Evaluation of Strategic Work Plan:
Salinas Comprehensive Strategy for Community-Wide Violence Reduction
Acknowledgments

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Suggested Citation

Evaluation Objectives
The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) conducted a process and outcome evaluation of the Salinas Comprehensive Strategy for Community-Wide Violence Reduction (also known as the Strategic Work Plan) from 2012 to 2014. For its evaluation, NCCD examined elements from both the 2010–2012 Strategic Work Plan and the updated 2013–2018 Strategic Work Plan. The Strategic Work Plan was developed by the Community Alliance for Safety and Peace (CASP), a coalition of local organizations and leaders in the Salinas, California, area. The plan aimed to strategically address gang violence in the City of Salinas, with an initial focus on the Hebbron Heights neighborhood, a high-density residential area with high levels of crime, violence, and poverty with the potential to undergo significant community transformation. This particular community was selected as the pilot location for CASP’s community-based intervention strategies.

NCCD’s objectives for the evaluation were to advance the work of the City of Salinas and CASP and provide recommendations for this comprehensive approach. Additionally, NCCD sought to demonstrate the impact of the Strategic Work Plan on crime and community safety for Salinas in general, and in Hebbron Heights in particular. With support from the city, CASP, the Salinas Police Department, and other key community stakeholders, NCCD conducted a process and outcome evaluation guided by the principles of participatory research and community psychology. This report delineates the findings from this evaluation.

Evaluation Methods
Evaluation Planning Process
In order to develop an evaluation that was tailored and responsive to its client, the City of Salinas, NCCD implemented an evaluation planning process before developing an evaluation plan. The planning process
helped identify key research questions and process and outcome measures, as well as obtain information on pre-existing or needed data. The planning process also informed NCCD staff about the development and implementation of the Strategic Work Plan, particularly in Hebbron Heights.

During the planning period, NCCD conducted 25 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders who worked on the development or implementation of the plan. These individuals were identified with the help of the community safety director for the City of Salinas and the stakeholders themselves. Individuals contacted by NCCD for participation in the planning process included elected officials from the City of Salinas and Monterey County; CASP members; law enforcement officers; and directors from city-, county-, and community-based organizations (CBOs).

**Process Evaluation Methods**

NCCD employed a model to organize and structure its data collection and analysis for the evaluation. The model, which has been used in a number of evaluations of complex programs and initiatives, consists of several key elements of program development, which are listed below.

- **Context and Identification:** The set of environmental forces, organizational issues, and policy assumptions that conceptually define the distinctive features of the Strategic Work Plan.
- **Linkages:** The formal and informal relationships and agreements that may hinder or help the establishment and progress of the Strategic Work Plan.
- **Intervention and Services:** The range of activities and products offered, supported, or created by the initiative such as programming, coalitions, and local policies.

- **Goals:** A determination of the measurable outcomes of the Strategic Work Plan as defined by the stated objectives in the updated plan.

NCCD conducted interviews with key stakeholders to gather data pertaining to the development and implementation of the Strategic Work Plan, including information on groups impacted by violence in the Salinas area and the extent of that impact. Interviewees included representatives of government agencies and CBOs that participate in CASP and/or provide Strategic Work Plan interventions, community members such as those who participate in work plan interventions, and other entities involved in the development and implementation of the Strategic Work Plan. In all, NCCD interviewed more than 65 stakeholders during the evaluation period. All interviewees participated voluntarily. It is important to note that among the immigrant community in general, some barriers may have surfaced in the context of interviews including the fear of being asked about citizenship status. The possible hesitancy of some interviewees to speak candidly should be kept in mind when interpreting the results of this report, particularly the results of community perceptions of safety. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, depending on the interviewee’s preference and comfort level.

**Outcome Evaluation Methods**

The outcome evaluation examined short-term and long-term outcome variables, identified with input from key stakeholders during the planning process. Examples of short-term outcomes that were examined include the development of new relationships between organizations across the
Background on Salinas

Demographic Snapshot

The Salinas Valley, located in Monterey County on the Central Coast of California, is known as “The Salad Bowl of the World” for its large farming industry, which supplies the majority of the country’s lettuce and artichokes. Over time, Salinas has been home to a diverse group of migrants including individuals from China, Japan, the Philippines, and Mexico (Seavey, 2010). While in 1924 Salinas hosted the nation’s wealthiest population per capita (Seavey, 2010), today the city and many of its residents face a number of challenges.

The population of Salinas is currently estimated to be 155,662, with three fourths (75%) of residents being Hispanic or Latino and more than one third (37%) being foreign born (US Census Bureau, 2014). Without citizenship status, many Latino families depend on work in the agricultural industry, ranked as one of the most hazardous industries in the nation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014), to provide for city and county; changes to city agency policies and practices; and the number of participants in CASP interventions. Intermediate and long-term outcomes allow conclusions to be drawn about the success of comprehensive efforts and include crime trends (focusing on Hebbron Heights), truancy rates, high school graduation rates, development of new programs, and perceptions of community safety.

Methods included working with CASP to obtain a data extract from the Salinas Police Department, conducting interviews with community members in Hebbron Heights regarding community safety, and reviewing secondary data.

Data Analysis

NCCD researchers used a mixed-methods approach to analyze data collected for the evaluation. Data collected from interviews with stakeholders were analyzed using a qualitative approach. Interview data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed for key themes. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to show trends related to violence prevention.

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Table 1: Demographic Snapshot of Salinas, With Comparison to California

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quick Facts</th>
<th>Salinas</th>
<th>California</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population, 2013 estimate</td>
<td>155,662</td>
<td>38,431,393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of population that identifies as White, 2010</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of population that identifies as Black or African American, 2010</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of population that identifies as Hispanic or Latino (may be of any race), 2010</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of population below poverty level, 2009–2013</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of population under age 18, 2010</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Census Bureau, 2014
their families. Nearly one fourth (21%) of individuals in the city live below the federal poverty level, compared to 16% of people statewide (US Census Bureau, 2014).

Given that the Latino population in the United States is relatively young, Salinas has a relatively large population of young people due to its proportion of Latino residents. About one third (31%) of Salinas’s residents are under age 18 (US Census Bureau, 2014), many of whom may be immigrants themselves or children of immigrants—who often face many challenges. As with adults, research has shown that immigrant children experience anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorders that often affect academic success as well as other areas of their lives (Pumariega, Rothe, & Pumariega, 2005). Research has revealed that second-generation children or children of immigrants are at higher risk of engaging in harmful activity, such as substance abuse and conduct disturbance, than their immigrant counterparts (Pumariega, Rothe, & Pumariega, 2005).

Impact of Violence
For many years, Monterey County in general and the City of Salinas in particular have faced significant gang and youth violence problems. For much of the last decade, the county’s annual homicide rate has either been similar to or noticeably higher than the statewide homicide rate (see Figure 1). After trending upward since 2006, the county’s rate peaked in 2009, with 12.3 homicides per 100,000 population. From 2011 to 2013, the homicide rate increased slightly on a year-to-year basis and remains substantially higher than the corresponding state rate (California Department of Justice, 2013; California Department of Justice, 2014).

Figure 1: Annual Homicide Rates (per 100,000 People), State and Monterey County, 2003–13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Monterey County</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>2005</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: California Department of Justice, 2013 and 2014
For young people ages 10 to 24, Monterey County had the state’s highest homicide rate per 100,000 population in 2009, 2010, and 2012 (Violence Policy Center, 2011; Violence Policy Center, 2012; Violence Policy Center, 2014); in 2011, the county had the third highest youth homicide rate in the state (Violence Policy Center, 2013; see Figure 2). In particular, Latino young men in the county are strongly impacted by lethal violence. From 2009 to 2012, 89 youth were homicide victims in Monterey County; 92% of these victims were Hispanic, and 93% were male (Violence Policy Center, 2011; Violence Policy Center, 2012; Violence Policy Center, 2013; Violence Policy Center, 2014). Similarly, an analysis of firearms violence in Salinas, focusing on 2010 to 2013, found that the most at-risk population in Salinas are Hispanic males in their late teens to mid-20s who are involved in gang activity and have criminal histories (Salinas Police Department, 2014). This analysis also found that about 90% of homicides are gang-involved (Salinas Police Department, 2014). A variety of efforts—including the formation of CASP and development of the Strategic Work Plan—have been initiated by a range of county and city agencies and CBOs to help stem these problems and address the root causes of violence.

