EVIDENCE-BASED ASSESSMENT OF SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATIONS

Prepared by

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Executive Summary

In January 2023, Chief Adrian Diaz of the Seattle Police Department (SPD) asked the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP) at George Mason University (GMU) to assess the state of SPD's investigative operations through an evidence-based policing lens. The request for CEBCP's assistance follows Executive Order 2022-05 by the Mayor of the City of Seattle.[1] Evidence-based policing emphasizes that police agencies should be aware of, use, and institutionalize the best available knowledge about operations in their work. Evidence-based assessments of policing operations are therefore grounded in rigorous scientific research knowledge about policing and empirical findings from internal analyses within the agency (Sherman, 1998).

The research knowledge about investigative operations in U.S. policing has been building since the 1970s. We now know that "investigative effectiveness" (the ability of police agencies to detect, investigate, solve, and resolve crimes and victim harm) is not simply the result of determining which cases have adequate solvability factors and applying investigative resources to those cases. Instead, an agency's ability to effectively investigate and resolve crime results from the combination of investigative casework and the organizational infrastructure that supports investigations. This organizational infrastructure for investigations includes systems of command, control, and leadership; supervision and management; tracking, performance, and accountability; training and onboarding; policy and procedural development and adherence; and strategic capacity. Investigative effectiveness also depends on strong, structured, and regular interactions between detectives, investigative units, investigative support services, patrol units, the community, and other social and governmental services. In these ways, investigative effectiveness is closely integrated with the overall effectiveness of the police agency in carrying out the two fundamental mandates of democratic policing: achieving both legitimacy from, and safety for, the public.

However, implementing an evidence-based investigative approach in policing is profoundly challenged by the realities of American police organizations. Police agencies are generally reactive, process-driven, and transactional, rather than dynamic learning organizations. These characteristics create an organizational environment in which it is difficult to adapt to new information and knowledge and weather crises. In addition, policing's reactive and transactional approach leaves more significant and longstanding structural problems unaddressed, impeding the agency's growth and alignment with the growing knowledge base about policing. Investigative operations, in particular, have also been relatively more hidden from scrutiny, reforms, and assessments than patrol, often rendering them less organizationally developed. The SPD is no different than many other U.S. police agencies in these characteristics, and its current challenges are the result of longstanding and unresolved concerns, rather than the fault of any individual or unit.

[1] Executive Order 2022-05 directs "the Seattle Police Department to Assess Policies, Protocols, and Practices Related to the Investigation of Criminal Offenses and Implement Necessary Solutions to Advance Justice and Serve the Needs of Crime Survivors." See http://clerk.seattle.gov/~CFS/CF_322390.pdf.

Recent events in U.S. policing generally, and Seattle specifically, have exacerbated this situation and traditional policing approach, creating a "perfect storm" of crises for policing (see more specific discussion about the Seattle Context in Section 2). These developments have included sentinel events in Seattle leading to federal oversight and a consent decree; highly publicized national officer-involved uses of force; the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis leading to protests and defunding discussions in Seattle; and the COVID-19 pandemic. These events and other political, social, and economic developments have contributed to the decline of police and justice system legitimacy and capacity, increased violence and property crime in some cities, and the departure of many officers, detectives, and civilians from police departments in many U.S. agencies, including the SPD.

All of these factors have led to a significant personnel crisis in the SPD that has reduced the capacity (and morale) of investigative and patrol operations. However, we emphasize that current problems in the SPD are not solely attributable to these recent social and political events. Rather, these events have exacerbated longstanding problems in the agency that cannot be resolved only through increases in staffing. Many of our suggestions in this report, therefore, tackle organizational infrastructure problems that impact the agency's operational capacity and potentially undermine its public legitimacy.

The CEBCP's assessment of SPD's investigative practices accounts for this context and the evidence base for effective investigative operations. To conduct this assessment, GMU professors Cynthia Lum and Christopher Koper formed a team of policing scholars and police practitioners to ensure expertise and balance in research and practice.[2] For a week at the end of March of 2023, the team visited the SPD in person, interviewing several sworn and nonsworn members of the agency and reviewing data, documents, and policies related to investigations. The team organized its efforts around eight topics, as informed by the research evidence on investigations:

- State of Investigations and Agency Context (Section 2)
- Organization of Investigations (Section 3)
- Selection, Onboarding, and Training (Section 4)
- Investigative Process, Workload, and Effort (Section 5)

[2] The researchers on the team (Lum, Koper, Barao) have all conducted extensive studies of law enforcement policies and practices, including investigations. The principal investigators (Lum and Koper) are national experts in evidence-based policing. Additionally, Lum has former law enforcement investigations experience and Koper was formerly the research director for the Police Executive Research Forum. Barao has conducted one of the few quasi-experimental studies testing an investigative process in a large urban agency. The three practitioners on the GMU team have deep investigations, leadership, and policing experience. They include: one retired Division Chief of Operations and Chief of Detectives of a county agency of similar size to the SPD with experience in evidence-based policing, patrol, investigations, leadership, and administration (Lewis); a retired sergeant with expertise in crime analysis, information technology, and investigations in a large city police agency (Egge); and a current practitioner and investigative supervisor with specific expertise in violent crimes investigations and performance management (Mastroianni).

- Leadership and Supervision (Section 6)
- Information Systems for Case Tracking and Management (Section 7)
- Investigative Support Services (Section 8)
- Investigations and Patrol (Section 9)

We emphasize that this effort is not meant to be a comprehensive assessment of all elements, technologies, or procedures of all investigations in the SPD.[3] Instead, the GMU team provides an external perspective from an evidence-based policing lens based on the areas we were able to explore, given the parameters of this assessment and the willingness of personnel to speak to us. This assessment is also not focused on analyzing how specific cases within units have been investigated. That type of analysis is beyond our scope and involves significant research effort to examine individual case files (for examples, see Braga & Dusseault, 2018; Braga et al., 2019; Wellford et al., 2019).

Recommendations

The SPD has gone through periods of crisis and reform in the last 10-20 years. While many we interviewed took pride and ownership of their cases and responsibilities and often described going the extra mile to do their jobs, both short- and long-term problems within and external to the agency likely limit the ability of individuals to effectively investigate, supervise, and lead in investigations. Some of the agency's long-standing practices related to investigations are not well aligned with the research about effective investigations. In each section of the report, we discuss our assessment and findings and provide suggestions for the agency to improve investigative operations. Below, we provide a brief overview of these suggestions but encourage readers to examine each section carefully for detailed information.

In summary and from an evidence-based perspective, the SPD should consider the following recommendations to improve their capacity for effective investigative functioning:

1. The leadership of the SPD across all bureaus should consider finding and fostering opportunities for strategic planning, discussion, analysis, and assessment of operations using a team-oriented and problem-solving approach. In several sections of this report, we discuss the absence of opportunities for members of the agency to engage strategically. (Sections 3, 6, and 9).

2. The SPD Investigations Bureau should embark on a team-oriented, organized, resourced, and professionally guided effort to create clearly written and described policies, standard operating procedures, operational guidelines, and bylaws for the Investigations Bureau generally and for each of its sections and units. This exercise

[3] The team did not assess sexual assault investigations, as that was being assessed by Professor Cassia Spohn (Arizona State University) at the time of this assessment.

should not be a discretionary, informal, or individual task, but a highly coordinated, transparent, and inclusive activity. (Sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9).

3. When implementing any reorganization or change in the Investigations Bureau, a strategic assessment should be conducted before and after the change, clearly describing the reorganization's expectations, outcomes, and unintended consequences. For example, if a particular goal is sought, was that goal achieved through reorganization? An example in Section 3 is given regarding the General Investigations Unit (GIU). (Sections 3 and 6)

4. Fair, consistently practiced, formalized, and written application, interview, and onboarding processes and guidelines are needed for all transfers (detectives or supervisors) to investigative units. These processes should also apply to training opportunities in investigations (such as the 30-day details). (Section 4).

5. Regular, formalized, updated, and consistently available training and mentoring systems should be developed for investigators and investigative supervisors. (Section 4).

6. Certain investigative practices that characterize high-performing investigative units were not found in the SPD Investigations Bureau (due to many factors). For example, the SPD should consider increasing initial response to crime scenes for more types of crimes (and not just homicide). The Investigations Bureau should reconsider its solvability triaging practices for serious crimes, as investigative efforts can help clear crimes that may seem less solvable. Units should consider employing checklists and other articulated expectations or guidelines about elements of an investigation that need to be completed in case folders and have supervisors actively involved in regular case review. Regular and formalized feedback and information-sharing loops should be developed between investigators, support services, and patrol officers to facilitate relationships and casework. (Section 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9).

7. First- and second-line investigative supervisors need stronger training, professional development, guidance, support, and authority to mentor, monitor, manage, and assess the performance of their units. (Section 6).

8. The SPD should implement a more standardized and mandatory approach to updating case jackets in Mark43 to facilitate more consistent tracking and assessment of investigations. In addition, agency guidelines should be more explicit about the types of updates that should be entered into Mark43 and the timeliness for such updates. Other information-sharing venues and systems should be regularly identified, developed, and used. (Section 7).

9. Given the importance of evidence collection and intelligence and crime analysis to successful investigations, the SPD should reconsider how it organizes its investigative support units and consider expanding them, employing more nonsworn individuals.

Analysts (crime, intelligence, forensics, and information technology specialists) are essential personnel in modern police agencies. The agency needs many more of these employees to support both patrol and investigative functions. Further, separating sworn and nonsworn individuals may unnecessarily isolate knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources for crime scene and forensics investigations. (Section 8).

10. In its current hiring push, the agency should consider increasing the hiring of nonsworn individuals to perform various investigative roles and find ways to equalize their status in the agency with sworn personnel. Analyst positions need to be significantly expanded in the SPD and can be filled with nonsworn individuals. Other nonsworn positions removed from the agency, including victim advocates, should be brought back into the agency, but with clearly defined expectations, roles, and supervision. (Section 8).

11. Despite their symbiotic relationship, there are several areas of disconnect between the patrol and investigation bureaus in the SPD. Leaders within the patrol and investigative bureaus must collaborate and have strategic discussions and problem-solving sessions on shared concerns. This includes finding more opportunities and systems for officers and detectives to share information and problem-solve together. Patrol officers and supervisors need clear guidance and support to ensure they respond optimally to cases that are later investigated. (Section 9).

Note of Appreciation

Our assessment could not have been completed without the cooperation of the employees of the SPD. Many staff members, officers, detectives, supervisors, and commanders were open and willing to share their experiences, expertise, and extensive knowledge about investigations within the SPD. Despite the agency's challenges, it was clear that many who spoke with us cared deeply about the future of the department and its ability to serve the community. We found many employees willing to “go the extra mile” to overcome significant challenges they faced to accomplish their work. Like all organizations, the challenges and findings we discuss throughout this report are less about specific people or units and more about the systems and environments (both internal and external) in which they work. We hope our findings and recommendations are received with the understanding that they are meant to help the agency and those that inhabit the great city of Seattle.

We are incredibly grateful to Loren Atherley and Mirs Vonaschen-Cook, from the Performance Analytics & Research Unit, who helped coordinate our visit and facilitated the interviews and meetings for the GMU team.

1. Background, Objectives, and Method of Assessment

Background and Objectives

In January 2023, Chief Adrian Diaz of the Seattle Police Department requested the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP) at George Mason University (GMU) to assess the state of SPD's Investigations Bureau through an evidence-based policing lens. Evidence-based policing emphasizes that police agencies should be aware of, use, and institutionalize the best available knowledge about operations in their work. Evidence-based assessments of policing operations are therefore grounded in rigorous scientific research knowledge about policing and empirical findings from the agency itself (Lum & Koper, 2017; Sherman, 1998). The request for GMU's assistance follows Executive Order 2022-05 by the Mayor of the City of Seattle, which directs the SPD to "assess its policies, protocols, and practices related to the investigation of criminal offenses and implement necessary solutions to advance justice and serve the needs of crime survivors."

Most research evidence about police practices is not focused on investigations but on patrol operations. While this knowledge is extensive, specific, and nuanced, the research points to several principles of effective policing that generally inform an evidence-based policing approach (for reviews of this research, see Lum & Koper, 2017; National Academies of Sciences, 2018; National Research Council, 2004). As Lum and Koper (2017) summarize, these principles of evidence-based policing are:

- Overreliance on arrests will not reduce crime.
- Officers are more effective when they are proactive, not reactive.
- Police can be effective if they proactively patrol, investigate, and mitigate places, not just people.
- Individual-based strategies are more effective when targeted and tailored to needs.
- Officers are more effective when they develop bespoke responses to problems.
- Community input and support is needed to achieve some evidence-based approaches.
- Fair and procedurally just treatment of individuals by the police can improve satisfaction and perceptions of the legitimacy of the police.

While effective criminal investigations and detective work can be generally informed by these principles, they have been much less specifically researched, evaluated, or assessed (Braga et al., 2011; Lum et al., 2018; Prince et al., 2021; Wellford et al., 2019). However, the research evidence on investigations has been building since the 1970s. We do not provide a full review of this evidence here, given that it is already provided by Prince et al. (2021; see relatedly, Lum et al., 2022). However, that research indicates that "investigative effectiveness" (the ability of

police agencies to detect, investigate, solve, and resolve crimes and victim harm) is not simply the result of determining which cases have adequate solvability factors and applying investigative resources to those cases. Instead, an agency's ability to effectively investigate and resolve crime results from the combination of investigative casework and the organizational infrastructure that supports investigations. This organizational infrastructure for investigations includes systems of command, control, and leadership; supervision and management; tracking, performance, and accountability; training and onboarding; policy and procedural development and adherence; and strategic capacity. Investigative effectiveness also depends on strong, structured, and regular interactions between detectives, investigative units, investigative support services, patrol units, the community, and other social and governmental services. In these ways, investigative effectiveness is closely integrated with the overall effectiveness of the police agency in carrying out the two fundamental mandates of democratic policing: achieving both legitimacy from, and safety for, the public.

The most recent large-scale national study of investigative effectiveness was led by the first author of this report (Lum) and Charles Wellford (see Lum et al., 2018; Scott et al., 2019; Wellford et al., 2019; Lum et al., 2023). That study examined investigative performance for the largest 100 agencies in the United States from the 1980s to the 2010s (which included the SPD), classifying agencies into various trajectories of crime clearance performance[4] for homicide, robbery, burglary, and aggravated assaults. This classification then allowed those researchers to identify four "high" and four "low" performing agencies in which additional in-depth case-study analysis could be performed (Seattle was not one of the eight agencies examined). From that analysis, the researchers identified organizational characteristics of high and low-performing agencies concerning their investigative practices (see Lum et al., 2023).

