funds. These funds are available to Peacekeepers through the processes already developed as outlined above. To make the funds more accessible and further streamline these processes would put at risk the controls and balances for the procurement process.*

- R 6.2 The OVP should streamline approval of reimbursement and/or preauthorize purchases.

**Response:** *The respondent agrees with this recommendation. As noted above, the City has already developed unique approval and preauthorization processes for the purpose of providing services to Operation Ceasefire clients. To further streamline these processes would put at risk the controls and balances for the procurement process.*

**7.0 Office of Violence Prevention liaison with Community-Based Organizations is sporadic.**

F 7.1 Past conflicts have strained relations between CBO's and the OVP, causing some CBO's to have difficulty working with the OVP.

**Response:** *The respondent agrees with this finding. While the OVP has developed numerous positive relationships with Operation Ceasefire partners and violence prevention partners, past conflicts did strain relations with a number of community based organizations. The OVP Manager has worked diligently over the past year to build and repair partner relationships. In addition, the OVP has hired a new Community Engagement Coordinator, who will have the specific responsibility for building partnerships.*

R 7.1.1 The purpose of the Community Engagement Coordinator is to work with CBO's; the person hired for the position must be skilled and effective in reaching out.

**Response:** *The respondent agrees with this recommendation. The role of the Community Engagement Coordinator is to build bridges. This role requires the ability to reach out, establish common ground and sustain partnerships over time.*

R 7.1.2 The Community Engagement Coordinator must work on mending relations with the CBO's, but the OVP Manager should also be conferring often with them.

**Response:** *The respondent agrees with this recommendation. As noted above, the OVP Manager has made specific efforts over the last year to build and repair partner relationships. The Community Engagement Coordinator will continue this work, and the OVP Manager will remain engaged with key partners.*

**8.0 A county-wide coalition to reduce gun violence is a possible step to bring together many agencies and organizations.**

F 8.1 Some CBO's and city officials would like to create a county-wide coalition to coordinate and improve services to reduce group gun violence.

**Response:** *The respondent agrees with this finding. The City agrees that there should be coalition partnership in support of group gun violence. For that reason, the City has two gun violence reduction coalitions. First, the City and County currently have a joint firearms reduction program that consists of public safety partners. Second, Operation Ceasefire is a county-wide coalition targeting group gun violence. The OVP has developed partnerships with key stakeholders and welcomes new partners that have the skills and resources for working with very-high-risk clients. Furthermore, the Community Engagement Coalition of the OVP is designed to foster broader violence reduction partnerships across the spectrum of risk factors impacting at-risk individuals in the community.*

R 8.1      The OVP Manager should bring this idea to city and county government agencies to see if there is merit to the idea, if the time is right to move ahead with this proposal, and if there is appropriate and adequate interest among the various stakeholders.

**Response:** *The respondent agrees with this recommendation. As noted above, the Operation Ceasefire partnership is a county-wide group gun violence reduction coalition. The OVP Manager regularly engages with City departments, County agencies and community based organizations to explore how further partnerships could be developed. For some organizations, as suggested by the Grand Jury, timing is a critical factor. As the Operation Ceasefire work develops, the missions and work of different partners becomes more, or less, relevant and the partnerships evolve and expand. The OVP continuously seeks out additional partnership opportunities for this coalition.*

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