**Figure 2: Annual Youth Homicide Rates (per 100,000 People), State and Monterey County, 2009–12**

![Bar chart showing annual youth homicide rates per 100,000 people in State and Monterey County from 2009 to 2012.](image)

The Community Alliance for Safety and Peace

Formation of CASP

CASP is a coalition of organizations and leaders from Salinas and Monterey County with the goal of working collaboratively to reduce violence in the local community. CASP was formed in early 2008 by the Community Safety Alliance of the City of Salinas and the Violence Prevention Subcommittee of the Monterey County Children’s Council. At the time of CASP’s creation, the city had established strong linkages with organizations addressing violence at the city and county levels, but lacked a single entity to coordinate a variety of similarly focused efforts. CASP was created to fill this gap through the convening of a broad-based collaborative team of local and state elected officials as well as representatives of youth service organizations, county housing and health departments, criminal justice and law enforcement, education, business, street outreach, faith-based communities, and private funding entities. As of September 2014, nearly 70 organizations and leaders, including 14 individuals, 41 CBOs, four city departments, and eight county departments, were CASP members, with approximately 45 of these being active members (e.g., regularly attending CASP meetings).

Creation of the City of Salinas’s Community Safety Division

In 2011, the Salinas City Council voted unanimously to create the city’s Community Safety Division, which consists of three full-time staff (a director, program manager, and administrative assistant). This division manages, organizes, and coordinates the daily operation of CASP, with a focus that includes development of CASP and implementation of the Strategic Work Plan. The Community Safety Division also collaborates with local, state, and national partners to identify best practices and programs and coordinate efforts to implement these in the community.

The Community Safety Division is primarily funded by the City of Salinas and the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention (described in detail later in this report). Additionally, since its inception, this division has received more than $2.5 million dollars in grant monies from funding sources such as the California Gang Reduction, Intervention, and Prevention program, which is administered by the Board of State and Community Corrections, and the Project Safe Neighborhoods grant administered by the Department of Justice. The Community Safety Division has allocated more than 95% of this funding to local CBOs, county agencies, and other organizations to support evidence-based violence prevention work.

Organizational Structure of CASP

Over time, CASP has developed and implemented a governance structure designed to guide its operation. This structure includes a board of directors, executive committee, and general assembly, and several committees or workgroups. Each entity assumes different roles and responsibilities, described in more detail below. Additionally, as noted above, personnel from the city’s Community Safety Division serve as staff for CASP.

The board of directors, which meets quarterly, oversees CASP’s major policy issues and intergovernmental conversations. Board members number 15, including five officers (two co-chairs, a vice chair, secretary, and treasurer). The mayor of Salinas and a supervisor from the Monterey County Board of Supervisors serve as board co-chairs; CASP members nominate and vote for the other board members. Board members represent a variety of fields including health, social services, education, recreation and parks, law enforcement, probation, and faith-based communities.
**The executive committee**, which meets monthly, guides the day-to-day management of CASP and acts on behalf of the general assembly when needed to deal with pressing issues that call for immediate action. Executive committee membership consists of the five officers of the board of directors and the chairs (or the designees) of CASP’s committees or workgroups. Committee chairs are voted on by members of their committee. For newly formed committees, a chair may be nominated and voted on by the executive committee, the board of directors, or the general assembly.

**The general assembly** (originally known as the steering committee) is open to all CASP members. Individuals or organizations can join CASP by attending a general assembly meeting and filling out a membership form. A formal orientation process for new members is now being developed. The general assembly helps to deepen members’ familiarity with local organizations that work along the violence prevention continuum. Meetings, held two times each month, typically include information sharing, committee reports, and networking opportunities. The information-sharing portion of the meeting provides a dedicated time for CASP members to make announcements on topics including legislative and data updates; accomplishments of clients served by CASP interventions or CASP member agencies; and upcoming meetings, training opportunities, and other events for service providers and community members. Information sharing may also include a more detailed presentation on a relevant topic. Networking opportunities often feature facilitated conversations, which allow members to interact informally and build relationships. General assembly meetings also provide a forum for CASP members to reflect on real-time community events, including the officer-involved shootings that occurred in Salinas in 2014. A CASP committee (the organizational capacity task force) is in the process of designing a specific framework for CASP to quickly respond to emerging community issues.

**Committees** are small groups of CASP members that focus on specific goals of the Strategic Work Plan. All CASP members are encouraged to join a committee. As of September 2014, active CASP committees focused on communications, community engagement, organizational capacity, prevention, Strategic Work Plan implementation, and interventions such as the Cross Functional Team (CFT) (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Manage and develop external communications for CASP to inform the community of their efforts and improve understanding and knowledge of youth violence in Salinas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>Engage the community in violence prevention throughout the city. This committee organizes and implements National Night Out events and community block parties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross Functional Team (CFT)</td>
<td>Identify youth in Hebbron Heights most at risk for being victims or perpetrators of violence. This multidisciplinary team then works to provide these youth and their families with as many protective factors as possible to reduce their risk of violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Capacity Task Force</td>
<td>Assess CASP’s current organizational structure and use this assessment to make recommendations to the board for improvement. Where appropriate, this committee will drive some of the improvements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>Mobilize the prevention-focused partners of CASP on collaborative violence prevention projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Work Plan/Implementation Team</td>
<td>Track selected risk and protective factors and define and monitor indicators using a collective impact process to implement the Strategic Work Plan.</td>
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</table>
In addition to holding regular meetings, CASP uses a variety of methods to communicate and interact with its members and the general public. This includes maintaining a website (http://future-futuro.org) that is available in both English and Spanish; the website provides an opportunity to sign up to participate in CASP-related events that promote public safety. CASP also has an active social media presence through the use of Facebook, You Tube, and other communication channels.

**Violence Reduction Efforts That Intersect With CASP’s Work**

Since CASP’s inception, its efforts have been informed by the local implementation of a range of other violence prevention initiatives, many of which intersect with the work of CASP. A significant portion of CASP’s work is underwritten by a capacity-building grant from the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention. The Forum, established in 2010, is a network of communities and federal agencies that work collaboratively and develop local capacity to prevent and reduce youth and gang violence. As of 2014, 10 communities nationwide were part of the Forum, including Salinas. A cornerstone of jurisdictions’ participation in the Forum is the creation or enhancement of comprehensive plans to prevent youth and gang violence in individual cities, using multidisciplinary partnerships, measured approaches, and data-driven strategies.

In addition to the Forum, CASP works in close collaboration with Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere (STRYVE), a federal initiative led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Monterey County was selected by the CDC in 2011 as one of four local health departments nationwide to address youth violence through the STRYVE project.

STRYVE seeks to build the capacity of the public health department and coalition to reduce violence and uses a prevention-focused, data-driven approach to monitor the causes and conditions that affect community health. As active participants in CASP, STRYVE staff collect and analyze data about youth and violence prevention efforts in Salinas, particularly as it relates to the Strategic Work Plan. STRYVE’s work with CASP includes identifying the primary risk and protective factors that impact violence in Salinas. STRYVE also provided measurement data for the objectives associated with each critical focus area and goal delineated in the Strategic Work Plan.

Other initiatives that complement CASP’s work include the following.

- A county-led violence reduction effort, detailed in a document titled *Monterey County’s Comprehensive Violence Prevention, Intervention, Suppression, and Reentry Framework* (Glavin, 2009). The framework, developed using a collaborative process, describes a wide-ranging, coordinated strategy to stem the escalation of local gang violence and address systemic issues related to violence. It is adapted from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Comprehensive Gang Model.