The Lum et al. national study is helpful to this evidence assessment of SPD investigations in two ways. Most importantly, the findings of the eight-agency case study and a subsequent review of investigations research by Prince et al. (2021) revealed the following characteristics of "high-performing" investigations in police agencies that were used to guide this evidence assessment of SPD. Specifically, high-performing agencies:

- have more structured oversight and formal interactions between investigative units and agency leadership;
- are more likely to have investigative units that have good relationships with other units and that share information regularly and well with each other;
- have investigative units that have specific goals and performance metrics for both the unit and for investigators within that unit;
- assign most, if not all, serious crimes to a detective or investigative unit for some follow-up investigation (while this is expected for homicides, high-performing agency

[4] The Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) defines crime clearance rates as the sum of arrests and exceptional clearances of offenses divided into the total number of offenses for any given year. Further, it describes "cleared by exceptional means" when "in certain situations, elements beyond law enforcement's control prevent the agency from arresting and formally charging the offender."

investigative units also do this with robbery, burglary, aggravated assault, and other crimes);
- have investigators who more frequently respond to the initial crime scene when crimes have been reported;
- have investigators and supervisors who either have (or are required to have) specialized experience before joining investigative units or are expected to be trained on specific skills once they join those units;
- have standard operating procedures for investigations, where cases are managed carefully and have requirements for completion;
- support their investigative units, both symbolically and with resources (units are viewed as prestigious, and investigations are seen as a priority within the agency's overall mandates, goals, and budgets); and
- have better relationships and more interactions with the community.

The Lum et al. studies were also helpful to this project for a second reason. Although the SPD was not one of the eight agencies examined in the comparison of high and low-performing agencies by Lum et al. (2018; 2023), it was one of the 100 agencies included in the overall trajectory analysis of agency long-term clearance rates.[5] That analysis generally revealed that the SPD did not fall into high-performing clearance rate trajectories. In other words, SPD crime clearance trends for various crime types analyzed were either at or below national averages going back to the 1980s. We note this trend has persisted despite changes in leadership, fluctuations in crime trends, or changes in Seattle's population over this period.

The most recent available crime and arrest data for Seattle from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program[6] for 2019 (the year before COVID) and 2021 (the year after COVID lockdowns) continued to confirm these trends (see Figure 1).[7] Comparing 2019 and 2021, Seattle has experienced substantial increases in homicides, aggravated assaults, robberies, and burglaries. In addition, the SPD's most recent 2022 Crime Report[8] indicates that the city has experienced notable violent crime increases since 2020. At the same time, the clearance rate has fallen for all of these crimes except burglary, for which the clearance rate has held steady. And for all these offenses, the SPD's most recent clearance rate is below the national average (which in 2021 was already lower than pre-COVID periods).

[5] Lum et al. (2018) did not provide the names of the agencies and which specific trajectories each were classified within in that publication. However, the first author notes that the trajectories of long-term clearance rates were derived from publicly available information (Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting system) as collected by the University of Michigan's ICPSR program (see https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/pages/index.html).

[6] See https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/home. We note that UCR information may not precisely match an agency's own data due to the way that the UCR classifies certain crimes or time lags in arrests by agencies.

[7] Given the unusual nature of 2020 due to the pandemic and the George Floyd protests, we do not show that year here.

[8] See https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/Police/Reports/2022_SPD_CRIME_REPORT_FINAL.pdf.

Figure 1. 2019 and 2021 incidents and arrests (as a % of that year's incidents), as reported by the Seattle Police Department to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting system.

	2019		2021		National Arrest %* in 2021
	Incidents	Arrests (%*)	Incidents	Arrests (%*)	
Homicide	29	18 (62%)	39	11 (28%)	53%
Aggravated Assault	2,673	817 (31%)	3,248	877 (27%)	37%
Robbery	1,551	383 (25%)	1,742	316 (18%)	23%
Burglary	7,703	539 (7%)	9,776	720 (7%)	11%

*Percentages are calculated based on the total number of arrests that year divided by the total number of incidents. Some arrests may be of incidents that occurred in previous years.

In sum, the SPD has experienced relatively low clearance rates over time, despite changes in leadership, personnel, crime trends, and other internal and external factors. This evidence-based assessment is conducted in the context of these trends, using the available research evidence about effective investigations and empirical data collected from the SPD. We discuss more about the specific organizational context of the SPD in Section 2. We also emphasize at the outset that this assessment was focused on organizational aspects of SPD investigations (excluding sexual assault investigations, see fn. 3) and not on the analysis of specific cases and how they have been investigated. That type of analysis is beyond this assessment. Case-level analysis requires significant research resources and internal access to a large sample of case folders to code elements of case characteristics and specific investigative steps that were applied (for examples, see Braga & Dusseault, 2018; Braga et al., 2019; Wellford et al., 2019). We recommend that the agency consider that type of analysis in the future to understand and improve how individual cases are being investigated within units.

Method of Assessment

To carry out this assessment, the GMU-CEBCP team comprised equal parts of policing scholars and police practitioners to ensure expertise and balance in research and practice (see fn. 2). For a week at the end of March of 2023, the team visited Seattle Police Department in person, intending to interview several sworn and nonsworn members of the agency and review data, documents, and policies related to investigations. Several weeks before our arrival, the team requested interviews with members of various ranks from investigative sections and unit/squads, investigative support units, patrol command, and leadership. Given that the SPD requested this assessment, the GMU team relied on the agency to arrange these meetings. These interviews were primarily facilitated by the Performance and Analytics Research Unit, with some cooperation from various members of the Investigations Bureau and SPD leadership. The SPD leadership did not require any member to speak with the team.

While voluntary participation is always preferred to facilitate openness and goodwill between interviewers and participants, relying on voluntary participation also limited the team's ability to speak with all individuals requested. Although the exact numbers are unknown, many individuals chose not to speak with the GMU team. While we recognize that the agency chose

to make all cooperation voluntary for this project, we also note that this project was at the SPD's request with the goal of self-improvement, not a research project requested by the GMU team. Some interviewees did not appear to understand the purpose of our visit, and several people chose not to participate.

On the first day, all team members were briefed together by several SPD leaders and employees. On subsequent days, the GMU team members separated into teams of two, pairing a researcher with a practitioner to conduct daily interviews and focus groups. In total, 51 individuals agreed to be interviewed or participate in group discussions, although the initial invitations involved several more individuals who did not respond or chose not to participate. The interviewed employees came from various assignments and reflected different ranks, positions, and employee statuses (Figure 2). While this reflects only a small portion of all employees in the agency, the GMU team felt that multiple units and groups were represented, and responses yielded important insights. However, we caution readers that the findings in this report are based on this limited sample of interviews.

Figure 2. Number of unique individuals who participated in interviews and focus groups by general assignment and rank (N=51)

GENERAL ASSIGNMENT	
Nonsworn (civilian)	17
Investigations	18
Patrol	11
Administration/Executive	5
RANK	
Nonsworn (civilian)	17
Sgt or below	12
Lt and above or Executive	22

As this assessment was informed by prior research, we developed several questions for various groups drawing from interview instruments used by Lum et al. (2018), the findings from the national study, the research on investigations more generally, and the team's expertise. The team organized our inquiries around eight topics:

- State of Investigations and Agency Context (Section 2)
- Organization of Investigations (Section 3)
- Selection, Onboarding, and Training (Section 4)
- Investigative Process, Workload, and Effort (Section 5)
- Leadership and Supervision (Section 6)
- Information Systems for Case Tracking and Management (Section 7)
- Investigative Support Services (Section 8)
- Investigations and Patrol (Section 9)

The following eight sections of this report describe the findings for each topic.

2. State of Investigations and Agency Context

Since 2010, the SPD, like many police agencies across the United States, has experienced periods of crisis and reform, shaping the agency and the City of Seattle's current situation and environment. During our interviews and focus groups, many discussed the current situation of the SPD, relating it directly to challenges faced in investigations. While recent crises and sentinel events have prompted some of this context, other elements have existed in the SPD for some time. Overall, we found that this state of the agency resulted in a general adverse condition within the SPD, reflecting low morale, frustration, and a sense that viable solutions were out of reach. As one interviewee put it, employees shared a "collective trauma" caused by several issues that the agency and the city in their minds have not adequately addressed. This situation has reduced optimism for any positive change in the agency, including within investigations.

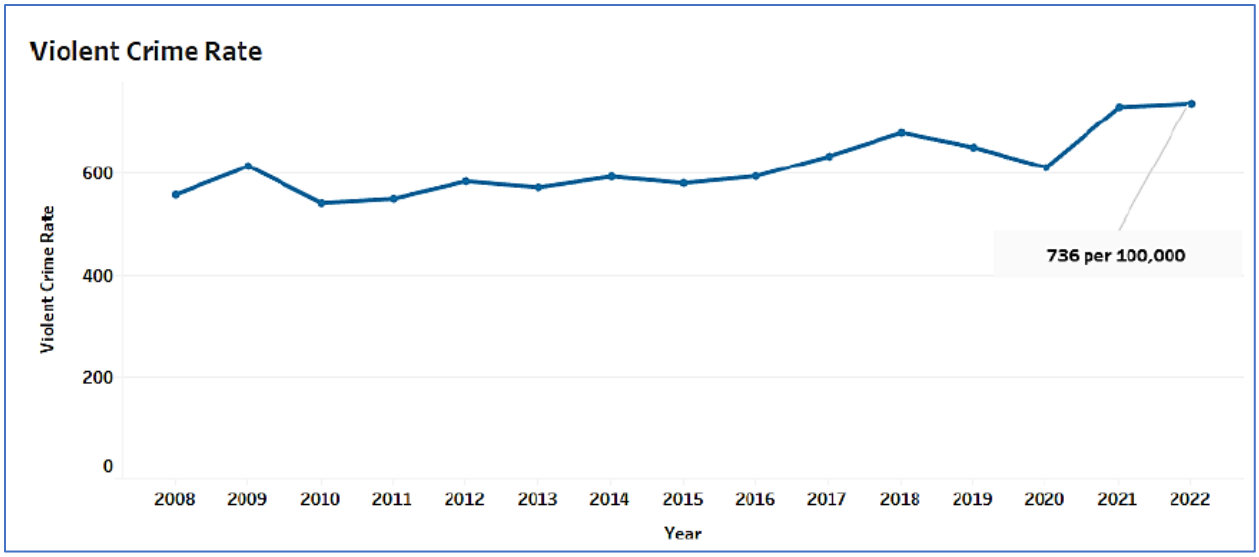
Recent Challenges

While a comprehensive historical examination of the SPD is well beyond this report, a few key events have occurred within the last fifteen years that have arguably shaped the current state of the SPD and, relatedly, its investigative operations. In 2010, after a series of officer-involved shootings, protests, and internal and external assessments, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) opened an investigation into whether the SPD engaged in a "pattern or practice" of civil rights violations. This investigation led to a DOJ lawsuit against the City of Seattle in 2011, prompting the city to enter into a settlement agreement (also known as a "consent decree") establishing federal court oversight over the SPD. On March 28, 2023, the City of Seattle and the Department of Justice filed a compliance agreement recognizing the progress made by the Seattle Police Department and limiting the scope of oversight to finalization of crowd management policies and accountability measures, with the goal of ending the consent decree entirely once those final tasks are completed.

During these 12 years, several sentinel events and officer-involved killings have affected the SPD and many other U.S. agencies. While Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, are often used to bookend these events, they encompass many other crises throughout the United States during the 2010s and 2020s. These events have significantly impacted policing in the United States and marked a general decline in police legitimacy in some jurisdictions, leading to intensive calls for reform. Two recent and historic crises have had a significant effect on the current state of the SPD: the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in early 2020 and the subsequent lockdowns that followed that year; and the killing of George Floyd in May 2020 by a Minneapolis police officer and the subsequent protests in Seattle. Both events challenged the SPD (and American policing more generally) in foundational ways.

As first responders, the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the profession's already high levels of concern for occupational health and safety and required officers to change how they worked (for a nationwide analysis of the impacts of COVID-19 on policing, see Lum et al., 2022). Along with other crises in policing, the pandemic likely changed employment trends, and some officers left the profession for different work environment preferences (see more discussion by Wilson et al., 2023). In the SPD, some officers left the agency (or were reassigned or reclassified into non-operational positions) because they would not be vaccinated (a requirement by the state of Washington). Additionally, the supply and demand for police services fluctuated dramatically during the 2020-2022 pandemic, given both the lockdowns and changes in everyday routines. These fluctuations resulted in changes in crime and victimization as well as the police work and resources available to address these changes. Seattle was one jurisdiction in the United States that experienced increased violence during this period, as reported in its *2022 Crime Report* (Figure 3).[9]

Figure 3. Violent crime rate trends (2008 – 2022), from SPD's *2022 Crime Report*



In addition to the pandemic, the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer and the subsequent worldwide protests and calls for police reform were arguably some of the most impactful events in U.S. policing. Combined with personal and body-worn camera footage of other police-involved shootings, Floyd's killing challenged the legitimacy of American law enforcement in several cities, pushing some communities and jurisdictions to call for "defunding" (or even abolishing) the police. However, the reaction in cities across the United States varied greatly, with some cities having little to no protests while others had extraordinary levels of public protest lasting for several months. Seattle was one U.S. city that experienced some of the most intense levels of public protest and backlash against the police,

[9] See https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/Police/Reports/2022_SPD_CRIME_REPORT_FINAL.pdf.

leading to the abandonment of a police station, the creation of a "police-free" zone, city-wide curfews, widespread destruction and property damage, and violence.

As a reaction to Floyd, there were initial calls for a 50% defunding of the police by some Seattle residents and city council members.[10] Although this amount of defunding was never realized (between 2020 and 2021, the Seattle City Council decreased the SPD's budget by 11%), it left a negative mark on police agency morale. The city's first Black police chief, Carmen Best, resigned, arguing that she could not run the police department with such an anticipated drop in resources (Bowman, 2020). Additionally, then-Mayor Jenny Durkan passed Executive Order 2020-10,[11] which called for several significant changes in the way policing was carried out in Seattle, including the transferring of some police responsibilities to other agencies and organizations. Overall, members of the agency we interviewed strongly believed that the stresses of COVID and other mounting morale problems brought on by these local and national events spurred a mass exodus of personnel from the SPD.

Mourtgos et al. (2022; also see Adams et al., 2023) confirm that the SPD has been a U.S. agency significantly affected by staffing losses in the post-Floyd era. By the time of the GMU team's visit in 2023, the agency had gone from employing a peak of 1,596 sworn officers and 852 nonsworn civilians in 2018 to its current force of 1,091 sworn officers and 592 nonsworn civilians, a decline of almost one-third of its police department (Figure 4). At the same time, the demand for police services did not decline during this period, as evidenced by increased crime and public protests. Many interviewees referenced this loss of personnel as significantly impacting the SPD's investigative effectiveness.

