

# PART 12



**CGIT**  
CRIME GUN INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGIES

# DETECTIVE PERSPECTIVES

## ON CRIME GUN INTELLIGENCE

### PART 12: ARE YOU A CHAMPION, A LEADER OR BOTH?

The reduction of violent crime is a complex problem and the task is too large and difficult for one lab, police department or prosecutor to manage alone. Only the right combination of stakeholders can plan and implement the improvements needed to reduce violent crime.

Success often depends on the ability to address a problem from a variety of fronts. All of the right people involved must be thinking and acting together—not only at the outset, but throughout the entire process. Plain old cooperation will not be enough to manage this—a stronger action is required. The level of action needed is best described by the word collaboration – **inferring to think and act together.**

### COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

Putting sustainable, comprehensive and timely crime gun intelligence (CGI) policies and procedures in place for the first time, will without a doubt require collaboration. It is an essential element for securing a sustainable solution capable of delivering substantial benefits. Yet, collaboration alone is not enough.

The act of putting new CGI policies and procedures in place, which are based on recognized best practices, suggests that change must occur within the organization. Therefore, innovation also becomes an essential element for securing a sustainable solution yielding substantial benefits. It will take, innovation in every sense of the word, from the discussion of new ideas, to the creation of new processes, to changing the way in which people work. Yet, innovation alone is not enough.

Reflect back a moment to your High School Physics Class. Think of the terms collaboration and innovation being analogous to “Potential and Kinetic Energy”. Visualize two giant boulders positioned near the edge of a cliff. In order to turn the potential of their mass into kinetic energy - they must be put into motion. Somebody needs to step up – and push them off the edge. As they fall hundreds of feet down, the amount of energy at impact will be measured by their speed and mass.

### CHAMPIONS AND LEADERS – MOVERS AND SHAKERS

There are basically two types of people that can put the elements of collaboration and innovation in motion to instill new CGI policies and procedures into an organization – **Champions and Leaders**. And, they don't necessarily have to be a member of the affected organization to do it.

**Champions are advocates.** Champions are critically important to the cause of embedding CGI best practices into an organization involved in law enforcement, forensics or the prosecution of armed criminals. They can be found from top to bottom and across the entire breadth of these organizations - and outside of them as well - amongst legislators and appropriators, interest groups, educators and solution providers. New champions can also be developed along the way – turning-up the volume on the calls for change. Champions make an impact convincing others to put the wheels of change in motion and keep those wheels turning.

While absolutely fundamental to advancing the cause of good CGI and sustaining it within an organization, a champion may have some inherent limitations depending on their position of authority. They may or may not have the ability to actually make the changes required and issue the orders. For example, this writer has talked to hundreds if not thousands of first line law enforcers, criminalists and prosecutors about the benefits associated with the adoption of CGI best practices. Their feedback has been clear and consistent: **“The bosses need**

**The feedback was confirming what many people in the business already know – organizational change also requires Leadership.**

**Leaders are groundbreakers.** While leaders can be found at all levels of an organization, in order to break new ground across an entire organization the leader must also have the will and authority to do it. For example, there are three key team members who would be most affected by new CGI policies: police, forensic personnel and prosecutors across the affected crime region. Because collaboration is an essential element, they will need to come together. Someone in authority must call for the meeting, approve the attendees participation and travel, and approve the funds to pay for any costs incurred. It takes leadership and authority to shake up the status quo and make things happen. Should new policy and procedural recommendations result from the meetings, it will require leaders with the proper level of authority to issue the directives and approve any expenses required. This is the leader's responsibility.

**“If it's not important to the leadership – it's not important to the people on the front line”.**

*Carlos Canino, DAD-National Programs,  
ATF, 2017*

### **AUTHORITY**

Innovation will depend upon leaders with the **authority** to make it happen. Without the

authority to put new CGI policies in place, a leader cannot institutionalize them within an organization. Yes, of course it's possible for certain team members on the front line to make **“handshake agreements”** adopting good CGI practices. However, these types of agreements will most probably fade away over time as assignments change and people move on. Remember, policy drives and adhered to policy sustains. An improvement that cannot be sustained is not an improvement at all.

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

Along with leadership and authority comes responsibility. Criminal justice system leaders have been advanced the public's trust. The expectation is, that they will use their authorities to fulfill a duty bound obligation to protect and serve the public in a just, efficient and effective way. The buck stops with them, so ultimately it becomes their responsibility to continually collaborate and innovate on ways in which to better seek justice for the victims of gun related violence, resolution for their loved ones and a sustainable peace for their neighbors.



### **LEADERSHIP: A NEW JERSEY STORY**

In 2008, the New Jersey Attorney General issued a directive requiring all police departments to collect and input CGI data on crime guns to the New Jersey State Police and ATF. The directive mandated the tracing of recovered firearms through ATF's eTrace and the NJ Trace system, checks of NCIC to determine a gun's stolen status, and expeditious processing through ATF's NIBIN Network to determine whether the firearm was used in any other crimes.

In September of 2013, the Governor of New Jersey signed public law P.L. 2013, Chapter 162. The law codified - and by so doing institutionalized - the tenets of the prior AG directive across all law enforcement agencies statewide.

From there, the New Jersey State Police (NJSP) took up the baton. In collaboration with its local, county and federal partners, the NJSP put new processes and policies in place that were designed not only to meet the requirements of the new law - but exceed them - for the benefit of the public they serve.

In 2023, the Office of Justice Programs posted a study entitled: Research on a 15-Year Statewide Program to Generate Enhanced Investigative Leads on Crime Gun Violence.

This study examined the innovative use of firearms related evidence to enhance violent crime investigations in New Jersey and the critical role that strong leaders played in building a statewide infrastructure for information sharing in support of evidence/intelligence-led policing.

This effort changed the use of firearms forensic evidence from a sole evidential focus to one that also incorporates a premonitory focus required to generate investigative leads. This project demonstrated the critical importance of fusing firearms forensic evidence such as ballistics imaging with locally available information, such as arrest and incident data on a statewide basis. This study further demonstrated the value of ballistics imaging to connect previously unconnected incidents, individuals, and weapons particularly when combined with other law enforcement data sets. This project demonstrated the critical importance of fusing firearms forensic evidence such as ballistics imaging with locally available information, such as arrest and incident data on a statewide basis. This study further demonstrated the value of ballistics imaging to connect, previously unconnected incidents, individuals, and weapons particularly when combined with other law enforcement data sets. It illustrated the critical need of information sharing across forensic, criminal intelligence (such as

fusion and real time crime centers), and investigative entities across all levels of government – local, state, and federal - in supporting violent crime suppression efforts.

[www.ojp.gov/library/publications/research-15-year-statewide-program-generate-enhanced-investigative-leads-crime](http://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/research-15-year-statewide-program-generate-enhanced-investigative-leads-crime)

### ARE YOU A CHAMPION, A LEADER OR BOTH?

At the very least, all of us can be champions and help put the wheels of change in motion. We can raise awareness of the benefits of adopting field proven policy driven CGI best practices and sustaining them through relentless follow-up! Better yet – if you're a criminal justice leader – you can make it happen!



### This wraps up our 12-part series on Crime Gun Intelligence.

Stay tuned to our website to discover the next topic featured in Detective Perspectives! [www.crimeguntech.com/detective-perspectives](http://www.crimeguntech.com/detective-perspectives) or visit our YouTube page at [www.youtube.com/@crimeguntech](http://www.youtube.com/@crimeguntech)

#### SOURCES:

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