- California Cities Gang Prevention Network, an initiative launched by NCCD and the National League of Cities in 2007. The network, which brings together 13 jurisdictions including Salinas, aims to reduce gang violence and victimization, mortality, and morbidity, and to develop a statewide policy agenda to support promising local efforts.
• Operation Ceasefire, a gun violence reduction initiative that uses a collaborative and data-driven approach to identify causes of violence and develop a targeted law enforcement response. Originally developed in Boston, elements of Ceasefire have since been applied in numerous jurisdictions nationwide. Ceasefire was originally implemented in Salinas from 2010 to 2012 and reinstituted in 2014. Local goals of the program are to use data and intelligence to identify individuals at highest risk for committing firearms violence, then bring customized resources to those individuals to lead them away from violence; or, alternatively, to ensure these individuals are aware that if they choose to continue their violent tendencies they will be selected for rigorous law enforcement scrutiny and ultimately arrest and incarceration to ensure the community’s safety.

• Operation Knockout, a law enforcement effort that brought together local, state, and federal agencies from 2009 to 2010 to target the most dangerous gang leaders in the Salinas area. This operation led to more than 90 arrests (Office of the Attorney General, 2010).

• Operation Snake Eyes, a 2013 local/state/federal law enforcement operation targeting the Nuestra Familia prison gang and associated Norteno street gangs. The operation culminated in the execution of 20 search warrants and the arrest of almost 50 gang members and associates (Salinas Police Department, 2013).
The Strategic Work Plan: Development and Implementation

Development of the Strategic Work Plan

To accomplish its goals of reducing violence and increasing public safety, CASP strives to achieve short-term and long-term outcomes across the continuum of prevention, intervention, suppression, and reentry. CASP’s key principles, focus areas, and strategies are detailed in an extensive document titled the *Salinas Comprehensive Strategy for Community-Wide Violence Reduction* (also known as the Strategic Work Plan), published in 2010 and updated in 2013 to include strategic objectives through 2018.

*The creation of the Strategic Work Plan is the result of diversified partnerships and linkages across many organizations.*

Drawing on this work with MIIS and NPS, a multidisciplinary subcommittee of CASP led a comprehensive effort to develop the Strategic Work Plan. This subcommittee included high-level representatives from the police department, city attorney’s office, board of supervisors, faith community, service providers, county health department (including STRYVE representatives), court, probation, and schools. The goals of the Strategic Work Plan are to reduce youth violence through prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry strategies. As importantly, the plan aims to create a shift in community members’ thinking and, for residents who live in areas of Salinas with high levels of violence, provide tools that empower them to improve neighborhood conditions.

The development of the Strategic Work Plan relied extensively on community involvement. In April and May 2010, CASP convened 23 listening sessions with community members to gain input about areas on which to focus. Listening sessions were held throughout Salinas with groups including middle and high school students, parent organizations, senior citizens, and neighborhood associations. Participants responded to open-ended questions about their experiences in their community, suggestions and recommendations for their neighborhoods, needed services, people they see as community leaders, and ways to prevent gang violence. More than 200 individuals participated in the sessions. Subsequent to the listening sessions, CASP convened four community forums that allowed CASP to share listening session findings with the community and obtain additional input. In 2013, when the Strategic Work Plan was being updated, CASP hosted six additional listening sessions with residents.
Drawing on this community input, the City of Salinas and CASP updated the 2012 Strategic Work Plan, resulting in the 2013–2018 Strategic Work Plan. The major updates to the 2012 plan included describing the creation of the city’s Community Safety Division and CASP interventions such as the CFT and the Leadership Academy (described in detail later in this report). Additional objectives were added in order to more fully address the plan's critical focus areas and goals. The updated plan also identifies community partners with the ability to help meet the plan’s objectives.

Key Principles, Critical Focus Points, and Goals of the Strategic Work Plan

The Strategic Work Plan is based on four key principles that serve as the plan’s guiding framework. CASP members explicitly crafted this plan to focus on principles that aligned mission and service for the community of Salinas to achieve peace.

1. **A single operational structure that manages action and progress.** While several organizations had previously addressed the growing violence in Salinas and Monterey County, no single governing body existed to coordinate efforts, mobilize a leadership team to plan and implement strategies, and share resources. The Strategic Work Plan aimed to establish one collective entity to implement a comprehensive strategy.

2. **Action is research- and data-driven.** In a climate of limited resources, data sharing and data-driven action is imperative. The development of the Strategic Work Plan drew on a wide range of existing research and data about the Salinas community and, through the plan’s implementation, aimed to utilize data to target resources for the greatest benefit to the community. The ability to have agencies share data provides a comprehensive approach to meeting the multifaceted needs of community members.

3. **The youth are at the center.** Through development and implementation of various interventions, the Strategic Work Plan seeks to prioritize youth and families’ needs in order to reduce violence in the community.

4. **There is deep and meaningful engagement with the community.** Deep community engagement is more likely to have positive impacts on comprehensive efforts. Engaging community residents as partners, and having a coordinated strategy that is truly reflective of their needs, is one of the most critical elements of this plan.

In addition to these four key principles, the Strategic Work Plan outlines goals, strategies, activities, timelines, and performance measures in six critical focus points—or problem areas—related to the underlying causes of youth and gang violence in Salinas. These six critical focus points emerged from a variety of sources including the community listening sessions, the California Endowment’s Building Healthy Communities initiative (which has a site based in Salinas), and existing research. Each critical focus point has one overarching goal, as well as several associated objectives. While the Strategic Work Plan’s interventions were focused initially in Hebron Heights, the plan’s overall goals were to reduce violence in the City of Salinas as a whole. Goals were designed to address violence with a holistic approach centering on youth, family, and community. Each focus point from the updated plan, as well as the corresponding goal and selected objectives for each, are outlined below.

1. **Social and economic conditions** (includes poverty, racism, homelessness, a bad economy, lack of funds for education, prostitution, poor schools, and teenage pregnancy)

   **Goal 1:** All residents have the ability and opportunity to earn a living wage and have access to necessary social and work support systems in order to provide for their families.
Objectives include: Increase percentage of families able to provide children with basic needs such as housing, food, and clothing; increase access to physical and behavioral health services for those in need.

2. Engaging and supervising youth (includes lack of out-of-school activities, family dysfunction, lack of parenting skills, violence in the home, generational gang involvement, parental alcohol and drug use, and limited access to services as a result of being undocumented)

Goal 2: Families and the entire community promote positive youth development.

Objectives include: Intervene with youth exhibiting at-risk, gang-related behavior; increase percentage of parents and caregivers who feel supported and demonstrate positive discipline, caring, and nurturing practices with children.

3. Environmental design and urban planning (includes neighborhood blight; lack of street lighting; little green space; and easy access to guns, alcohol, and gang paraphernalia)

Goal 3: Residents have pride in all neighborhoods, and all neighborhoods support peaceful community life and positive community engagement.

Objectives include: Increase opportunities for residents to exercise, gather, and play outdoors; increase community engagement and participation; support leadership.

4. Law enforcement (includes understaffing, out-of-date technology, deployment strategies that are not data-driven, perceptions of a low quality of policing, and community distrust)

Goal 4: The community and law enforcement partner to create safe and thriving neighborhoods.

Objectives include: Increase positive interactions with law enforcement by engaging community to build trust and relationships; enhance law enforcement by using data-driven approaches to reduce crime.

5. Education and schools (includes lack of college preparatory programs and adult schools, unsafe schools, lack of parental education opportunities, lack of community connection to schools, high truancy and dropout rates, and poor student achievement)

Goal 5: All youth and their families are engaged with schools to ensure academic achievement and positive youth development in a safe environment.

Objectives include: Increase daily attendance and graduation rates; decrease truancy and dropout rates; improve school safety and prevent bullying.

6. Impact of drugs and alcohol (includes youth and adult substance abuse, youth access to alcohol, and sales of illegal drugs by gangs)

Goal 6: Reduce the demand and supply of alcohol and drugs.