Figure 4. Numbers of full-time sworn and nonsworn personnel in the SPD (2015-2023)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Nonsworn	647	720	731	852	740	728	670	657	592
Sworn	1,398	1,447	1,477	1,596	1,451	1,449	1,325	1,222	1,091

Statistics provided by the Seattle Police Department as of April 2023.

The general decline in police legitimacy during this period, combined with changing employment patterns due to COVID and adjustments to employment expectations by both the Millennial and Z generations, likely impacted the willingness of individuals to apply to, join, or stay in the SPD. Over this short period, this dramatic reduction in agency employees required the agency to reorganize, move, consolidate, eliminate, or reduce various units. For example, some individuals in specialized or detective units were moved back into uniformed patrol positions, which some perceived as a move backward in career development and advancement, given the prestige of investigative positions in the SPD. Other individuals were moved out of the SPD to other city departments. For example, parking enforcement officers were moved to Seattle's Department of Transportation (they were moved back to the SPD on January 1, 2023).

[10] See https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-city-leaders-throw-support-behind-defunding-spd-by-50/SI3Q7B3TL5BONCWYRTRX6MDZLU/.
[11] See https://durkan.seattle.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2020/10/Executive-Order-2020-10-Reimagining-Policing-and-Community-Safety-in-Seattle.pdf.

Additionally, victim advocates (about 20 employees) were moved from the SPD into the city's Human Services Department. Many investigators viewed this change negatively and as a significant loss of a valuable investigation resource.

These changes and personnel losses affected patrol and investigations in the SPD. In investigations, the SPD experienced an over 40% reduction in assigned personnel (from 243 to 134 by the time of the GMU team's visit). These losses included individuals who retired, chose to leave the agency early, returned to uniformed patrol, or were not active due to HR-related reasons.[12] At the time of GMU's visit, the Investigations Bureau had 60 open positions, including at the supervisory and command levels. This situation was well-known to all interviewed and was frequently raised as a severe crisis. As expressed by one interviewee, the initial discussions of a 50% defunding in the agency "spooked" some detectives to leave the agency early for other non-policing jobs. Several of these individuals had long-term experience in investigations and patrol and were considered valuable to the agency's daily work ("go-to" people, in the words of one interviewee). Officers in patrol seeking to transfer to detective units also had less opportunity for advancement, given the significant staffing losses experienced in patrol. In addition, because of the drop in patrol officers and the need for more officers during and after the Floyd protests to deal with protests, sporting events, and other special requests, the agency instituted a "draft" which pulled both officers and detectives back into overtime work for several needs and events. The draft put additional pressure on all members to work more hours.

There were several reorganizations related to investigations between 2016-2023, two of which occurred before COVID and Floyd. Some of the reorganizations involved consolidating different units under one captain and lieutenant. Other reorganizations involved moving the "General Investigations Units" (units that handle burglary, theft, auto theft, juveniles, and fraud/financial crimes) between the Investigations and Patrol Bureaus (the GIU is currently within the Investigations Bureau). These reorganizations have also impacted investigative work; we discuss them in Section 3 of this report.

Other developments in Seattle during this period also impacted investigations. A reduction in the prosecution of certain offenses and changes in the processing of juvenile suspects in the city were viewed by members of the SPD as hampering their ability to respond to and resolve crime events. Significant tensions existed between the city attorney, the city council, and the police department, which some in the agency argued fueled anti-police sentiment and reduced internal morale. Partly due to COVID and partly due to trends in prosecution, the courts and jails began processing fewer individuals, and there was a strong belief by members of the agency that jails were refusing to intake youths who were committing serious offenses. While individual detectives mentioned having good relationships with specific prosecutors, these overall negative feelings were palpable from our interviews. Combined with rising crime,

[12] For example, some individuals had not yet separated from the agency but had refused vaccination and were not active employees.

including brazen property crimes and thefts of businesses and individuals documented by the media, these problems led to a "perfect storm," as one interviewee described.

Long-term and Institutionalized Issues

While the concerns above were recent, there were agency challenges that the GMU team also discovered that likely existed long before the current crises. Two long-term challenges already mentioned were reflected by the consent decree process instituted in 2010 and Seattle's low clearance rates going back to at least the 1980s. However, during our visit, some regular practices related to investigations that had existed before COVID and Floyd also impacted the SPD's ability to weather current crises.

We discuss these challenges at length in this report. For instance, when the GMU team was visiting, the agency had just begun to develop a system to standardize case management and tracking within units. However, this has been a concern for years, and information technology systems that achieve these tasks have been around for decades. This lack of standardization and tracking may be both cause and consequence of the absence of clearly articulated and written unit and bureau-level policies, standard operating procedures, or detective guidelines. In addition, the absence of essential elements of investigative organization resulted in largely informal approaches to training, onboarding, supervision, accountability infrastructure, and leadership within investigations. Long-standing beliefs and contractual impediments about hiring nonsworn civilians for investigative and support services roles have also likely contributed to reduced capacity and resources for the Investigative Bureau.

The state of the SPD and its investigations and patrol units has also impacted the ability of the agency to engage in evidence-based policing (i.e., engaging in research and implementing evidence-based practices). Officers, detectives, and their supervisors have been either unwilling or unavailable to carry out evidence-based or innovative approaches or to help test the effectiveness of policing interventions. As some interviewees emphasized, the room to innovate in the SPD, either in investigations or patrol, has been hampered by several existing problems predating COVID, Floyd, or even the consent decree process. For example, one interviewee argued that innovation and strategizing are essential command-level activities but not regularly practiced in the SPD.

Summary

The SPD has seen its share of turmoil and challenge during the last three years. Many who remain in the SPD suffer from low morale and, as one interviewee put it, a "collective trauma." However, the agency also has long-standing issues, some highlighted by the consent decree, but others resulting from the everyday infrastructure and organization of the agency that pre-date COVID, Floyd, or the consent decree. As a result, when faced with the dual crisis of COVID and protests over policing, the agency struggled to weather the resulting loss of personnel and

legitimacy and increases in violent crime. From the perspective of SPD personnel, actual and anticipated changes and reforms, along with these external crises, led to a mass exodus of personnel from the police agency without the ability to supplement with new sworn or nonsworn personnel. As with the Patrol Bureau, the Investigations Bureau was impacted by these issues in its organization, personnel, workload, and roles and responsibilities. At the same time, many individuals interviewed by the GMU team expressed a desire to see the SPD improve internally and in its service to the City of Seattle.

While the GMU team acknowledges these contextual challenges in implementing the recommendations in this report, it does not offer them as an excuse to ignore the suggested recommendations. Many findings in this report reflect long-standing practices or organizational characteristics of the SPD that will continue to exist even if the agency returns to full personnel capacity or gains more community and city government support. Future crises of legitimacy to American policing will occur, and significant emergency events like COVID will unfortunately happen again. We strongly recommend that the agency take the current opportunity to strengthen its organizational capacity and agency infrastructure to weather the next crises more successfully.

3. Organization of Investigations

In this section, we describe our findings related to the structure of SPD investigations, including how the Investigations Bureau is organized and operational requirements related to standard procedures, manuals, and guides for units. Note that several more specific organizational suggestions within investigations are covered in later report sections.

How Investigations are Organized in the SPD

The overall structure of SPD's investigations is centralized and described in Figure 5. After several reorganizations since 2016, there are currently three sections within the Investigations Bureau, which house different squads and areas of responsibility. We note that during the early months of 2023, which included our visit, the agency was considering another reorganization, so Figure 5 reflects a general estimate at the time of our visit. Each section is managed by one captain and at least one lieutenant. Squads are usually led by a sergeant (with some exceptions).

Figure 5. Organization of SPD Investigations Bureau
The Investigations Bureau is led by 1 Assistant Chief.

1. **Violent Crimes**: (1 captain)
    a. Homicide (1 lieutenant with 3 squads, each led by 1 sergeant); Missing Persons, Cold Case, and Bias Crimes (1-2 detectives each, no sergeant).
    b. Robbery (1 lieutenant with 2 squads, each led by 1 sergeant); Gun Violence Reduction Units (2 squads, each led by 1 sergeant); Fugitive and USMS Task Force (1-2 detectives each, no sergeant)
    c. Crime Scene Investigations (1 squad, led by 1 sergeant and 1 lieutenant)

2. **Major Investigations (Criminal Enterprise Investigations)**: (1 captain)
    Criminal Enterprise Investigations (1 lieutenant)
    a. Major Crimes Task Force (1 squad, share sergeant with Human Trafficking)
    b. Human Trafficking (1 squad, share sergeant with MCTF)
    c. Narcotics (3 proactive squads, 1 seizure/abatement squad, each with 1 sergeant)
    Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) & Investigative Support (1 lieutenant)
    d. Internet Crimes Against Children (1 squad led by a sergeant)
    e. Electronic and Cyber Squad (1 squad led by a sergeant)
    f. Technical Equipment Support Unit (TESU) (1 squad led by a sergeant)
    g. Real-Time Crime Center (RTCC) (1 detective detail)
    h. Investigative Support Analysts (2 nonsworn civilians)

3. **Coordinated Criminal Investigations**: (1 captain)
    a. General Investigations Unit (1 lieutenant with 3 squads, each led by 1 sergeant; also administrative staff)
    b. Domestic Violence and Extreme Risk Protection Order units (share 1 lieutenant with SAU, 3 specialized squads, each led by 1 sergeant);
    c. Sexual Assault Unit (share 1 lieutenant with DV/ERPO, 3 squads, each led by 1 sergeant)

As described in Section 2, every section and unit within this organization has open positions. However, the majority of these open positions are currently within the Major Investigations and Coordinated Criminal Investigations Sections. The division of labor for investigations is governed by a crime "Matrix." For each type of crime (and associated victim, suspect, and circumstances), the Matrix directs which follow-up unit would be responsible for a specific event if an investigator became involved. At the time of GMU's visit, the Matrix was dated 1/29/2018, but the GMU team was told that members of the SPD have been informally modifying the Matrix after past reorganizations and developments.

The current organization in Figure 5 reflects multiple reorganizations between 2016 and 2023. These reorganizations included moving the General Investigations Units to and from the Patrol and Investigations Bureau, discussed further below. The more recent reorganizations consolidated more units under specific commands, expanding the area of responsibility for captains and lieutenants. For example, some interviewees noted that the consolidation of units—while needed because of the lack of investigative personnel—widened the areas of responsibility for supervisors or commanders. Some argued that this challenged commanding officers' ability to effectively manage, supervise, or innovate within their units, partly because of the widening area of responsibility and because some commanding officers lacked sufficient operational knowledge and experience for specific units.

Further analysis would be needed to understand whether the expanded or adjusted area of responsibility for captains and lieutenants post-reorganization is, in fact, too broad. Such strategic assessments are worth conducting after any reorganization and require examining various performance metrics before and after reorganization. Such post-reorganization assessments would provide a better understanding of the capacity of captains and lieutenants in managing the multiple units under their command and highlight gaps in both expertise and supervision that need strengthening. Within the context of the research knowledge on effective investigations, such assessments might include:

- determining the workload per investigator, supervisor, lieutenant, and captain before and after a reorganization (this would require a more standard and unified case tracking system);
- assessing the quality, time spent, efforts made, and outcomes of individual investigations before and after a reorganization (i.e., does reorganization impact the quality of actual investigative processes or impede certain activities?);

- examining whether information sharing and cooperation between investigative units are improved or weakened by a reorganization;
- understanding the specific expertise of captains, lieutenants, and sergeants and the quality of supervision, mentorship, case review, and leadership before and after a reorganization;
- assessing whether training capacities can be combined, or whether they are made more difficult by reorganization; and
- identifying opportunities for collaborative strategic discussions about reorganization.

More generally, combining specific units under the three commands raises the question of whether those units were strategically reorganized to address related crimes and investigations efficiently. Bringing units together because of the interrelatedness of their investigations, either in process (e.g., similar support units, technologies, tools, training, or investigative steps needed) or in substance (specific crimes have connected victims, suspects, witnesses, modus operandi, etc.), can increase investigative effectiveness. For example, some gun crime units investigate all gun-related crimes (including homicides). Auto thefts may be closely related to shootings in some cities, which may require gun units to investigate auto thefts in conjunction with gun crimes. Because of the priority of violent crime cases, such units combine various types of expertise to tackle a defined problem (rather than a specific type of crime). Research has found that these problem-focused (rather than crime-specific) units can improve investigations, clearance rates, and deterrence (Barao et al., 2021; Braga & Dusseault, 2018). Such units also have enhanced training, specialized expertise, and increased effort and case time for cases.

It was unclear whether this type of strategic thinking about the process or substance of investigations contributed to the various reorganizations of the Investigations Bureau in the SPD over the past ten years. Instead, reorganizations seemed to be prompted by a lack of investigators or supervisors. Interestingly, despite recent reorganizations, some in the SPD we spoke to continued to feel a need to consolidate disparate units and functions within the Investigations Bureau—arguing that there was still too much specialization in some units. Furthermore, this specialization was potentially exacerbated by (and also exacerbated) staffing shortages and contributed to siloing and the lack of collaboration across units. Some interviewees remarked this had been an ongoing problem even before recent reorganizations.

Centralized versus Decentralized: The Example of GIU

In addition to expanding the areas of responsibilities for the three sections of the Investigations Bureau, the reorganizations of investigations during 2016, 2020, and 2023 have also reflected a move to centralize investigations further. An example of this centralization was the transfer of the General Investigations Units (GIU) from the patrol precincts into the Investigations Bureau. In theory, GIU is responsible for investigating property crimes, burglaries, thefts, auto thefts, frauds, juvenile offenses (with some exceptions), minor assaults, and other offenses and

concerns. While other units appear very specific in the crimes they handle, the GIU is the most generalized “catch-all” investigative unit. It is responsible for the largest number of crimes compared to other investigative units. As several interviewees pointed out, these are also crimes that affect the most people in Seattle.

Before 2016, GIU investigators were housed in separate precincts within the Patrol Bureau. In 2016, while remaining in the precincts, these units were placed into the Investigations Bureau under the Coordinated Criminal Investigations Program. In January 2020, the detectives were moved back to the Patrol Bureau, continuing to remain in the precincts. In January 2023, these units were again returned to the Investigations Bureau and centralized into a single location (an office space in the East Precinct).