Objectives include: Decrease supply and sale of illegal drugs; decrease alcohol abuse among adults and use among youth.
Implementation of the Strategic Work Plan

In 2010, the Salinas Police Department and CASP identified the Hebbron Heights neighborhood of East Salinas as a pilot site for implementing the Strategic Work Plan. Hebbron Heights is a high-density residential area with high concentrations of gangs and gang members (including members of rival gangs). This area has a much higher crime rate when compared to other parts of Salinas. It also experiences high levels of poverty and unemployment and low levels of educational attainment. Its population is primarily Hispanic, with many residents speaking Spanish at home. In addition to apartment buildings, single family homes, and commercial spaces, the neighborhood’s physical assets include two parks and one community center.

The Hebbron Heights-area effort of the Strategic Work Plan, named “Para Nuestro Futuro/For Our Future,” was designed as a movement to empower the residents to “take back” the neighborhood and reduce gang activity and violence. This approach combines innovative law enforcement strategies with deep community engagement and a targeted infusion of educational, library, public health, recreational, and social service resources that are provided to families and youth.

The plan’s implementation in Hebbron Heights consists of three primary interventions that complement each other: 1) the CFT; 2) community-based policing; and 3) the Leadership Academy. In the CFT, direct service professionals coordinate and provide intensive services targeted to at-risk Hebbron Heights’ youth and their families. The CFT consists of representatives from CBOs, schools, faith-based groups, and city and county agencies including health, parks and community services, police, and probation. In addition to the work being done by the CFT, two officers from the Salinas Police Department are assigned full time to Hebbron Heights to implement innovative community policing strategies, working in direct partnership with residents to reduce violence. The officers’ responsibilities include building relationships with residents, providing referrals for services, and participating in the CFT. The Para Nuestro Futuro/For Our Future Leadership Academy, which includes a 13-class cycle, works to deepen community engagement by providing residents with tools for team building, conflict resolution, project management, leadership, public speaking, advocacy, and resource development.

The CFT, community policing, and the Leadership Academy will be described in more detail in the next section of this report. In addition to these major interventions, other key activities implemented as part of the Strategic Work Plan include the following:

- **Creation of a youth subcommittee.** Facilitated by a CASP member agency, the Boys and Girls Club of Monterey County (Salinas), this subcommittee’s work included developing and producing a public event that brought youth together.

- **Collaboration with Juntos Podemos (Together We Can).** A Salinas-area organization of Spanish language media outlets, Juntos Podemos works to educate the local Latino community about youth violence, safety, and public health.

- **Development of a weekly radio show.** The show presented updates on the Strategic Work Plan and invited city, county, and nonprofit organizations to describe their resources available to the community. While this radio program is not currently active, Community Safety Division staff are working with Juntos Podemos to restart it.

- **Organization of night walks.** Through the National Forum and California Cities Gang Prevention Network, 50 local clergy members received training in this form of street outreach. Since the first event, hundreds of volunteers from all areas of Salinas have offered to participate. Walks are held four nights a week on three separate routes for a total of 12 distinct weekly walks in Salinas. Since the local effort began in 2012, an average of 576 walks with an average of five participants per walk have happened per year.
The Strategic Work Plan: Intervention and Services

This section describes the key interventions and services implemented as part of the Strategic Work Plan in Hebbron Heights, including the perspectives and opinions of those participating in the programs. These interventions include CFT, which coordinates efforts to identify Hebbron Heights-area youth in need and provide services to these youth and their families; community policing, which aims to increase trust between Hebbron Heights residents and law enforcement; and the Para Nuestro Futuro/For Our Future Leadership Academy, which equips residents with leadership, public speaking, and other skills and empowers them to implement community change.

Serving Hebbron Youth and Families: CFT and Its Clients

CASP and NPS created CFT, a multidisciplinary group of CASP organizations in the Monterey County and Salinas region that work together to coordinate provision of services to Hebbron Heights residents. The CFT’s overall goal is to keep youth and their families out of trouble, safe, and well-connected to services. The CFT is composed of CASP member organizations that provide or have access to various services in the Salinas community. CFT members represent diverse sectors including CBOs, schools, faith-based groups, and city and county agencies including health, parks and community services, police, and probation.

CFT clients include at-risk youth (ages 12 to 18) and their families in the Hebbron Heights neighborhood who have been identified by at least one CFT member as needing support. Although any CFT member can refer a potential client, identification is typically done by community police officers and school counselors in Hebbron Heights. Youth who may be referred include those who have demonstrated chronic behavior issues in school or on the streets (e.g., drug or alcohol abuse, multiple sightings with known gang members, etc.). If a potential client is referred by a school counselor, multiple interventions must have been exhausted before the referral is made. If a client is seen to be a danger to him/herself (e.g., suicidal), he/she is immediately sent to CFT behavioral health services. CFT members collaboratively decide whether the youth or family is a good fit for CFT services, based on each client’s presenting issues and needs. In order to improve the CFT intake process and ensure that those most in need are being served, Community Safety Division staff and CFT members are currently developing clearer guidelines for program eligibility and exploring implementation of an evidence-based assessment tool.

In twice-monthly meetings, CFT members collaboratively review the cases of targeted youth and their families in detail in order to determine the services and actions that can best provide support. As part of this process, the CFT collects a variety of data about each client, including basic demographic information; school discipline data; probation/police data; and client connections or relationships with other CFT clients, local gangs, and extended family members. Through a recently executed memorandum of understanding with local school districts, the CFT also collects academic performance data. The CFT uses these sources of data to better understand a client’s experiences and circumstances and to make informed decisions about service provision.

Services and service delivery for CFT clients and families are determined on a case-by-case basis. Since the CFT began, clients have been referred to a range of services such as behavioral health services (including substance use counseling and treatment), classes
offered through The Parent Project (described in detail later in this report), vocational training, afterschool and summer programs, medical health assistance, services for foster youth, support with domestic violence, and assistance with housing and food. While a set timeframe for receiving CFT services does not exist, the current duration averages about one year. CFT has served 31 clients and has an annual caseload average of 18 clients.

Voices of CFT Members
In order to assess the effectiveness of the CFT, NCCD interviewed six CFT members—those responsible for providing services to clients in Hebbron Heights—about their experiences participating in the CFT and CASP. Interviewees stated that both the CFT and CASP provide opportunities for networking and collaboration toward a common purpose. “The CFT brings together people from [multiple] places. We get people from different agencies working toward the same efforts,” one member said. Another member voiced being pleased with CASP leadership. Members also expressed the desire to see more diverse participation in CASP and CFT, particularly by community members. Overall, while CFT members saw CASP and CFT as beneficial on many levels, most interviewees agreed that some adjustments are needed in order to fully achieve the goals of both CASP and the CFT. This includes increasing community participation as well as communication among the CFT group.

Voices of CFT Clients
NCCD also interviewed six CFT clients for their perspectives on the services provided to them. With the exception of one, interviewees were parents of youth receiving services. When interviewed, overall, most CFT clients articulated finding CFT services helpful. The only youth interviewed reported having an exceptionally positive experience with CFT services. This CFT client said that participating in these services changed her life’s journey and she is now pursuing her goals. When asked if she felt she had a voice, the client expressed how supportive program staff have been. “If I would be messing up, they meet with us. If you don’t like a program then they introduce you to another program,” she said. This client won an award as a result of her success in the program. Other interviewees also voiced finding CFT services helpful, especially the relationship developed with the community police officers.

Some challenges also emerged from the interviews, such as how CFT clients are identified and receive communication about CFT services. First, parents were unclear on how they and their children were identified or enrolled as CFT clients. Some did not remember signing a contract or permission slip allowing their child/ren to receive services. Second, interviewees
discussed a lack of communication between service providers and parents. One mother said, “All they ask me to do is sign, sign, sign, sign, but never take the time to talk to me.” Additionally, two interviewees did not recall receiving more than an initial phone call about the services their children received. These reported experiences suggest a need for improved communication between service providers and CFT clients’ parents/guardians. Families also reported not knowing who to ask for assistance if they had questions or concerns about a service. Third, some interviewees felt CFT services were provided too late in their children’s trajectory with law enforcement. One mother said, “By the time they called, my daughter was locked up.” In addition to improving processes for client identification and overall communication, one consistent recommendation from CFT clients and family members was for the city to increase opportunities for youth recreational activities, such as providing more soccer goal nets at local parks.

**Community Policing in Hebbron Heights**

In order to build stronger relationships and improve trust between the Salinas Police Department and Hebbron Heights residents, the chief of the Salinas Police Department assigned two full-time, culturally competent, bilingual police officers to implement community policing strategies in this neighborhood. Community police officers participate in the CFT, teach parenting classes, and interact with the entire Hebbron community.

One of the officers’ main responsibilities is developing relationships with community members, including CFT clients. Officers recognize the importance of using a culturally competent approach with community members. “Understanding the culture and the fear is very important,” said one officer. “Words can be words, but when [a parent] is trying to express something and they are expressing it with their culture, and you are able to understand them, it helps them a lot.”

Community relationships also are strengthened through parenting classes, taught by the officers assigned to Hebbron Heights, in conjunction with CASP member agency Partners for Peace. Offered in a 12-week cycle, classes are designed to provide

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1 The police department originally planned to place four community police officers in the Hebbron Heights neighborhood, with a goal of having two officers on duty at a time. However, due to a decrease in departmental resources, this overall number was reduced to two.
parents with concrete solutions and skills for dealing with family conflict, improving their children's school performance, effectively dealing with a gang-involved child, and other topics. Of the 146 parents who completed The Parent Project program between April 2013 and August 2014, nearly half (49%) took part in classes taught by these officers. NCCD researchers found that the majority of parents who attended The Parent Project classes and were interviewed for the evaluation found the classes beneficial. One officer who teaches these classes stated, "We learned about and capitalized on the opportunity to be Parent Project facilitators to help empower the many parents we have in our target area. The parent participants who have applied what they learned have seen dramatic positive changes in their homes … and these classes have helped to grow police legitimacy."

“*The Leadership Academy helped me so much. It made me feel more encouraged and have confidence. I am a leader now.*”

**Increasing Community Empowerment: Leadership Academy**

Another essential intervention of the Strategic Work Plan is the Para Nuestro Futuro/For Our Future Leadership Academy. The Community Safety Division and CASP organized the Leadership Academy in the Hebbron Heights neighborhood with the purpose of empowering community members to become leaders in Salinas. The Leadership Academy program aims to deepen community engagement in target areas by providing residents with tools for team building, conflict resolution, project management, leadership, public speaking, advocacy, and resource development.

Potential participants are recruited at local street fairs and festivals and referred by previous Leadership Academy members. After completing an application for participation, Leadership Academy members volunteer to attend 13 classes, which meet for two hours each, two times a week, in order to complete the program. Classes are taught in Spanish by culturally competent community leaders and experts. Leadership Academy members complete a short evaluation after each class meeting as well as an overall evaluation at the end of the program in order to assess their experiences and provide suggestions for improvement. Feedback from these evaluations is used to improve upcoming seminars, courses, and the overall Leadership Academy program. Upon program completion, Leadership Academy members receive a certificate that acknowledges their participation. As of September 2014, four Leadership Academy cycles have been completed, and 52 members have successfully graduated from the program.

As part of the program, Leadership Academy members are encouraged to start a community group with the purpose of improving their neighborhood. For example, members from the first academy formed five committees to support witnesses of crimes, connect parents to educational institutions, connect youth to services and recreation programs, beautify areas and reduce “broken windows,” and organize additional leadership opportunities.
Voices of Leadership Academy Members

Six Leadership Academy members interviewed by NCCD described what they gained from participating in the Leadership Academy, including the ability to better assist other community members in their neighborhood, more confidence in their leadership capabilities, and improved public speaking and conflict resolution skills. One Leadership Academy member stated, “[This program] helped me so much. It made me feel more encouraged and have confidence. I am a leader now.” Members also expressed that the program was beneficial for networking. As a whole, Leadership Academy members felt they had a voice in the city.

Members also had some suggestions about how to improve the program. For example, some interviewees said they would like to see more follow-up, support, and connection with the city and CASP after graduating from the Leadership Academy. “Now that we have taken the classes, we are here for you still. Follow up with us,” one member said. Members would like the opportunity to share their perspectives in CASP meetings. Some members also expressed the desire for support in applying for grants for their grassroots organizations. Finally, some suggested making Leadership Academy classes available in both English and Spanish, rather than Spanish only.
In addition to conducting interviews with stakeholders about the Strategic Work Plan and its interventions, NCCD analyzed a dataset to examine crime trends in the Hebbron Heights neighborhood, interviewed community members about their perceptions of neighborhood safety, and examined quantitative data collected by external agencies such as the California Department of Education. This section describes major findings from these data sources.

**Crime Data From the Hebbron Heights Neighborhood**

To examine crime trends in the Hebbron Heights neighborhood during implementation of the Strategic Work Plan, NCCD analyzed a data extract from the Salinas Police Department. This dataset, which spans 2011 to 2014, reflects information collected from the two police reporting districts that represent the Hebbron neighborhood.

The data indicate a general downward pattern in several crime categories in Hebbron Heights (see Table 3). For example, firearms offenses decreased by 44% from 2011 to 2014. Property crime also dropped by 22% during this timeframe. Violent assaults, while increasing from 2012 to 2013, show an overall decline of 18% from 2011 to 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Offense</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Assault</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firearm</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Offense categories are not distinct and should not be summed (e.g., firearm offenses also may be included in violent assaults, etc.).

Source: Salinas Police Department
Tables 4 and 5 disaggregate data on use of firearms and violent assaults, respectively. Regarding use of firearms, the most common offense was robbery, the frequency of which fluctuated between 2011 and 2014, followed by attempted murder. For violent assaults, the most common offenses were robbery and battery. The instances of both robbery and battery varied during this timeframe, and each showed overall decreases from 2011 to 2014 (dropping by 27% and 36%, respectively).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Offense</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assault With Deadly Weapon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted Murder</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted Robbery</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibiting Deadly Weapon (Not Firearm)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibiting Firearm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang Member Possess Firearm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder: First Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery/Car Jacking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatening Violent Assault</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Salinas Police Department
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Offense</th>
<th>Year 2011</th>
<th>Year 2012</th>
<th>Year 2013</th>
<th>Year 2014</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assault With Deadly Weapon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted Kidnapping</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted Murder</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted Robbery</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battery</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting in Public/ Challenge to Fight</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder: First Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing/Dissuading Witness/Victim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resist or Delay Officer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery/Car Jacking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoot at Inhabited Dwelling</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatening Violent Assault</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violation of Court Order</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>184</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Salinas Police Department
Community Members’ Perceptions of Safety

NCCD researchers interviewed 35 community members about their perceptions of safety in the Hebbron Heights neighborhood. Most individuals interviewed were not specifically involved in CFT services or the Leadership Academy. Interviews were held in Salinas, outside of Sherwood Elementary School and at La Paz Park. The majority of interviewees expressed feeling unsafe or somewhat unsafe in their neighborhood and in downtown Salinas. Many reported feeling somewhat insecure about going to the park during the day and very insecure about going out at night. Overwhelmingly, community members expressed the need for more police officers and increased vigilance by law enforcement. Community members reported feeling much safer when police officers are nearby. Interviewees’ recommendations for reducing violence in their community included providing more extracurricular activities and afterschool programs for youth, having schools become more involved in violence prevention efforts, and providing parent education.

Finally, Table 6 provides a snapshot of trends in offenses identified as having a gang-related component, in association with certain crime types. In general, the data show that gang reports for violent assaults and firearms offenses increased between 2011 and 2012, and since then have trended downward, in some cases dramatically. For example, firearms offenses that included a gang report declined from 56% to 31% between 2012 and 2013, and dropped still further, to 10%, in 2014.