In our discussions with SPD leaders, commanders, supervisors, and detectives, there was disagreement about whether the GIU should remain centralized within the Investigations Bureau or decentralized within each patrol precinct. More individuals preferred the decentralized approach, arguing that these were very localized and “everyday” crimes that required knowledge of the specific area and individuals involved. However, those who argued for a more centralized structure felt that decentralization of the GIU led to a lack of supervision and standardization of what these units did, or that detectives within these units did not have access to other investigators or resources believed to be at the headquarters level. We address some of these issues shortly.

Although there were disagreements about the pros and cons of decentralizing the GIU, there was much more agreement about the reality of the unit's current challenges. At the time of this report, the GIU had 13 open, soon-to-be transferred, or “HR Unavailable” positions of the 24 sworn allocated. Given the volume of cases that potentially fall under the GIU and the lack of investigators within the unit, the capacity of the GIU appears severely diminished. Because of this, the unit prioritizes processing “rush” cases rather than pursuing investigations of crimes where the perpetrator has not been apprehended. “Rush” cases are those in which a person is in custody, but the prosecutor must prepare a more complete case before the suspect’s second court appearance. That second appearance is generally about 72 hours after booking, which leads to a sense of urgency about processing the paperwork of those arrested for crimes that fall under the GIU purview (hence the “rush”). While the initial probable cause statement is enough to charge and book the individual, it may not be enough for prosecution, which may require interviews, video, photographs, and additional evidence or case elements. A more complete case would theoretically allow the prosecutor to make the best filing decision possible when presenting the case to court.

While all investigative units file rush cases, the number of rush cases is much greater for the GIU than any other investigative unit due to the broad spectrum of high-volume crimes falling under its purview. As a result, GIU detectives have primarily become “filing detectives,” as one interviewee put it, unable to regularly open investigations on other reported crimes where an apprehension has not yet occurred. There was a shared belief by those in investigations and patrol alike that the inability to investigate burglary, auto theft, or fraud was damaging for

Seattle residents, whose victimizations would likely go uninvestigated and unattended except for an initial patrol response or report. Patrol commanders also believed this significantly impacted how officers responded to citizen calls for police service and whether people would even call or report certain crimes to the police.

The GMU team notes that the research is inconclusive regarding whether centralized versus decentralized investigations are better for police agencies. This is not surprising; effective investigations rely less on the physical location of units and more on a combination of supervision, effort, performance tracking, resources available, information sharing, and strategic thinking about the work of those units. While the motivations for shifting GIU back and forth between the Patrol and Investigations Bureaus may reflect concerns about supervision, resources, information sharing, and effort, it is unclear whether these problems were resolved due to the reorganizations. Without further analyses of workloads, supervision, rush cases, and case outcomes, the SPD cannot fully understand the ramifications of centralizing or decentralizing the GIU. Additionally, regardless of whether GIU detectives are centralized or decentralized, the capacity of these units is greatly diminished, given the small number of detectives assigned to a large number of crimes. In the recommendations section below, we offer some ideas to the SPD on this issue.

Standard Operating Procedures, Manuals, and Guidelines

The GMU team discovered no evidence of uniform standard operating procedures (SOPs) or manuals for investigations at the bureau, section, or unit level (except for the Investigations Title of the SPD's General Policy Manual[13]). Some interviewees mentioned an "investigations manual" that may have existed but could not be produced for the GMU team. Others explicitly stated that no such practice-related guide or unit manual existed for their units. If such guides did exist for some units, they were not produced for the GMU team. As described above, the SPD has a matrix that lays out the specific crimes each unit is responsible for. However, policies, procedures, directives, and bylaws that specifically describe and dictate the work and accountability of each investigative unit or section do not exist. This lack of a common organizational element pre-dates any current crisis that the SPD is experiencing and has significant ramifications.

For example, we did not find evidence of specific guidelines or checklists for investigative processes within units, sections, or the Investigations Bureau that provide a detailed description of:

- a unit's work, including policies and practices related to the receipt, processing, and division of labor for investigative cases;
- the elements required for every investigation for that unit, such as checklists or case review documents, policies, or guidance;

[13] See https://public.powerdms.com/Sea4550/tree/documents/2042782.

- the availability and use requirements of specific resources relevant to that unit;
- a unit's requirements, responsibilities, or policies for information sharing and notifications with other units, patrol, and command staff;
- onboarding and training practices, policies, and requirements of investigators for each unit;
- specific training, requirements, knowledge, skills, and abilities required to be maintained within each unit;
- how and when investigations should be closed and classified (or otherwise completed);
- how detectives and detective supervisors are assessed and how performance is managed;
- sergeants' and lieutenants' specific responsibilities and authority to review detective casework or cases coming into the unit.

Such manuals would include consistent elements across the units and sections of the Investigations Bureau but would also be specific to each unit and section (for example, the elements of an investigation or resources used for ICAC will be similar in some aspects but different in others from those for the Robbery Unit).

Developing these guidelines and procedures should not be an academic exercise nor left to a single individual within a unit. Instead, guideline development creates an opportunity for multiple members, units, and ranks across the Investigations Bureau to strategically discuss and make each unit's organizational elements and responsibilities transparent. Unit manuals, SOPs, and bylaws express the values and procedures of each unit in relation to the Bureau and show how units connect and relate to other units and agency goals. SOPs, manuals, bylaws, and guidelines also authorize and guide supervision, performance measurement, and case tracking; provide fair and transparent processes for the application, recruitment, and onboarding of new detectives; and define what "success" looks like for each unit.

The lack of unit manuals, policies, procedures, and other formal organizational elements—and therefore adherence to such standards—reflects an old-fashioned informality in policing that negatively impact other organizational areas discussed in this report. For example, there is little structure in the recruitment, onboarding, and training of new detectives, which is informal and relies on social networks, off-the-cuff mentoring, and word-of-mouth (see Section 4). When new detectives and supervisors are onboarded into units, they may be unclear on their roles, responsibilities, and expectations (Section 4). The lack of policies at the unit level also results in weakened supervisory, accountability, and case management systems (as discussed in other sections), given that standards are not clearly articulated, and new supervisors may be unsure as to their authority and responsibility (Sections 6 and 7). Elements and requirements of investigations for particular types of cases are not articulated, which may lead to variations in the quality or completeness of individual investigations (Section 5).

We offer these findings about the lack of standard operating procedures without attribution of fault or blame. Informality and lack of clearly written policies and procedures are common

problems across investigative units in many police agencies in the United States. Investigation (and specialized) units and bureaus have been less visible or scrutinized in policing and, therefore, less developed. However, research on police investigations (and organizational management more generally) finds that lacking these essential organizational elements can impede the performance of a unit, section, bureau, or agency. Investigative research shows that high-performing agencies have written and detailed policies, standard operating procedures, and operational guidelines for their investigative units. Attending to these essential organizational elements can help the SPD develop more robust and transparent investigation practices, performance management, supervision, onboarding, recruitment, and training.

Whether centralized or decentralized, and regardless of SPD's current crises, the agency cannot sustain a healthy investigations approach without articulating the specifics of its organization, work, and processes. Additionally, this lack of organizational elements may make it more difficult for investigative units to weather significant change, particularly turnover and understaffing. For example, those who lament the loss of "institutional knowledge" often cite the loss of older, "go-to" experienced detectives and supervisors. While this may be somewhat true, such knowledge can be institutionalized into guides, checklists, policies, practices, and directives that are in place for units, sections, and bureaus. Therefore, capitalizing on the knowledge of these detectives to help develop these manuals would be highly recommended.

Summary of Suggestions

Overall, the GMU team found that the SPD has primarily focused on the physical organization of its investigation units rather than on the units' more substantive, strategic, and operational concerns. Because of this, the agency has been significantly impacted by the loss of detectives and has been unable to weather current crises. Moreover, even if the SPD returns to full personnel capacity, these organizational weaknesses will continue if unattended. Therefore, the GMU team suggests the agency consider the following recommendations to strengthen its organizational capacity:

1. The agency should embark on a team-oriented, organized, resourced, and professionally guided effort to create detailed policies, standard operating procedures, and operational guidelines for the Investigations Bureau and for each of its sections and units. We advise the agency to engage this task strategically in coordination across units. The agency might consider consulting experienced supervisory detectives and leaders (retired or in-service) to contribute to creating these documents. However, we also advise that the agency be guided by unified principles of the Investigations Bureau, professional organizational standards, and the research evidence about effective investigations. We do <u>not</u> advise that individuals within units take on this task separately or in isolation.

2. The purposes (and outcomes) of the many reorganizations of investigations were unclear to the GMU team. It would be worthwhile for leaders, commanders, and supervisors to carefully assess the purposes and impacts of any reorganization if it has not already done

so. For example, were specific units combined because of personnel, process-related, substantive, or strategic goals? Is the area of responsibility for commanding officers appropriate given these strategic goals? Are assumed outcomes realized after reorganization, and how are these outcomes empirically assessed or known? What performance metrics can be used before and after reorganizations to assess these developments? Engaging in these inquiries reflects a dynamic learning approach that aligns more with evidence-based policing.

3. Related to #2 above, the agency should also consider the volume and community harm associated with crimes it prioritizes for investigations to assess whether its current staffing allocation for detectives is optimal.

4. We do not offer a recommendation as to whether the GIU should be centralized or decentralized, as we recognize the current personnel situation may preclude the agency from making certain adjustments. However, we emphasize that without an internal analysis of workload, supervision, rush cases, and outcomes, the SPD cannot understand the ramifications of centralizing or decentralizing the GIU or any other reorganization decision. Instead, we suggest that:

    a. If the GIU returns to patrol precincts, standardization and more substantial supervision facilitated by better unit manuals and policies, case management, and appropriate resource allocation will be needed to ensure the unit can accomplish its work.

    b. The number of crimes that fall under the purview of the GIU is very large, and this problem will not be diminished simply by decentralization. Patrol commanders and investigative supervisors would need to consider hybrid or integrated approaches that require stronger collaboration with patrol (or the Community Response Group) in the GIU's efforts. Additionally, such approaches would need to strategically connect patrol and the GIU through preventative, place-based, problem-solving, and proactive approaches (see Eck & Rossmo, 2019; Koper et al., 2015; Lum & Koper, 2017, ch. 12). The prevention and deterrence of crimes by patrol are relevant to all crimes, but particularly those in the GIU's purview, and can help to reduce caseload over time (by reducing the number of these crimes more generally). However, preventing these crimes requires evidence-based approaches to be applied within patrol and coordinated with specifically dedicated crime analysts and investigators.

    c. An analysis of rush cases is needed given that the GIU is being asked to prioritize them without understanding their outcomes. Essential questions to explore include: Why do so many cases need extra paperwork, and for what purpose? Does prosecution act on the cases that the GIU prepares, or is this work product sometimes ignored (and why)? What proportion of rush cases are prosecuted? Can the agency prioritize which rush cases must receive additional attention?

How can the initial responding officer improve the initial booking case to reduce the need for the rush paperwork to be filed? These questions reflect a more strategic approach to GIU that needs to be explored.

5. The above suggestions cannot be accomplished without a strong case management and tracking system (see Section 7). For example, a more robust case tracking system (and related protocols and requirements for updating cases as they progress) would be needed to carry out the rush cases analysis described above. Tracking would also help with workload analysis and performance assessments before and after reorganizations.

6. The SPD should assess the pros and cons of its current investigative organizational structure, comparing performance before and after reorganizations on various metrics as described above. Such reorganization assessments would provide a better understanding of the capacity of captains and lieutenants in managing the multiple units under their command and highlight gaps in both expertise and supervision. Identifying whether weaknesses were due to the physical organization of investigations or more specific, substantive issues (e.g., supervision, knowledge, skills, abilities, etc.) is crucial to developing a more strategic approach to investigations.

4. Selection, Onboarding, and Training

The application, selection, onboarding, and training processes for investigations in the SPD are informal, nonstrategic, undocumented, and unstructured. This characteristic of investigations existed in Seattle long before the current crises and, in turn, was exacerbated by the recent loss of detectives.

Application and Selection Process for Detectives

Those we interviewed acknowledged that there is—in theory—some official application and interview process for investigative positions. Positions are posted through an internal system; individuals express their interest and submit a resumé, and some state that they believe that interviews are required. However, the reality of the application and selection process for detectives is often informal and unit-dependent, and the elements required in an application or resumé for investigative positions were unclear. There are also no apparent requirements (experience, training, education, etc.) for either becoming a detective or detective supervisor, with the possible exception of time-on-job (some mentioned "at least three years" for detective positions, albeit with noted exceptions such as homicide or crime scene investigations). In some cases, detective supervisors did not have to have general or specific detective experience to fill supervisory positions in detective units.

Those interviewed confirmed that a formal interview process is not consistently used for all investigative positions. For example, a supervisor or commander may identify an individual for an investigation unit that they may know personally, through the recommendation of another supervisor, or from a 30-day detail (which is an informal process). There was a belief among some who spoke with the GMU team that politics or social networks played a significant role in who would be selected and transferred to detective units. Opinions varied about the value of an informal approach to transfers. While some argued that it was easier to make a call to other supervisors in patrol to see who might be a good fit for investigations, others felt that this process limits opportunities for potentially promising officers who may not be known by an investigator or investigative supervisor, or whose skills and personalities do not match what supervisors believe makes a "good investigator." Some felt that the ranking of individuals for positions was subjective. Others mentioned that some individuals had become detectives without going through any process.

The research in this area is clear: informal and friendship network systems of application and hiring create multiple problems and biases in hiring and transfers in any organization. These approaches can limit opportunities for those not within social networks or who do not have advocates in advantageous positions. This is particularly true when opportunities are highly desired, as is the case with investigative positions in the SPD. As mentioned in the previous section, these approaches also reflect the lack of guidelines and procedures for hiring,

onboarding, and investigative performance. While these processes are often developed for formal promotions to new ranks, they are less developed in policing for same-rank transfers. All of these characteristics of detective selection and onboarding found in SPD investigations units were similarly found in "low-performing" agencies in the eight-agency national study by Lum et al. (2023).

The agency has "30-day details" that provide opportunities for officers (or even other detectives) to spend time in an investigative unit to learn about the work of that unit. These details are generally valued throughout the agency as a way to select and train new detectives. However, it was unclear whether opportunities to apply for these details are distributed fairly throughout the agency. Selection for 30-day details appears vulnerable to the same informal social network approach as applying to investigative positions. Additionally, without any formal SOP manual, bylaws, written policies, or performance metrics for each unit, it is unclear how well the 30-day detail helps individuals learn the most optimal approaches to investigations or how individuals in these details are assessed at the end of the detail.