Overall, the data discussed in this section indicate considerable improvements in certain types of crime in Hebbron Heights from 2011 to 2014. These changes may be due in part to the efforts of CASP, although no cause-and-effect relationship between CASP’s work in this neighborhood and any decreases in crime can be determined from this analysis. The trends seen in the data suggest that implementation of the Strategic Work Plan, as well as other local violence reduction interventions and strategies being implemented concurrently, may be having an impact in this community. It also is important to note that a number of additional factors including policy changes, policing efforts, and an improving economic climate may have contributed to the changes seen here.

### Table 6: Gang Report Associated With Offense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Offense</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent Assaults</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firearms</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Each “N” represents the total number of incidents for each offense.

Source: Salinas Police Department
School-Based Indicators Related to Crime and Delinquency

Some school-based indicators that may help predict involvement in crime and delinquency have shown improvement in recent years and thus may contribute to reductions in violence and improvements in community safety. These indicators include rates of graduation, dropout, truancy, suspensions, and expulsions, as well as students’ self-report of gang involvement. The data reported here are for the Salinas Union High School District, which includes five high schools, four middle schools, a community day school, and a self-paced independent studies program.

The high school graduation rate for the Salinas Union High School District increased from 2009 to 2011 and stayed consistent from 2011 to 2013, while the dropout rate generally decreased (see Figure 3). Rates for Hispanic or Latino students in particular, who make up the large majority of the student body population, also showed improvement. The graduation rate for this population increased from 72% (2009–10) to 80% (2013–14), while the dropout rate decreased from 13% (2009–10) to 8% (2013–14) (California Department of Education, 2015).²

² Unless otherwise noted, graduation and dropout rates are based on cohort outcome data. The four-year adjusted cohort, as computed by the California Department of Education, is the group of students that could potentially graduate during a four-year time period (grades nine through 12). The four-year adjusted cohort includes students who enter ninth grade for the first time in the initial year of the four years used for the cohort (California Department of Education, 2012). “4-Year Adjusted Cohort Outcome Data Processing,” page 1, http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ CohortRates/CohortOutcomeDefinitions2012_4_30.doc).
The annual truancy rate for Salinas Union High School District students has fluctuated in recent years, ranging from a high of 30% in 2012–13 to a low of 7% in 2013–14 (California Department of Education, 2015). While it is beyond the scope of this report to examine what may account for the variability of these statistics, these differences over time could be due in part to varied enforcement policies at different schools in the district or a lack of resources to focus on truancy.

Suspension and expulsion rates for Salinas Union High School District students have improved overall. The percentages of both suspensions and expulsions generally trended downward from 2009–10 to 2012–13. Both reached a low in 2011–12 of 14% and 0.1%, respectively, and then each increased slightly for 2012–13 (Monterey County Health Department, STRYVE, 2014).

Students’ self-reported school data also showed some improvement. Between the 2009–10 and 2012–13 school years, self-reported gang involvement of students in seventh, ninth, and 11th grades either decreased slightly or showed little increase (WestEd Health & Human Development Program for the California Department of Education, 2010, 2012, 2013). For example, self-reported gang involvement for seventh-grade students decreased from 11% in 2009–10 to 6% in 2012–13. The percentage of students who reported being verbally harassed or bullied two or more times on school grounds also tended to decline slightly or indicate little increase from 2009 to 2013. An exception was for students attending nontraditional schools (defined as continuation, community day, or alternative schools), where self-reported bullying occurring twice or more on school property dropped from 29% in 2009–10 to 10% in 2012–13 (Monterey County Health Department, STRYVE, 2014).
Major Findings of the Strategic Work Plan

Key Principles of the Strategic Work Plan

As described previously in this report, the Strategic Work Plan is structured around four key principles. This section briefly reviews these principles and discusses NCCD’s major findings related to each.

1. **A single operational structure that manages action and progress.** NCCD found that CASP is functioning as originally intended in terms of coordinating a unified leadership structure to guide local violence prevention efforts. CASP’s overall framework and current governance structure, including the convening of monthly general assembly meetings, have been effective in bringing together and increasing communication between the many organizations that address violence in the Salinas area. CASP members reported finding CASP meetings to be a great opportunity to network and learn from each other. Additionally, interviewees expressed being very satisfied with the current and previous leadership of CASP.

2. **Action is research- and data-driven.** NCCD’s findings indicate that the development of the Strategic Work Plan was grounded in existing research about the Salinas community, including information about local demographics, assets, and needs, as well as data collected from numerous community listening sessions. NCCD also found that through implementation of the work plan, CASP has undertaken various efforts to gather and review relevant data, including data collected by the CFT and CASP committees and through collaboration with initiatives and partners such as STRYVE and MIIS. While good initial progress has been made in this area, NCCD’s research indicates that CASP’s emphasis on data-driven action could be further systematized and strengthened. This could be done by continuing to solicit information from community members about needs related to violence prevention and ways to meet these needs as well as continuing to apply research and data to the implementation of CASP interventions.

3. **The youth are at the center.** NCCD found that CASP strives to make youth the focus of its efforts. CASP has placed a strong emphasis on prevention and intervention, specifically through CFT’s targeted services in Hebbron Heights and a range of programs offered by CBOs and city and county organizations. NCCD’s findings also suggest that CASP could continue to sharpen its approach of situating youth at the center of its work and involving parents and other family members in both its planning processes and its interventions.

4. **There is deep and meaningful engagement with the community.** NCCD’s findings indicate that CASP can continue to make progress on meaningfully engaging community members. NCCD found that CASP incorporated community members’ voices during the creation of the work plan by conducting listening sessions. In addition, NCCD found that Leadership Academy classes have been successful in enabling community members to feel more confident in their abilities to lead efforts in improving their neighborhoods. While some CASP initiatives have been helpful in realizing the goal of community engagement, CASP could use a stronger approach in order to truly meet this goal.
Critical Focus Points of the Strategic Work Plan

In addition to four key principles, the Strategic Work Plan also includes six critical focus points on which to concentrate CASP’s efforts. As discussed earlier in this report, through convening listening sessions with community members and conducting additional research, the Community Safety Division and members of CASP identified six problem areas or risk factors that contribute to gang violence and impact public safety in Salinas. These identified risk factors were incorporated into the Strategic Work Plan as the six critical focus points for CASP’s violence reduction efforts and include:

1. Social and economic conditions;
2. Engaging and supervising youth;
3. Environmental design and urban planning;
4. Law enforcement;
5. Education and schools; and

Each critical focus point has a specified goal and associated strategies and activities designed to meet this goal, along with potential community partners that can contribute to meeting this goal. Progress on these goals can be measured quantitatively and will be evaluated by the city.

Although a comprehensive assessment of each critical focus area is beyond the scope of this evaluation, through NCCD’s qualitative interviews it appears that some progress has occurred in selected focus areas, particularly within the context of Hebbron Heights. For example, interviewees, such as CFT members, reported that the provision of physical and behavioral health services through the CFT in Hebbron Heights was a major asset, especially when referred youth experience depression, are suicidal, or have substance use problems.

Regarding engaging and supervising youth, which includes supporting parents/caregivers, NCCD found that parents who participated in The Parent Project classes felt the program provided insight about and techniques for disciplining and nurturing their children. Finally, in relation to law enforcement, interviewees reported substantial improvements in the partnership between the community and law enforcement. Residents, CFT clients, and members of the Salinas Police Department all reported witnessing or experiencing a more positive relationship between police officers and community members.

Residents, CFT clients, and members of the Salinas Police Department all reported witnessing or experiencing a more positive relationship between police officers and community members.

NCCD’s interviews also revealed challenges that have inhibited progress in some critical focus areas. In the area of education and schools, several CASP members expressed the desire to see a stronger presence by schools and the county department of education in CASP and in discussions about violence reduction. Similarly, community members expressed that they would like schools to be more involved in students’ safety, especially concerning violence. In terms of engaging and supervising youth, a consistent finding from NCCD’s interviews with Hebbron Heights residents was a strong desire for the city to increase its provision of affordable or no-cost recreational opportunities, including more spaces where children can play sports.
Achievements of CASP and the Strategic Work Plan

CASP Interventions Are Making a Difference in the Salinas Community

Interviewees across stakeholder groups stated that the Strategic Work Plan efforts have been helpful in the Hebbron Heights community. For example, Leadership Academy members articulated feeling more prepared to refer other community members to services than prior to their involvement in the academy. “Being leaders in our community is important primarily for our children,” said a Leadership Academy member. “We are also able to help parents who do not have enough time for their children. We feel equipped and confident to help them.” Community groups initiated by the Leadership Academy team also have sparked interest in other community members in a proactive approach to keeping the city safe and clean. Additionally, CFT clients said they were grateful for the services they received, and CFT members reported building relationships with families in Hebbron Heights. In sum, stakeholder groups described Strategic Work Plan efforts as positively affecting the community.

In addition to the interview data, NCCD’s analysis of crime data indicate considerable improvements in certain types of crime in the Hebbron Heights neighborhood from 2011 to 2014. These changes may be due in part to the efforts of CASP, although no cause-and-effect relationship between CASP’s work in this neighborhood and any decreases in crime can be determined from this analysis. The trends seen in the crime data suggest that implementation of the Strategic Work Plan, as well as other local violence reduction interventions and strategies being implemented concurrently, may be having an impact in this community. It also is important to note that a number of additional factors including policy changes, policing efforts, and an improving economic climate may have contributed to these changes.

Partnerships and Relationships Are Positively Impacting CASP and Its Interventions

A noted achievement resulting from the work plan is the collaboration promoted among a range of agencies and organizations. CASP members interviewed for this evaluation indicated that CASP provides useful networking, information-sharing opportunities, and coordination of services across organizations. One organization described CASP as being a helpful resource when needing input in updating goals for their organization. In a similar manner, CASP collaboration and efforts helped a CASP member agency obtain a STRYVE grant from the CDC; these funds were used for youth violence prevention in Salinas. Additionally, the relationships CASP has fostered with Leadership Academy members has given CASP staff a better perspective on what the community needs. CFT meetings convene a range of partners working together on the same goal, an approach that was often under-utilized in
Salinas before the creation of the plan. Because of the Strategic Work Plan’s unique approach, interviewees reported that other communities would like to implement similar strategies in their communities.

Community Members’ Relationships With Police Are Improving

A diverse group of interviewees agreed that Hebbron Heights residents have developed greater trust and confidence in the police as a result of CASP efforts. CFT clients said they appreciated receiving frequent visits from the community police officers and referrals to services. CFT client families who reported having close relationships with officers felt their voices were being heard in the city. Similarly, Hebbron Heights residents said they felt safe when there was vigilance by the police. Interviewees noted that community police officers have greatly contributed to the CFT and its mission. By being the main point of contact for many CFT clients, the officers have been able to provide important input regarding clients’ progress and suggest additional services needed. Further, some interviewees reported that when an emergency occurs some community members now prefer to call the community police officers instead of dialing 911. One officer stated that even the quality of calls has improved. Stakeholders reported that part of the success behind community policing comes from the officers’ ability to relate to community members in culture and in language; this ability increases their understanding of CFT clients and community members’ experiences and reactions. Additionally, some Leadership Academy members described the officers as leaders in the community and were pleased with the work they were doing. “[The police are doing a good job],” said one Leadership Academy member. “They are building a bridge and trust with the community.”
Challenges

CASP and the Strategic Work Plan Lack Engagement With a Wide Range of Stakeholders

One of the most commonly voiced concerns across all stakeholder groups interviewed for this evaluation was the need to increase participation in the work of CASP and the Strategic Work Plan by a range of stakeholders. This concern focuses on several key areas. First and foremost, many noted a pressing need to increase involvement and engagement of community members in CASP efforts. Community members have limited involvement in CASP meetings, leadership roles, and operation of CASP and its interventions. As mentioned by several interviewees, this may be due to logistical issues. For example, some CASP meetings and other events are not held in Hebron Heights, but in another area of Salinas during the weekday, and lack translation services. Further, some Leadership Academy members described not feeling welcome at CASP or CFT meetings. One Leadership Academy member said, “I don't feel like we are being used as testimonies and I say that with much respect.” Leadership Academy members also reported a lack of understanding of what is occurring in neighborhoods by CASP and CFT service providers, which may in turn impact how and what interventions are provided. Improved understanding by CASP and CFT members, as well as increased participation in CASP by residents, could strengthen the effectiveness of interventions. These findings are supported by comments from some interviewees who work for agencies or CBOs associated with CASP; one interviewee noted, “Conversations in CASP are controlled by people in power. There is an inner circle of elites.” It should also be noted that while some CFT members expressed concern with the lack of community input in the work of CASP and the CFT, others felt that involving community members in CFT meetings, for example, could have the potential to jeopardize confidential information.

Some interviewees reported that the composition of CASP tends to be weighted in the direction of county government agencies, leading to feelings of exclusion among some CBOs, particularly smaller grassroots organizations. One interviewee said, “My organization has not been officially invited to CASP … CASP has mostly people from government. They are really about building more money instead of about communities.”

Finally, some interviewees said that the Strategic Work Plan would benefit from greater or more consistent involvement by some partners including education/schools, probation, and churches, as well as wider representation by CBOs. Additionally, some interviewees discussed the need to improve partnerships with other groups who have similar goals related to violence prevention, such as Building Healthy Communities (BHC). In Monterey County, BHC efforts focus on East Salinas and emphasize improving health outcomes for local residents. Interviewees noted a desire to improve partnership and coordination of CASP efforts with BHC, which could lead to better outcomes for community members. Members of BHC’s Salinas effort, in turn, when interviewed for this evaluation, highlighted the need for CASP and the Strategic Work Plan to implement strategies that more deeply reflect community engagement and empowerment, with a focus on youth involvement.

Additional Clarity About CASP’s Next Steps in Hebron Heights Is Needed

Findings from the evaluation indicate a lack of clarity regarding CASP’s next steps in Hebron Heights, the neighborhood selected as the first location for implementation of Strategic Work Plan interventions. Clarity regarding a strategy to implement similar work in other Salinas neighborhoods is also lacking. While the Strategic Work Plan includes a section
regarding CASP’s proposed transition from Hebbron Heights, this section may benefit from further explanation with more specifics, which could include conversations at general assembly meetings or other CASP gatherings that involve community members. Some interviewees reported the need for a more well-defined long-term strategy for continuing CASP’s work in Hebbron Heights and/or transitioning the work to other neighborhoods in Salinas. For example, some interviewees wanted to know if CASP’s next steps include moving the CFT’s intensive service provision model to other communities, and if so, whether CASP will continue to provide this level of services for the Hebbron Heights neighborhood once that transition occurs. While some interviewees believe CASP should begin transitioning out of Hebbron Heights and bringing its services to other neighborhoods, others believe that CASP should never leave a neighborhood as it may create complications and be harmful to community members currently being served. Finally, some interviewees feel the time to shift the majority of CASP’s efforts from Hebbron Heights to another neighborhood is when community members are sufficiently empowered to continue doing the work on their own. “[The exit strategy] may lie with the Leadership Academy and residents themselves,” said an interviewee.

Communication on Multiple Levels Can Be Improved

Interviewees described some challenges with communication related to Strategic Work Plan processes and interventions. These challenges appeared on several levels, including between CFT member agencies and CFT clients; between Leadership Academy members and CASP; and among CFT member agencies. For example, some family members whose children participated in CFT-referred services said they did not know how their children were identified for involvement in services; nor did they recall signing documentation to enroll their children in services. Some also described feeling excluded from service provision for their children, including not knowing what services their children received. Additionally, some family members of CFT clients expressed confusion about the role of community police officers. This misunderstanding arose after their own children or other family members were arrested by the same officers who were offering them services. “We trusted them, but instead, they kick people out of their homes,” one CFT client said. These interviewees would like to see more clarity regarding the role of the community police officer.