The GMU team also discovered that the 30-day detail impacts patrol commanders, who lose officers for a substantial amount of time if they grant these details. Although we sensed that patrol commanders were not opposed to the details in theory, commanders noted that 30-day requests or extensions were much more difficult to grant during the summer or other busier patrol months, as it would remove critical resources from patrol. Thus, the 30-day details seem to place patrol commanders in a difficult position concerning investigations. On the one hand, patrol commanders want to provide opportunities for officers to broaden their patrol experience through these details. On the other hand, if they grant these details, they lose critical resources.

The GMU team notes that the suggestion provided in Section 3 regarding "hybrid" approaches to the GIU may help provide opportunities for patrol officers to "cut their teeth" on investigations. However, such a training approach would require strengthening the capacity of the GIU, as noted in that section.

Onboarding and Initial Training of Detectives

While the SPD does have a training unit that manages training for the agency, this unit currently does not include the Investigations Bureau under its purview. Once a detective or supervisor is brought into an investigative unit, that individual's onboarding process and initial training are also informal and ad hoc. Again, this is partly because there are no written policies and practices within units or investigative plans or checklists related to case completion that could guide new detectives in their work. However, this is also a product of a long-standing cultural belief that new detectives can effectively learn about investigations by other detectives "taking them under their wing." Such an informal, rely-on-experienced detectives approach can become problematic when agencies lose personnel or if poor practices are unintentionally passed on as "good" practices. The GMU team notes that while informal mentorship is always

ever-present in policing and can be helpful, informal mentorship without guidelines, policies, and formal training may lead to inconsistent, uneven, and even inaccurate skillsets amongst detectives. Some units with specialized functions may receive specific training (CSI or ICAC). However, for most investigators, investigations training is informal, by word-of-mouth, and not strategically approached, planned, or scaffolded according to evidence-based educational standards and methods (National Academies of Sciences, 2022).

Such informal approaches are both a symptom and a result of inconsistency in investigator requirements and formal training across units within the Investigations Bureau. Detectives and supervisors did believe that a one-week detective school existed that would teach new detectives the basics of investigative work. However, after probing, we discovered this school had not been implemented for at least ten years, if not more. Further, it was unclear what knowledge, skills, and abilities were taught in detective school and whether that training was effective, evidence-based, contemporary, and relevant for all investigative units. As with most police agencies, research knowledge about effective investigative strategies is not covered in academy or in-service training, nor is there formal training for detectives and detective supervisors. There also does not seem to be regular in-service training on various elements of primary and follow-up investigative work that is regularly required from detectives.

Similarly, as discussed above, no training is required for individuals to be assigned to 30-day investigative unit details. Indeed, the 30-day detail was treated as a form of training, utilizing an informal mentorship approach. Some argued that the GIU could also be where prospective detectives “cut their teeth” on investigations because of its broad areas of responsibility. However, given that the GIU is primarily focused on filing rush cases and that they are no longer in precincts, some argued the link between the GIU and the preparation of detectives for other investigative assignments has been attenuated.

New investigative unit sergeants (and sometimes lieutenants) are affected by these same problems. There is no formal training or onboarding guidance for supervisors in investigative units. Our interviews revealed that sometimes supervisors are left to ask subordinates about their authority, unit requirements, and performance expectations. This approach to supervision is an untenable situation for supervisors who rely on their authority to make strategic decisions for the unit and manage the performance of detectives. Others noted a culture of resistance for supervisors to be involved with cases. This may also reflect more general problems with staff development in the SPD. In the words of one interviewee, the agency has a “hands-off approach to employee development.” As a result, training and professional development opportunities and requirements vary considerably across the agency.

Summary of Suggestions

Our findings about the lack of formal procedures for selecting and training detectives and detective supervisors mirror findings from “low-performing” agencies in research on effective

investigative practices. To strengthen this organizational element, the SPD should consider the following:

1. Fair and consistently practiced application, interview, and onboarding processes are needed for all transfers to investigative units or to participate in opportunities that facilitate those transfers (such as 30-day details). Such processes require supervisors and leaders in patrol and investigations to agree on the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for investigations. Evidence-based hiring and human resources practices should be followed to reduce hiring biases and the influence of informal friendship networks.

2. Relatedly, the agency needs to develop operational guidance, manuals, and bylaws that are consistent and coordinated across the sections and units of the Investigations Bureau, and that articulate each unit's work and the application, selection, onboarding, and training practices of each unit.

    a. The description of a unit's work provides a shared understanding of the expectations of detective work within the unit. Detailed policies about roles, responsibilities, and casework could also be used in onboarding and training new detectives and for performance tracking and measurement.

    b. Clearly detailed onboarding processes within a unit's or section's policy manual increases the fairness and transparency of the selection process for detectives and enhance the ability of the unit to hire the best individuals for open positions.

    c. As mentioned in the previous section, the burden of developing unit manuals should not be the sole responsibility of each unit. These manuals must be coordinated across sections and the bureau to ensure consistency in the policies and practices focused on selecting, onboarding, and training detectives and detective supervisors.

3. New supervisors and commanders for investigative units and sections would also benefit from clearly articulated responsibilities, expectations, and work guidelines, including how detectives are assessed for performance. Without such information, supervisory authority is weakened (see Section 6).

4. Regular, formalized, and updated training systems should be developed for investigators. This may include an initial "detective school" for new investigators but can also include quarterly or semi-annual training for various knowledge, skills, and abilities.

5. Supervisors need specialized training regarding their roles, responsibilities, and authority for investigations. Understanding the investigative process may help supervisors review cases and assess an investigator's performance.

6. The SPD would benefit from a more structured and formalized mentoring system. This includes developing a strategy to find the best mentors for new detectives and developing written guidelines and performance assessment tools for field training detectives as they exist with new patrol officers.

5. Investigative Process and Workload

Few unranked detectives agreed to speak to the GMU team during their visit, nor do we know why detectives did not participate. Our lack of exchange with detectives was unfortunate, given that they have the most insights into their day-to-day work, the challenges and stresses they experience, and what they believe is expected from them. Any recommendation in this report affects detectives directly. We strongly urge the agency to include, incorporate, and involve unranked detectives and other nonsworn support personnel in discussing and strategizing about the suggestions in this report.

Receiving Cases and Workloads

In the SPD, calls for service about crime are first dispatched to patrol officers, who are the first responders to all potential investigations. For most crimes, officers in the SPD take reports from victims, locate and preserve evidence, secure the crime scene, identify surveillance video, and take witness statements. A patrol supervisor may respond and determine whether an investigative unit needs to come to the scene. However, for many crimes, patrol officers can submit charges and send the case directly to the prosecutor's office without requiring an investigative unit to respond or follow up (unless there is an arrest, for which some cases will require rush paperwork from investigative units as described in Section 3). Thus, for some offense types (for example, burglaries, auto thefts, retail theft, robberies, and assaults), large proportions of cases will never be investigated beyond the initial patrol officer response. This may include felony or "Part I" UCR crimes. The GMU team notes that the lack of dedicated investigative resources for serious crimes or felonies was a characteristic of "low-performing" agencies in Lum et al.'s (2023) eight-agency study.

If an investigator is needed for an offense, the SPD does not require a detective to respond to the initial scene during the reporting stage unless the crime is a confirmed homicide (or another significant event, such as an officer-involved shooting). Response to all other crimes is at the discretion of supervisors and investigators. Most SPD investigations units do not work around the clock but instead will have officers "on call" or on "stand-by" if the need arises for an investigator to respond to a scene outside of the unit's working hours (different units have different stand-by practices). Otherwise, investigators will receive the case from patrol later. The time frame as to when they receive the case for follow-up investigation can vary from hours to days. Research on investigations has found that agencies where detectives do not initially respond to the initial crime scene tend to have below-average crime clearance rates over time.

The one consistent exception to these practices appears to be *confirmed* homicide cases. For confirmed homicides, at least two detectives may respond to every scene, as does a CSI (crime scene investigator) detective and supervisor. This policy can pose a challenge to initially

unconfirmed homicides. In one death case described by interviewees, the event was initially deemed something other than a homicide and then changed to a homicide mid-investigation. Interviewees believed the lack of an initial response by the investigative unit ultimately responsible for the call can lead to confusion about the chain of command and missed opportunities for collecting evidence and speaking to witnesses.

If a case needs to be sent to an investigative unit after the initial patrol response, a document known as the "Investigative Matrix" is used. At the time of the GMU team's visit, the available matrix provided was dated 1/29/2018. However, the team was notified that the matrix has been informally modified to reflect the various reorganizations of the agency. The matrix describes which follow-up unit handles each type of crime (and associated victim, suspect, and circumstances).

When a case is sent to the responsible investigative unit, that unit may or may not decide to investigate that case. While some cases (homicides, for example) are always assigned to a detective, other cases may not be, even if they are sent to an investigative unit (including robberies, burglaries, and assaults). Once directed to a particular unit, a supervisor determines whether the case will be assigned to a detective. This practice of triaging within investigative units predates the current personnel crisis in the SPD. These decisions appear to be based on an informal understanding of the solvability factors of cases (and sometimes on detective workload). It is unclear which solvability factors (beyond the identification of the suspect) are regularly used, what weight is placed on each, and how such determinations are made to triage cases for investigation. It is also unclear whether this triaging is based on research knowledge about solvability factors (for example, see the studies reviewed under "Category 1" in Prince et al., 2021, pp. 687-690). In the GIU, cases are often not assigned at all, as the unit's priority is to file rush cases, as described in Section 3. For cases that are investigated, different units have different practices of assigning cases. Some use rotation policies, while others make decisions based on perceived workload.

Members of the Investigations Bureau believe that workloads have increased because of the decline in the number of investigators in the agency (Section 2). However, it is unclear exactly how much, as the agency does not conduct workload analysis. Further, the agency cannot conduct this workload analysis across units as it does not have a consistent approach to track the process of investigations for each case. As discussed in Section 7, the SPD's Data-Driven Policing Section has been working with the Investigations Bureau to develop a better system for tracking cases, which will help monitor workload and effort. It will be important that SPD optimizes its use of this tracking system for both casework and performance assessment. As already mentioned, analyses are needed both within and across investigative units to understand a variety of performance metrics that are essential for the effective organization and working capacity of units.

Many interviewed mentioned a "drafting" process requiring investigators to work outside the investigative unit on alternative assignments on their days off. These alternative assignments are designated into three separate tiers: Tier 1 includes holidays, Tier 2 includes major sporting

events, and Tier 3 includes smaller events like concerts. Though some supervisory ranks are exempt, all others are subject to drafting. With the department's current staffing shortages, these drafts have been imposed on many sworn personnel in most units (including investigations). However, it is unclear how this drafting practice affects sworn personnel. For example, drafting may impact patrol and investigative work by increasing stress and burnout or reducing opportunities for voluntary overtime. For detectives, drafting practices may limit the time, effort, or overtime they may dedicate to their cases. But the exact impacts of the draft on workload remain unanalyzed and unknown.

The Investigative Process

Since there are no investigative manuals or written expectations, policies, and practices within investigative units, it was unsurprising that detectives did not describe checklists or clear expectations for processing cases. Practices vary across units and detectives about how cases are investigated, developed, reviewed, or closed. We do not mean to suggest that detectives are not earnestly engaged in investigations or don't have their own casework systems. Many we spoke to also go the extra mile to help victims, investigate cases, pursue leads, and resolve crimes. However, these efforts and investigative approaches can vary significantly across detectives and units. Additionally, investigators may not be aware of, or have the ability to determine, whether the approaches they use for investigations are the most optimal.

Regular supervision and review of cases, a common practice in high-performing agencies, also varies across units in the SPD. Supervisors do not have a standard case management tool to assess the performance of their unit and investigators regularly. According to some interviewees, the prevailing sentiment and expectation in some units are that supervisors will stay out of detective cases, and detectives have high levels of autonomy and discretion in the process they take to investigate a case. This weaker approach to supervision and case review has been found in research to be a characteristic of lower-performing agencies with regard to investigations.

Relationships with Other Units

Because the GMU team did not have the opportunity to speak with many detectives, we could not determine the day-to-day relationship that investigators within units had with each other. However, some key findings did emerge that may provide some insights into this area.

For example, the Mark43 records management system is the only shared case-tracking system for detectives and supervisors within and across units. However, because that system does not incorporate detailed case management (see Section 7), and because there are so few intelligence analysts in the Investigations Bureau (see Section 8), investigators from one unit are unable to determine, except by asking other detectives, whether suspects, victims,

witnesses, or other persons are linked to investigations in other units. Investigators often rely on informal social networks and communication approaches to facilitate these connections.

Furthermore, relationships between units were generally described as occurring on an "as needed" basis. Given that there are no unit manuals, we discovered no standard practices indicating that units would be required to meet or exchange information with each other. There were no formal or structured inter-unit communication venues. For example, weekly shooting or intelligence meetings may not involve or engage actual detectives and may only include supervisors.

While detectives did not describe any explicit barriers to inter-unit communication (e.g., intradepartmental tensions), a lack of formal venues and structured information-sharing efforts can hamper investigations. Without planned meetings or intelligence-sharing platforms, it is incumbent upon detectives to seek information from others and only in instances where they believe others have information to share. Effectively, criminal intelligence relevant to investigations will likely remain siloed within each unit and detective. More effective information sharing can be facilitated through internal messaging platforms, distribution lists, and weekly intelligence bulletins. Scheduling regular peer case review meetings in which detectives share the status and updates of their investigations can also bolster collaboration that can contribute to more successful investigations (Braga & Dusseault, 2018).

Lastly, the relationship between patrol and investigations is thin (see Section 9). In the SPD, investigators have few required or organic opportunities to engage with patrol officers. One interviewee noted that there were almost "two different police agencies in the SPD" (referring to the patrol and investigative bureaus). Investigators do not respond to most initial crime scenes in person and receive reports after officers have already responded. While investigators expressed concern about the quality of officers' written reports, patrol commanders felt that feedback from investigators was inconsistent and primarily negative.

We discuss the relationships between investigations and support units further in Section 8, and with patrol in Section 9. However, we emphasize that good working relationships amongst investigative units and between investigations, patrol, and support services is a mark of higher performing agencies with regard to investigations (Carter & Carter, 2016; Maguire et al., 2010; Wellford et al., 2019).

Summary of Suggestions

Again, this assessment was not focused on the specific analysis of investigative cases but on the organizational processes related to those investigations. Therefore, our suggestions do not touch upon specific elements of cases or the sequencing of those elements during an investigation. However, we do offer the following organizational suggestions to the SPD about investigative processes, workload, and effort:

1. A more formalized and updated investigative matrix that matches the current organization of investigations is needed. Further, the agency might consider analyzing the matrix and "deconfliction" policies for the matrix. Such analyses could be helpful to reorganization assessments described in Section 3. At the operational level, such analyses may help to ensure that assignments are not disrupted mid-investigation or that contingency plans are in place if investigations need to be transferred quickly to different units. This may be particularly relevant for cases that could become homicides (e.g., arson, severe child abuse, shootings, etc.).

2. Increasing response by detectives to initial crime scenes may be difficult in the current staffing crisis. However, the SPD should consider expanding the types of crimes to which a detective would more regularly respond. An initial response by a detective can improve the quality of the investigation, from the responding officer's written report to evidence collection, interviewing, and canvassing.

3. Triaging, "red-lining," or "shelving" cases (choosing not to investigate them due to the lack of solvability factors) is a regular practice in the SPD. However, these practices are not often evidence-based and are characteristics of lower-performing agencies (in terms of investigative practices and clearance rates). While the capacity to respond to more cases requires more investigators in the SPD, the agency should consider the ramifications of not investigating certain crimes that are especially concerning to community members. Such crimes are not often homicides or drug crimes but burglaries, auto thefts, frauds, or commercial thefts. Some possible innovations in this space may include hiring more nonsworn civilian or retired investigators or reassessing priorities regarding how investigators are allocated.

4. Related to the above point, determining whether cases should be assigned to investigations primarily using solvability factors is an old-fashioned investigative practice. Cases are solved through a combination of solvability factors *and* investigator and unit effort, resources, technologies, and tools applied. In other words, some cases deemed not worthy of investigation due to outdated beliefs about solvability may be solvable with investigative techniques.

5. We also note that detectives and supervisors responsible for triaging cases may be doing so with high levels of discretion. They may not be adequately trained on *which* solvability factors are relevant and how much each factor may increase the probability of a case being solved. Again, some cases may not initially have the requisite solvability factors, but investigator effort can build solvability over the course of an investigation. We do not know if those doing the triaging have this knowledge.

6. Units should consider developing checklists or guidelines about the requirements for an investigation. Such written guidelines or checklists serve multiple purposes, including ensuring that "no rock is left unturned" in an investigation; reminding investigators about possible avenues for investigations that they may have forgotten or not thought

about; increasing collaboration and exchange with other units if those requirements are included on checklists; serving as a guide for supervisors to review cases; serving as a template for developing information tracking systems; and providing foundations for training and onboarding new detectives.

7. The SPD should consider strategically creating and improving constructive interactions between investigative units and between patrol and investigations. With regard to investigative and patrol interactions, the Investigations Bureau may consider more formal and structured opportunities to provide feedback to patrol officers about cases (for example, increasing on-scene response or report supervision). Stronger links, especially between the GIU and patrol officers, might be where prevention innovations regarding burglary, robbery, auto theft, and juvenile crimes might be coordinated. Other patrol units not explicitly assigned to investigations (the Community Response Group, for example) may also provide opportunities for facilitating collaborations between patrol and investigations. However, such collaborations should be monitored, as they can become one-sided and not mutual.

6. Leadership and Supervision

In this section, we describe our observations about leadership and supervision as they relate to investigations in the SPD. We emphasize that the characteristics and challenges described in this section likely pre-date the current crises and are attributable to organizational weaknesses rather than specific individuals in these positions.

Strategic Command and Control

The strategic command and control infrastructure for the SPD would be best characterized as relatively weak. Perhaps the most ironic example was that leaders and supervisors struggled to direct subordinates to perform requested tasks related to our visit, including encouraging them to meet with us. The primary individuals tasked with coordinating our visit were nonsworn civilians who did not have command authority in the police agency. These aspects of our visit were unusual for the GMU team compared with their experiences with other agencies. While we recognize that the agency chose to make all cooperation voluntary for this project, we also note that this project was at the SPD's request with the goal of self-improvement, not a research project requested by the GMU team. Some interviewees did not appear to understand the purpose of our visit, and several people chose not to participate. Several interviewees confirmed directly or indirectly that this culture of weaker command and control has been longstanding in the agency, regardless of the leadership team. The GMU team also noticed incongruence across the ranks; not everyone agreed about the agency's strategic direction or the need to improve investigations.

Several factors likely contribute to this weakened command and control environment in the SPD, which, in turn, impacts investigations. Some interviewees suggested that the SPD had a long-standing culture in which giving direct orders was frowned upon, and voluntary compliance was often sought. Others pointed to the current situation of low morale and low employment numbers contributing to the loss of internal legitimacy in the leadership and the agency. Some interviewees noted that the SPD leadership had to deal with the politics of the city and the city council, which left it much less able to be inward-focused or strategic.

For investigations, the lack of standardized procedures, performance measures, and articulated expectations for officers, detectives, and supervisors has also weakened supervisory authority at all levels of the organization. Unlike patrol operations, investigations are also not regularly assessed in SeaStat, which is one vehicle the agency uses for performance management. Some interviewees argued that because some investigative units handle sensitive information, they should not be involved in SeaStat or share that information with other leadership members. This belief is unsubstantiated and reflects outdated cultural thinking in policing and a lack of transparency and internal trust.

Many interviewees noted a lack of strategic leadership and direction to the Investigations Bureau's body of work and areas of responsibility, which was evident even before the current crises of COVID and Floyd. One interviewee suggested that command staff should—but does not—act as the "think tank" for the agency, providing strategic priorities and discussing ways to innovate or problem-solve around current challenges. Many individuals we spoke to believed that SeaStat, as practiced, is not a good forum for strategic problem-solving. However, other opportunities for Investigative Bureau strategizing are also not used for this purpose. For example, interviewees noted that the command staff of investigations meets every 2-4 weeks with the Bureau's assistant chief. However, the focus of those meetings is for the assistant chief to receive feedback or hear about the needs of individual sections rather than for strategic discussions related to bureau or section operations. Others we spoke to thought there used to be regular quarterly meetings among investigative captains. However, the current discussions between captains and command staff, or even between captains, lieutenants, and sergeants, are now less substantive, strategic, or frequent.

Several individuals we spoke to at various ranks used the term "reactive" or "defensive" to describe the leadership and command and control approach in the SPD, especially concerning demands from the mayor's office. Instead of adhering to a strategic vision for the agency, some interviewees noted that command staff tends to lead by reacting to different political problems in Seattle, Washington State, or the United States.

Supervision

During its visit, the GMU team spoke with several first and second-line investigative supervisors and agency leaders. Many wanted to do a good job and cared about the agency and the city. However, precisely what doing a "good job" meant was unclear. Given the agency's informal nature, investigative supervisors' knowledge, skills, and abilities varied greatly across units. Some interviewees we spoke with mentioned that some units require supervisors to have prior investigative experience, while other units do not have such requirements. Supervisors' onboarding into detective units was informal and unstructured, like investigator training and onboarding. One interviewee noted that new supervisors are sometimes left to learn about their authority and responsibility within investigative units from the detectives they supervise.

Relatedly, supervisors' activities vary. While some supervisors are actively communicating with detectives and working with them on cases or goals of the unit, other supervisors are expected to stay out of detective work. There appears to be a prevalent feeling amongst some detectives and supervisors that it is almost inappropriate and insulting for supervisors to be checking in on detectives' cases. Investigative sergeants make initial intake decisions about whether referred cases will be assigned to a detective. This decision appears linked to sergeants' assessment of solvability, but the guiding principles driving these decisions are undocumented (see Section 5). For cases assigned an investigator, units lack consistent and articulated procedures, policies, and expectations for assigned cases (see Section 5), which also weakens supervision. Relatedly, there are no clear procedures or requirements for regular reporting to supervisors or

commanders (which also varies across units and sections). Investigative sergeants review cases at their discretion and determine whether they have been handled adequately based on their knowledge and experience. Sergeants compile reports for their superiors on the status of cases in their units, but investigative managers do not have formal case management processes or meetings. Nor is investigative performance examined systematically in the SPD's SeaStat management meetings. No standard performance metrics have been developed for supervisors to assess their detectives or their units, and the lack of a standardized case management tracking system (see Section 7) further impedes such tracking. These structural and organizational characteristics likely hamper investigative supervisors' ability to monitor and assess detective and unit performance and for the Investigations Bureau and the command staff to assess the overall performance of investigations in the agency.

These views and practices of investigative supervision in the SPD can negatively impact investigations. The research evidence on effective investigations indicates that structured, formal, and regular case management and supervision are essential for investigative success in high-performing agencies. Additionally, the ability of first-line supervisors to guide, manage, and supervise investigative activity is crucial to ensure that cases are adequately developed. However, the SPD does not have checklists, written policies, procedures, or clear expectations about what should be required in an investigative case folder. Many suggested that highly skilled investigators and supervisors "just know" what is required of them. This type of organizational approach is neither sustainable nor optimal for two reasons. First, those with deep institutional knowledge may leave. Second, those who believe they have strong institutional knowledge may not have the most optimal knowledge. Again, this situation seems to have existed for some time in the SPD.

Standard performance metrics and case tracking are essential elements of supervisory authority. Relevant metrics and guidelines include, for example, when a case is officially defined as "solved" or "cleared," when exceptional clearances are used, how long a case is actively investigated, and requirements to notify victims. Tracking and performance management also help supervisors better understand and guide investigators' efforts. This is important in investigations, as investigative efforts (e.g., visiting the scene, attempting to locate and interview individuals, using multiple technologies and search databases, searching and processing evidence, etc.) can significantly determine whether cases are resolved. Clearly described expectations, tracking, and regular case review can help supervisors and detectives meet their expectations of each other and facilitate the onboarding and training of new detectives.

Professional Development for Leaders and Supervisors

As previously discussed, there appears to be very little (if any) professional development available for investigative supervisors or commanders who enter investigative units or for existing supervisors and commanders. As with the onboarding of investigators, the onboarding and initial training and preparation of sergeants and lieutenants are informal, unstructured, and

reliant on “learn as you go” approaches. In some cases, new supervisors may have to ask subordinates about performance and expectations, which is an unsustainable leadership practice. Relatedly, we heard concerns about a lack of training and preparation for command staff in general, extending beyond investigations, and about the need for better performance review systems that provide opportunities for employees to give feedback on the performance of their superiors.

Summary of Suggestions

Understandably, modern police agencies and progressive leaders do not wish to operate in a rigid, militaristic style where ranks cannot converse or question each other. At the same time, essential organizational elements of highly functional organizations (i.e., strong and formalized supervision and mentorship, clear expectations and performance metrics, well-articulated responsibilities of different roles, clearly described operational procedures, etc.) are needed for effective leadership and supervision. While some might portray these issues as “cultural,” most organizational challenges in this area are due to structural weaknesses. Below, we suggest some steps to assist the SPD in this area.

1. More opportunities are needed for lieutenants and higher-level commanders to have strategic discussions that encourage problem-solving or innovations in investigations. Existing opportunities could be developed in chiefs’ and command staff meetings, SeaStat, bureau chief meetings, and investigative section meetings amongst supervisors, lieutenants, and captains. Leading strategic discussions take practice and are different from meetings that are more “presentation,” “theatric,” or “feedback” oriented (sometimes characteristics of “Compstat-like” meetings). A starting point may be to base meetings around specific problems and use professional problem-solving approaches with specific ground rules about participant expectations and behaviors during these meetings.

2. Supervisors, from sergeants to the chief, need the ability to monitor and track investigative performance and have clearly defined roles and responsibilities for doing so. For first-line supervisors, regularly engaging with detectives on their cases, or at least having some way of monitoring effort and providing mentorship and guidance for missing elements of cases, would be helpful.

3. Investigative sergeants and lieutenants need structured and direct training, policies, and guides that help them clearly understand their authority and responsibilities. These should be clearly described, written, and understood by all subordinates and can also be used to assess a supervisor’s performance.

4. First and second-line supervisors, commanders, and other agency leaders need regular professional development to strengthen their supervisory and leadership skills. The SPD might consider developing or participating in supervisory or leadership schools that

could help strengthen command, control, and supervision within the agency. The agency should also consider specialized training on engaging in strategic discussions and operational planning. Supervisors involved in triaging cases also need much more knowledge about the research in this area; they may be making decisions that are not optimal for the agency's or community's goals of increasing case resolution.

7. Information Systems for Case Tracking and Management

As discussed in the previous section, the management of investigations in the SPD appears unstructured and variable across units. Investigative sergeants make initial intake decisions about whether referred cases will be assigned to a detective. This decision appears linked to sergeants' assessment of solvability, but the guiding principles driving these decisions are undocumented. For cases that are assigned an investigator, units lack consistent and articulated procedures, policies, and expectations for assigned cases. Relatedly, the agency does not use manuals or case checklists for investigations, nor are there clear procedures or requirements for regular reporting to supervisors (which also varies across units) or commanders. Investigative sergeants review cases informally and determine whether they have been handled adequately based on their knowledge and experience. While cases formally have a 90-day closing date expectation, there seems to be little systematic pressure from supervisors for investigators to close cases, which varies depending on the specific supervisor. Sergeants compile reports for their superiors on the status of cases in their units, but investigative managers do not have formal case management processes or meetings. Nor is investigative performance examined systematically in the SPD's SeaStat management meetings.

These structural and organizational characteristics likely hamper investigative supervisors' ability to monitor and assess detective and unit performance and for the Investigations Bureau and the command staff to assess the overall performance of investigations in the agency. One essential organizational strategy for addressing these issues is using a robust and timely information system for classifying crimes, tracking and supervising cases, and supporting both strategic analyses and managerial performance assessments. In this section, we focus on the SPD's records management system for tracking cases and highlight some of the limitations of this system as it is currently used.

Information Technology for Case Management

At the time of GMU's visit, there was no unified system to track case effort or process for investigations beyond SPD's Mark43 records management system. Crimes reported to the SPD and referred to investigators are initially recorded in Mark43 through a patrol report of a crime. As previously discussed, SPD's Data Quality Center reviews crime reports and refers cases to appropriate investigative units based on the investigative matrix. A case jacket (or file) is then created in Mark43 for each case assigned for investigation. Supplemental reports by detectives and other support units (e.g., crime scene investigators and latent print specialists) are added to the case file as they are completed.

In practice, these case files may not be regularly updated, and updates are at the discretion of individual detectives. Detectives may record their supplemental notes and reports using word processing software or other methods and save their work on their personal computer drives or notetaking systems. They may or may not enter and store updates, reports, and other data and evidence on Mark43 or the SPD's internal network drives immediately upon receipt or completion, but may wait until the end of an investigation to file those updates. When case files are closed or no longer investigated, there is also variability in the closure justifications (and labeling) of these incidents.

Individual detectives' variable case jacket maintenance practices create several challenges to tracking and managing investigative work. Timeliness and sharing of investigative work are left to individual detectives, which makes case review and oversight, quality control, and intelligence sharing more difficult. Relatedly, the current approach does not allow first-line supervisors to clearly understand all cases being investigated in the unit, what stage those cases are in, or the work being done on those cases.