Leadership Academy participants also identified some challenges in terms of communication. This includes the need for CASP and the city to strengthen follow-up with Leadership Academy members and continue momentum after a Leadership Academy training cycle is completed. Some academy members stated that when they want to report something wrong in their neighborhood, as the academy trains them to do, they do not know who to contact.

Finally, some CASP members and CFT providers reported that while agency-to-agency communication has improved overall through CASP activities, it could use further strengthening. Community Safety Division staff agreed about the need to strengthen internal communication (for example, among CASP members), and then address issues related to external communication (for example, in terms of effectively communicating information about the breadth of services available through the CFT).
In order for CASP and its partners to continue advancing its initiative for community-wide violence reduction, NCCD has developed several specific recommendations for consideration. Recommendations in this report respond directly to the challenges that emerged from the evaluation findings.

**Increase the Diversity of CASP Partnerships and Participation**

NCCD recommends that CASP increases the diversity and number of partnerships and participants in its general assembly. Findings suggest that the collaborative efforts of CASP, city, and county partners would be greatly enhanced with the inclusion of more community member participants in the further development and implementation of its strategies. Shifting the monthly CASP meeting to a time and location that is more amenable to community resident participation is advised, as it is critical that parents and families be active participants in this initiative to ensure that it reflects their needs. Similarly, youth participation in CASP and a stronger youth focus in general is recommended for CASP and its partners. Bringing more youth to the table will empower youth to have a voice in prioritizing what services are delivered and, more importantly, how they are delivered. Additionally, NCCD recommends that CASP and its partners increase collaboration with schools in the Salinas and Monterey County area, with smaller CBOs, and with other initiatives in the community with similar aims, such as BHC. Increasing the number of contacts and working relationships with these organizations will only enhance the work being done in this community around the needs of families and youth.

When considering this recommendation, it is important to situate it alongside the original purpose of CASP, which is to serve as a leadership group that coordinates violence prevention efforts in the Salinas area. While in that respect CASP is accomplishing its stated goal, as CASP continues to evolve, CASP leadership should consider expanding who is included in high-level decision making and governance for CASP. In particular, Leadership Academy members have voiced a desire to be more involved in CASP’s leadership process. Building academy participants into the CASP structure will increase community members’ input and empowerment, which in turn will improve the overall effectiveness of CASP and the Strategic Work Plan implementation. The Community Safety Division of the City of Salinas recently hired a staff member who will be dedicated to operating the Leadership Academy and convening follow-up activities for academy participants, which may help to address this important issue.

**Improve Clarity and Marketing About CASP’s Purpose**

NCCD recommends that CASP continue to clarify its purpose and goals and, subsequently, improve its efforts to communicate that information to stakeholders. Various stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation expressed confusion about the purpose and goals of CASP. Particularly since CASP is a continually evolving entity, CASP could consider better communications with its diverse stakeholder groups, including community members, CFT clients, Leadership Academy members, CFT members, and CASP members, about its mission and what each group should expect from CASP, including
services provided and for whom various meetings are intended. Communication strategies can be tailored to the needs of each group. In addition, NCCD recommends that CASP increase its outreach efforts in Hebbron Heights in order to spread further awareness of the group’s efforts. Finally, CASP may want to consider sharpening its violence reduction efforts to focus specifically on a few key areas in order to increase its effectiveness and dispel a perception that CASP is an entity that should serve as all things to all people. If this shift occurs, the change should be communicated clearly to all relevant stakeholder groups.

Increase the Capacity for Data and Evaluation Management and Tracking

NCCD recommends that CASP increase its capacity for data and evaluation management and tracking to ensure its effectiveness. In order to continue the collaborative efforts that have been developed and implemented in the City of Salinas and specifically Hebbron Heights, CASP must continue to define and measure success by reexamining its goals and objectives in an iterative process. Several stakeholder groups highlighted their concerns with the large number of objectives included in the Strategic Work Plan. NCCD recommends that the general assembly revisit these strategic objectives quarterly, as improvements in the community around public safety and violence reduction occur over time. This process will allow the work to remain focused and deliberate and maintain the intention on implementation.

NCCD also recommends that CASP create formal agreements with participating agencies in the form of memorandums of understanding. This would enable collaborative partners to have discrete tasks and roles in both service provision and delivery.

Additionally, data issues around evaluation may be enhanced with an increased capacity for data management. This applies directly to the work being done in Hebbron Heights with CFT. An improvement in the CFT’s systems for maintaining and tracking data should be implemented for data integrity and to maintain confidentiality for families. This process would greatly improve the CFT’s ability to track their families and the progress made with service provisions.

Finally, when measuring outcomes, NCCD recommends using a strengths-based approach. For example, when measuring the goal of “increase community engagement and participation” for the critical focus point of healthy and safe communities, NCCD recommends operationalizing and measuring “stability” rather than measuring “instability.” This asset-focused perspective could be applied to measuring other outcomes, too.

Improve the Capacity of Service Provision in Hebbron Heights

NCCD recommends that CASP continue to improve its capacity for service provision in Hebbron Heights. For example, NCCD advises the CFT to continue using procedures that are already in place to improve integrated service delivery and communication between CFT members and clients served. This also extends to communication and collaboration between Leadership Academy members and CASP to improve the level of support that Leadership Academy members receive during their tenure in and after they graduate from the program.
Increased transparency of services and a clear delineation of roles also will enhance the services provided by CFT. Families and youth served by CFT will be more successful if more information is available about services. Specific information about services provided, names and contact information for CFT members, and clearly defined roles with associated responsibilities explicitly described also may increase the usage of services and thereby impact public safety and youth violence. NCCD also recommends that Salinas law enforcement clearly define community police officer roles for community residents. This will allow residents to be aware of officers’ presence, duties, and the services and/or information they can provide.

Throughout the course of interviews with families served by CFT, the importance of parental involvement repeatedly emerged. NCCD recommends that CFT involve parents and extended families more directly in service provision. It is also advised that CFT hold community forums and listening sessions with parents about types of services that families need in order to implement interventions that are directly responsive to parents and families. These community forums also could involve parents in defining how they would like services delivered, as this could directly impact the success of their children’s service usage. Finally, related to strategies in Hebbron Heights, increasing collaboration with schools is advised so that youth are supported in a full-spectrum manner. CASP can enlist teachers, administrators, and school officials to collectively work to improve the number of educational and recreational activities available for youth in Hebbron Heights.

**Secure Funding for Continued Work**

NCCD recommends that CASP and the City of Salinas explore avenues for continued funding for implementing the Strategic Work Plan in Hebbron Heights and beyond. Local leaders and champions of this community have driven the success of the work so far, and continued advocacy on this level must persist to secure sustained funding. Strategic partnerships with local and state government, businesses, CBOs, federal organizations, and initiatives with similar aims must be pursued to provide financial resources that can be leveraged to continue the pioneering work in this community.
Impact of Recent Community Events

When considering violence reduction in the Salinas area, it should be noted that CASP operated against the backdrop of several important events involving community members and law enforcement in 2014. Between March and July 2014, Salinas experienced four officer-involved shootings, with Latino men as the casualties in each incident. Typically, one officer-involved shooting occurs per year in the city. From the community perspective, these incidents sparked both unrest and peaceful community forums. The shootings also motivated community members, through the recently convened Respect, Dignity, and Justice Committee, to develop a proposal to form a police review board; board members would be appointed by the Salinas City Council. Law enforcement responses to these incidents included initiating an internal review of each incident, requesting and facilitating the involvement of the US Department of Justice in their investigation of some of these incidents, and engaging a federal mediator to talk with city officials and community members to determine how best to proceed regarding community/law enforcement relations in Salinas (Gatlin, 2014; Monterey Herald, 2014; Reynolds, 2014; Rubin, 2014). It also is important to note that all of NCCD’s data collection efforts with community members—such as Leadership Academy participants and CFT clients—were completed prior to these incidents.
Sacramento, CA: Author.