When case clearances are reported in Mark43, they are reviewed by the Data Quality Center staff for compliance with federal Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) reporting requirements. (The UCR codes are also known as "NIBRS" codes, referencing the UCR's National Incident-Based Reporting System.) Data Quality Center staff often require corrections from detectives when reported case clearances are inconsistent with UCR requirements. This occurs regularly, especially when exceptional clearances are used. The agency also has a separate set of extensive internal clearance codes that capture more detailed information about case status (e.g., the state of prosecutorial review).

Case tracking is done primarily within investigative units and in informal ways (e.g., some unit supervisors maintain spreadsheets, while others do not). As a result, this information is not standardized or centralized, impeding bureau- or agency-level management and assessment of investigations. In addition, each investigative unit may have particular ways of determining case dispositions and inconsistently use internal SPD clearance codes. Given these and other inconsistencies, it is challenging for the agency to generate clearance rates for crime types from the Mark43 system.

To address these limitations, SPD's Data-Driven Unit staff are developing an investigative management dashboard that investigative managers can use for assigning, tracking, and managing cases. The system will enable managers to assess caseloads (across investigators), case statuses, and the amount of time cases have been open. The system was still being developed at the time of GMU's visit.

Although many of the problems with case tracking in the SPD are attributable to how Mark43 is used (or not) by investigators, technical staff also pointed out some limitations inherent in Mark43 as a records management system. One of the most pressing issues is the need to improve the system's master name index, which currently does not adequately identify individuals linked to multiple cases. This is a significant problem, as it impedes the ability of

investigators to readily determine whether they are dealing with subjects (e.g., suspects, arrestees, victims, etc.) who have been linked to other cases. As another illustration of the system's limitations, the staff of the Data Quality Center must create spreadsheets with reports on recent jail bookings because it is not easy for detectives to see that information in Mark43.

Summary of Suggestions

Given the importance of timely and consistent case information for managing individual investigations and assessing unit performance, we offer the following suggestions to the SPD to strengthen its information systems for tracking investigations:

1. The SPD should implement a more standardized and mandatory approach to updating case jackets in Mark43 to facilitate more consistent tracking and assessment of investigations. In addition, agency guidelines should be more explicit about the types of updates that should be entered into Mark43 and the timeliness for such updates.

2. Related to the point above, the SPD should avoid unit-siloed case management systems. Unit-specific systems can create information silos and do not facilitate relationship building, information sharing, intelligence work, or strategic analysis. Creating performance metric systems within units also does not facilitate strategic leadership for lieutenants and high-level command staff.

3. Detectives need further training on using the Mark43 system, particularly on using clearance codes in Mark43. Clearance codes should be used uniformly throughout the agency and all units. This recommendation applies to the use of external UCR-NIBRS clearance codes and SPD's internal clearance codes.

4. The investigative management dashboard under development in the SPD should help facilitate more standardized approaches to tracking and measuring investigations across investigative units. The SPD should use this system to analyze investigative performance in its SeaStat meetings or other venues in which strategic discussions of these performance measures can be conducted. We also recommend expanding the investigative management dashboard to include information on cases not assigned to investigations. Analysis of non-assigned cases (e.g., numbers and reasons for non-assignment) should also be incorporated in the SPD's assessment of investigations, given that research indicates that over-triaging cases into non-assigned, non-followup status can negatively impact clearance rates and victim satisfaction.

5. Besides encouraging more systematic use of Mark43 to update the status of cases, the SPD should consider other policies for sharing investigative information (e.g., posting of information on secure agency network drives) that would facilitate information sharing, intelligence analysis, and better management of investigations. In addition, old-

fashioned views about the secrecy of investigations in particular units need to be revisited and may reflect deeper internal trust concerns or unsubstantiated beliefs.

6. The SPD should establish a working group of appropriate personnel (e.g., investigators and nonsworn/civilian staff from the Data Quality Center and other IT and analysis units) to address technical improvements to the Mark43 system that would facilitate investigative work (such as improving the system's master name index).

8. Investigative Support Services

The GMU team met with personnel from several units that support investigations, including crime scene investigation, fingerprint collection and analysis, intelligence and crime analysis, and technology support. These functions are spread across multiple bureaus and investigative units. Below, we briefly describe the operations of these units and highlight some of their needs and challenges. We also discuss a concern about nonsworn civilian support services we discovered during our visit to the SPD.

Crime Scene Investigations

The Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) unit is assigned to the Violent Crimes Section of the Investigations Bureau. It comprises one squad of eight detectives (at the time of GMU's visit, two positions were open), led by a sergeant and one lieutenant. There are no civilian employees in this unit. While CSI's work primarily is for homicide investigations (including processing scenes of warrant service for homicides), it also responds to some additional violent crimes. CSI also assists with "Type 3" use of force investigations (officer-involved shootings, for example) and may process vehicles.

According to interviewees, two CSI detectives and one sergeant go to all homicide scenes and may do so for other investigations. The responding detectives usually have predefined roles, including one "primary" and one "secondary" detective. The primary detective must be certified in crime scene analysis. Such certification is provided by the International Association for Identification,[14] the National Forensics Academy, or other schools. Interviewees noted that a stronger eligibility list for the unit was needed because of the prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities of CSI detectives. The unit also provides on-the-job training and has other training requirements to become a "primary" detective. The unit provides 24/7 coverage for requests using a system of shiftwork and on-standby assignments.

CSI's primary work product is writing supplemental reports for existing cases that others have entered into the Mark43 records management system. The unit does not have a procedures manual, although the Investigations Bureau chief recently requested one from the unit. The unit is not involved in SeaStat assessments. Interviewees raised concerns about consistent staffing in the CSI (especially because of the drafting of CSI officers for special events) and the need for updated equipment and facilities (although not everyone interviewed argued that equipment needs were a significant problem).

While the collection of latent prints and photo evidence was previously under CSI, the individuals who handle these tasks are now under a separate unit and command. Some

[14] See https://www.theiai.org/.

members of CSI feel that the detectives within CSI can do this type of work. We return to that issue in the discussion of nonsworn civilian employees below.

Forensic Support Services

The SPD's Forensics Support Services include a Latent Print Team, an Identification Unit, an Evidence Unit, a Photo Lab, and the Video Unit. Organizationally, the Forensics Support Services group operates outside the Investigations Bureau. Most individuals in these units are nonsworn, although the Evidence Unit contains two sworn detectives.

During our interviews, we were only able to meet with members of the Latent Print Team, which collects and analyzes fingerprint evidence from crime scenes, vehicles, property, and other evidence collected by officers and investigators. This civilian-staffed and accredited unit responds to any crime scenes at which they are needed from 6:00am to 3:30pm. At later hours, they respond on-scene if needed to homicide calls and events involving a high dollar loss. Personnel from this unit also train patrol officers to collect fingerprints from crime scenes (using "lift cards"). The unit's work is documented in a laboratory information management system, and their reports are added to case folders in Mark43. This unit was formerly within the Investigations Bureau but was moved out during one of the recent reorganizations. This relocation may also be true of other civilian forensic units.

Collecting and analyzing fingerprint evidence could be further improved by additional training for officers and detectives. Such training can reduce instances in which officers or detectives contaminate print evidence or inadvertently introduce evidence that could bias (or appear to potentially bias) the work of latent print staff. An example of the latter would be detectives providing unnecessary and potentially prejudicial case information in their requests. Research on human factors in forensics sciences demonstrates how such information can impact the outcomes of forensics work (e.g., see Dror et al., 2021). A better understanding of print processing requirements and timelines could also assist detectives in establishing priorities for their fingerprint requests.

Intelligence Analysis

The SPD has two intelligence analysts who conduct strategic analyses of cases, offenders, and criminal networks to support shooting investigations. The analysts are part of the Investigative Support Unit of the Major Investigations Section. The SPD does not have analysts providing similar support for other types of investigations. The intelligence analysts track trends in different types of shootings (e.g., those involving gangs, narcotics, juveniles, homeless persons, road rage, etc.) and conduct analyses that link related cases, actors, networks, and firearms to help build investigative cases. They also provide weekly bulletins on shootings for SPD officers and other regional partners.

The work of the analysts is sophisticated but limited by several factors. Detectives investigating shooting cases are not required to consult or collaborate with analysts. Some detectives appear unaware of the analysts and their capabilities or choose not to work with them. Further, the analysts can only use information and data posted by detectives on shared computer network drives within the agency. However, as already discussed, information storage on shared drives is highly variable across units and detectives.

There is also a lack of strategic direction for the intelligence analysts. For example, the analysts began analyzing shooting cases based on their own initiative. Despite regular meetings with the analysts, SPD command staff have not harnessed the intelligence capabilities for a strategic and coordinated approach to shootings. Shooting investigations may be handled by detectives assigned to Homicide, Robbery, or the Gun Violence Reduction Unit, depending on the circumstances of the case. Some commanders do not fully understand what the analysts do and do not instruct their detectives to work with them. Further, the work of the analysts is used primarily for reactive investigations and not for proactive initiatives to prevent gun violence (such as focused deterrence approaches) or other crimes.

Crime Analysis

The Data-Driven Policing Section provides additional analytic support for the agency. This unit, comprised of nonsworn analysts, tries to promote evidence-based practices within the SPD. The analysts create public and internal dashboards for tracking and mapping crime, compile data and analyses for the SPD's command staff meetings (SeaStat), and analyze homicide data for the Mayor's Office, among other tasks. This section also studies crime trends to identify significant changes and conducts analyses of specific problems like shots fired incidents, crime hot spots, and homicides involving the homeless.

Those we interviewed emphasized that their focus on ensuring accurate, timely, and useful data is essential to crime analysis. They argued that better data and analysis could improve the evaluation of critical problems and improve responses to reducing crime and holding offenders accountable. A great deal of research confirms this assessment. However, the GMU team noticed that crime analysts seem minimally used in investigations (or even patrol) and are not assigned to investigative units.

The analysts' direct work with investigators is limited but increasing. For example, at the request of the assistant chief of the Investigations Bureau, the Data-Driven Unit has been developing the investigations management dashboard discussed in Section 7. At the request of investigative commanders, the unit also recently developed a dashboard application for analyzing assaults on officers. Related to these tasks, analysts underscored how problems with case classifications, tracking, and dispositions could affect the accuracy and timeliness of their work and create complications in tracking investigator workload. These concerns underscore the need for improvements discussed in Section 7.

Other Investigative Support

Several additional investigative support functions are organized within the ICAC (Internet Crimes Against Children) and the Investigative Support Unit of the Major Investigations Section. Outside of ICAC, the functions of the investigative support unit include intelligence analysis, as described above; threat assessment, focused notably on threats of mass shootings and threats against dignitaries; event assessment (i.e., monitoring of social media for events like protests); technical and electronic support, for detectives' requests related to the use of specified types of technology; an electronic and cyber squad (several of these detectives are assigned to federal task forces); and the SPD's real-time crime center (RTCC).

Given that the GMU team only met with members of the technical-electronic support unit (TESU) and the RTCC, our comments focus on these two services. The TESU handles requests from other units for assistance with technologies like pole cameras, "drop cars" (which are equipped with video recording devices), and surveillance wires. The TESU must evaluate the legal grounds for these requests, which are governed by strict state and local laws, and assist requestors with deploying the technologies in the field. Of particular note, the TESU also has one individual who handles requests for data extraction from cell phones for the agency (except for the ICAC and the Special Victims Unit, who each have one staff member handling cellphone extraction). During our interviews, several individuals remarked on the need for the SPD to increase personnel and equipment to extract data from cell phones (though the department also faces legal limits on the equipment it can procure for this purpose). Some staff also noted the need for detectives to have additional training on investigative technologies and the legal issues surrounding their use.

The SPD's RTCC was established several years ago to enhance the department's ability to respond quickly to in-progress and other very recent crimes. However, the RTCC currently has only one assigned detective, significantly limiting its capacity to support investigations. One interviewee referred to it as an RTCC "in name only," underscoring a general perception that the RTCC currently lacks meaningful capabilities. Other agencies with highly operational RTCCs tend to deploy modern law enforcement technologies and several staff members to supplement investigative work. This was not found in the SPD.

As a result of the budget cuts and reforms post-Floyd, the 20 victim advocates located in the SPD were moved to the City of Seattle's Human Services Department. These victim advocates provide support for investigations, and their work entails listening to survivors, helping them identify the next step they want to take in their case, addressing their immediate safety concerns, and offering connections to resources in the community and within the criminal justice system.[15] SPD detectives emphasized this resource's value for violent crime investigations and other situations where victims are reluctant to cooperate with the police.

[15] See https://www.seattle.gov/human-services/services-and-programs/safety-and-victim-support/victim-support-team#:~:text=If%20you'd%20like%20to%20connect%20to%20Victim%20Support%20Team,024%20(online%20chat%20available).

Victim advocates were viewed by those interviewed as helping to build trust and rapport with victims and facilitating their cooperation. These victim advocates now primarily work off-site and remotely. Several interviewees noted the negative impact that this relocation has had on investigations and victim support.

Additional investigative support is provided by the SPD's Community Response Group (CRG). We discuss the CRG in the next section, as it is part of the SPD's Patrol Bureau.

Technologies for Investigations

We did not undertake a systematic inventory of the SPD's investigative technologies as part of our assessment. Nevertheless, technologies arose as a point of discussion in many of our interviews. The GMU team learned of limitations imposed on the agency by the city or state about using technologies like CCTV (and other video evidence), license plate readers, intelligence databases, social media, and software for extracting information from cell phones. Interviewees believed that some of these restrictions limit investigative effectiveness in Seattle. Some studies have shown that several technologies, such as information/analysis, video evidence, and forensics technologies, can improve investigative outcomes and reduce crime in specific contexts (e.g., see Coupe & Kaur, 2005; Koper & Lum, 2019; Roman et al., 2009), although this effectiveness can be limited if not matched by other organizations needs and investigative effort (see Koper et al., 2014; Lum et al., 2017). Moreover, resulting impediments to crime clearance may worsen community trust in the police, reduce citizens' confidence that crimes will be solved, and further decrease citizens' cooperation with the police.

Some restrictions on the SPD's use of technology might warrant reconsideration by the agency and the city. Since the GMU team did not examine this issue closely, we refrain from offering specific recommendations. However, we encourage the SPD to engage in these conversations with community members through community forums and perhaps even develop usage policies with community groups.

A Note about Nonsworn Employees

Within the evidence-based policing framework, nonsworn employees of multiple types (analysts, information technology specialists, investigators, and administrators) widen the capabilities of police agencies and play critical roles in detecting, responding to, and preventing crime. For investigations specifically, nonsworn employees carry out many essential services and serve ably in investigative capacities as crime and intelligence analysts, investigators, investigative support personnel (including crime scene investigators, forensic specialists, and victim advocates), and information technology personnel. However, while nonsworn civilian employees are essential to police organizations, they are often viewed in administrative rather than operational capacities.

Policies and practices in the SPD can undermine the ability of the agency to optimize nonsworn employees in investigations and may have widened the cultural and organizational justice gaps between nonsworn and sworn employees. Notably, existing union and contractual practices discourage the agency from hiring nonsworn individuals for positions that sworn officers could theoretically fill. This practice is antiquated and unrealistic; it hamstrings the agency from filling positions that nonsworn personnel could effectively serve. Nonsworn personnel often have training and expertise that sworn individuals do not have (e.g., crime/intelligence analysis, database management, information technology work, forensics, planning, research and evaluation, accounting, etc.). Limiting nonsworn employment is especially problematic in an era when agencies nationwide struggle to recruit and retain people for sworn positions. Greater utilization of nonsworn employees in the SPD could improve the agency's investigative resources, functioning, and skillsets, and reduce the negative impacts of the loss of sworn personnel.

Increasing civilian staff requires the agency's proactive and positive efforts to value both groups equally and integrate them and their work as frequently as possible. However, several developments in the SPD suggest that the opposite is occurring. For example, as noted above, forensics staff were moved outside of investigations, and there may be sworn and nonsworn personnel doing similar work (e.g., CSI and FSS). Some interviewees noted an unspoken tension between nonsworn and sworn personnel, and that nonsworn employees held lower status than sworn personnel in the SPD. Some sworn interviewees noted that investigators could handle the forensic support functions that nonsworn employees are conducting (implying the civilians were *not* needed). Overall, the GMU team concluded that nonsworn employees felt undervalued.

Summary of Suggestions

Investigative support services are critical in high-performing investigative units and police agencies. In the SPD, however, the use of some of these support services is not well articulated. Some members of these support services have had to define their roles, and these units are not directly involved in the strategic planning of the agency's investigative functions. Several suggestions might strengthen the role of investigative support services:

1. The SPD should consider expanding (and potentially integrating) all crime scene investigations and forensic support services so that more physical evidence can be collected from a wider variety of crime scenes in a strategic, organized manner. Studies have shown that collecting DNA evidence from more crime scenes leads to the detection of more suspects and more active offenders (Roman et al., 2009). Further, the SPD should consider hiring more nonsworn individuals for these positions, not only because it does not have enough detectives for detective positions but also because these are positions that nonsworn individuals commonly fill in large agencies. For example, many college and professional forensic science programs supply a national pool of potential applicants for CSI work. Scheduling additional CSI staff should also be

done to better fit the agency's needs (i.e., having CSI staff working during evening and night shifts).

2. The agency needs many more intelligence analysts to support a wider variety of investigations. The agency should also develop more formal guidance for integrating intelligence into investigative work, sharing investigative information for intelligence analyses, and incorporating more problem-solving into investigative work (Eck & Rossmo, 2019; Koper et al., 2015). Again, these are positions that nonsworn employees can fill.

3. Similarly, the SPD should make much more effort to integrate crime analysis work into investigations (and, equally, patrol). To make investigative work more successful and strategic, we recommend that crime analysts work more closely with patrol supervisors and investigators to address crime hot spots, patterns of related crimes, and the offenders contributing to these problems. Increased use of crime analysts in patrol and investigations can be particularly beneficial for the Community Response Group (discussed in the next section) or the GIU (see Section 3), given the large number of crimes they must address with limited staffing. We believe this would also help better integrate investigations with the needs of precinct commanders, an issue we examine in Section 9. The SPD should expand the number of crime analysts in the Data-Driven Policing Section to support these efforts.

4. The SPD would also benefit from expanding nonsworn employee hiring for other support functions. For example, more technology specialists could enhance the agency's ability to collect evidence from cell phones and other forms of technology, which several interviewees identified as a significant need. Analysts could also bolster the staffing of the RTCC and improve its effectiveness.

5. In addition to expanding its investigative support personnel, we also encourage the SPD and city policymakers to review the SPD's current technological capabilities. The agency should undertake an evidence-based, cost-benefit assessment of how its investigations could be improved with new and expanded uses of technologies while at the same time minimizing the risks of undesired outcomes (e.g., unwarranted intrusions on privacy or significant community disapproval). For example, recent studies have highlighted the beneficial effects that RTCCs (which use these technologies) can have on investigative clearances and crime reduction (Barao & Mastroianni, 2022; Hollywood et al., 2019). To be impactful, the RTCC would require city support to acquire and deploy modern law enforcement technologies and additional personnel to supplement investigative work.

6. The SPD should consider the ramifications of dividing nonsworn and sworn investigative support staff. Those divisions may unnecessarily weaken relationships between personnel and units and undermine the capacity of the agency to investigate cases. More generally, the SPD's leadership should emphasize the importance of expertise

rather than sworn/nonsworn. Nonsworn individuals often have the expertise needed by the agency that sworn individuals cannot regularly fulfill. Leadership should also promote more equality and respect for nonsworn staff and find substantive ways to show they are valued.

7. The SPD should provide more training to supervisors (and, if possible, detectives) on investigative support functions in the agency. This training should cover, at a minimum, the functions and capabilities of support units, their roles in supporting investigations, their work processes, the evidence and inputs they need from detectives, and the legal regulations governing their work.

8. We encourage the city and the SPD to consider how the working relationship between SPD detectives and the city's victim advocates can be refortified to improve victims' cooperation with detectives and enhance their trust and confidence in the SPD. This may involve returning victim advocates to the police agency.

9. Investigations and Patrol

The integration and collaboration between patrol and investigative units are vital in policing and are marks of high-performing agencies. However, such integration requires a teamwork approach at the leadership level, with regular exchanges between the patrol and investigative bureaus. However, the SPD has few opportunities for collaboration, teamwork, and strategizing between the Patrol and Investigations Bureaus.

The Role of Patrol in Investigations

In Seattle, as elsewhere, patrol officers are the first responders to all calls for service and crimes. Putting aside the rare event of homicide, patrol officers in the SPD also play the primary role of the initial investigator in most crimes assigned to a detective, as described in Section 5. Specifically, patrol officers interview victims, locate and preserve evidence, secure the crime scene, identify surveillance video, and take witness statements. Patrol officers in the SPD can also submit charges and send cases directly to the prosecutor's office without requiring investigative follow-up. Follow-up units may also be needed to conduct "rush" investigations for in-custody cases, as discussed in Section 3.

Investigators are available or on stand-by for most violent crimes to respond to a scene if needed. However, for many crimes that eventually involve a detective, investigators likely do not initially respond (except for homicide). It is unclear whether this has been a long-standing practice in the agency or a new development due to staffing challenges in the Investigations Bureau. But for most crimes involving an investigative unit, detectives will receive these cases after patrol officers file their initial reports.

Once patrol officers take the initial crime report, it is reviewed and assessed before it is forwarded to an investigative unit. First, a patrol supervisor will review the report before sending it to the SPD's Data Quality Center. A supervisor might also contact an investigative unit directly to determine if an investigative unit is needed. The Data Quality Center will also review reports to determine whether a report should be sent to an investigative unit. An investigative sergeant may also review cases to determine if the case should be assigned to a detective based on solvability factors present in the case.

In addition to general patrol and the initial response, report, and investigation of crimes, the Patrol Bureau and the patrol precincts have other links to investigations, both historical and contemporary. As noted in Section 3, the General Investigations Unit was once under the Patrol Bureau and physically located in the precincts. However, the centralization of that unit removed that investigative element from patrol. Patrol commanders felt having the GIU, crime analysts, and other specialized units in patrol precincts helped to improve collaboration between patrol and investigations. Patrol units also had anti-crime units that supported

investigations. After the protests of 2020, these and the bike units were combined into the Community Response Group (CRG), a patrol unit that supports investigations.

The Community Response Group (CRG)

The Community Response Group (CRG) is a Patrol Bureau unit that provides support for investigations. CRG was first developed in response to the 2020 Floyd protests when the agency decided to combine the anti-crime, bike, and other community policing units to form a unit that would respond to public protests. Early during the protests, the CRG consisted of two platoons, two lieutenants, five sergeants, and 40 officers. However, once officers started leaving and the protests started to decline, the CRG was reduced to one platoon, one lieutenant, and 30 positions (of which 20 are currently filled).

Although the CRG is within the Patrol Bureau and continues to have responsibilities to respond to precinct commanders' requests for crime prevention initiatives, the bulk of the CRG's work appears to support investigations. The CRG appears to have a wide area of discretionary responsibility. For example, it often implements warrants that do not rise to the level of needing a SWAT team. CRG officers may also conduct surveillance and follow-up investigations for other investigative units. They may assist in proactive drug-related operations or help to locate and find suspects, retail theft or vehicle theft operations, or coordinate arrest resources for investigative units. CRG officers may also respond to events in which a significant incident report is written and where an investigation is needed, but a detective is unavailable.

Investigative units and the CRG appear to have a good relationship. The CRG coordinates with the Investigations Bureau, especially regarding scheduling some follow-up activities (particularly warrant service). However, because the CRG is a patrol unit, it does not have equal access to investigative resources. The primary use of the CRG for investigative support activities likely impacts its ability to focus on crime prevention, problem-solving, and community policing activities that patrol commanders may need.

Relationship Between Patrol and Investigations

We were not able to interview patrol supervisors, officers, or even many detectives, and therefore are uncertain about the relationships between patrol and investigators at the individual level. However, some findings emerged from our interviews that illuminated the relationship between patrol and investigations more generally.

A common belief amongst those we interviewed from the Investigations Bureau is that many patrol officers are not well trained in crime scene processing or initial investigations, including how to write the initial crime report. Investigators suggested several areas for improvement, including evidence preservation, obtaining witness statements, and ensuring that specific elements of an investigation are correctly written into the report. While some detectives feel

comfortable giving officers feedback, others do not, given their understanding of how stressed and understaffed patrol is. We note that detectives are not regularly first responders in the SPD for most crimes they eventually investigate. Thus, they are not regularly at the initial scene to provide officers with guidance, immediate feedback or review, or direction regarding the elements needed for investigations.

On the patrol side, some commanders feel that the feedback from investigations back to patrol is often negative and could be improved. Patrol personnel noted that while investigators may be quick to tell officers what they did incorrectly in an initial investigation or report, positive feedback or the results of investigations are less often provided. No formal or regular feedback or question-and-answer loops exist between patrol and investigations. It was also unclear to the GMU team whether a formal link exists between the investigative supervisor review stage and the report writing stage in patrol. For example, if investigative supervisors are looking for particular factors to determine if an investigation will be assigned to a detective, it would be helpful for an officer writing the initial report to know that those factors are important and should be reported upon. Officers who do not know about or understand these factors may not include them in their reports.

The relationship between patrol and investigations is informal and characterized by personal networks facilitating exchanges between the bureaus. As noted in Section 4, these social networks can play some role in determining whether an officer is transferred to investigations permanently or for 30-day assignments. Several interviewees noted that the 30-day details for patrol officers in investigations are good opportunities for patrol officers to learn about investigations and broaden the capabilities of the Patrol Bureau. However, as noted previously, there is no formal assessment, quality control, or feedback related to the 30-day details. Additionally, because of the low numbers of personnel, patrol commanders cannot afford to grant these details during the summer and other high-activity periods for patrol. While patrol leaders seem open to innovation and advancement for their officers, they also sharply recognize the reality of the current personnel situation.

As SeaStat primarily focuses on the Patrol and not the Investigations Bureau, it is not a forum where patrol and investigative commanders can collaborate strategically on shared concerns. For example, for crime problems that need an integrated response between patrol and investigations (e.g., gun violence, organized retail theft, etc.), SeaStat could be helpful but is not used for that purpose. Another example given was when the agency changed the timing of shifts. Some believed that this could have been discussed strategically at SeaStat, anticipating the consequences of the adjustment for both patrol and investigations. However, this was not done.

While most recognized the commonly found operational separation between patrol and investigations in policing, one person noted: “It’s like there are two separate departments in Seattle.” There was disagreement amongst those we interviewed about the value of integration strategies such as officer or supervisor rotation between patrol and investigations. Again, the research on rotation is mixed. The more important question for the agency is not whether

rotation should be used, but what the agency could accomplish with a rotation system. If the goal is to improve the knowledge, skills, abilities and performance of officers, detectives, supervisors, civilians, or leadership, rotation systems alone cannot achieve such goals. Instead, corresponding changes in supervisory and accountability systems, training and onboarding practices and policies, and greater openness in hiring nonsworn individuals with specific expertise would be needed.

The Impact of Investigations on the Patrol Bureau

Interviewees mentioned the lack of investigative follow-up for several offense reports taken by patrol, including burglaries, robberies, assaults, and frauds. Several reasons were given for this lack of investigative follow-up, including the lack of solvability factors, investigative resources and detectives, and discouraging practices by the prosecutor's office. At the same time, some interviewed believe this harmed the community and crime reporting more generally.

For example, some interviewees believe that some people in Seattle have stopped reporting certain crimes to the police unless they need information for insurance purposes. Others reflected on field interviewing as one proactive approach used by patrol to assist with investigations and developing suspect information. However, one interviewee noted a "chilling effect of FIs [field interviews] on the streets," given the current environment of policing and the lack of follow-ups for investigations. Because the priority is violent crimes, patrol primarily supports investigations of these offenses (see also CRG discussion above). However, some interviewees noted that property crimes significantly impact the community given their volume, and not focusing on these crimes negatively impacted public safety. Some also noted that there used to be more specialized and follow-up units in patrol that provided more flexibility with investigations and follow-ups for citizen complaints. However, that flexibility was lost once these units were turned into the CRG.

Summary of Suggestions

Patrol and investigative work are symbiotic and closely linked by the mandates of policing, agency resources, and community goals. Personnel losses and other significant problems in the agency will therefore impact patrol and investigations simultaneously. Investigators will be pulled back to patrol, reducing investigations of many types of offenses. Some specialized patrol units will be leaned more heavily on for investigations, reducing these units' ability to support patrol needs. Transfers between patrol and investigations will be hampered, which can lead to strained relationships between the two bureaus. Weaker crime prevention capabilities in patrol will naturally impact investigative caseloads since crime prevention is the key to reducing crimes from being reported in the first place. Relatedly, lower clearance rates in investigative bureaus can impact deterrence efforts in patrol if would-be offenders believe they will not be detected, arrested, or prosecuted. Consequentially, the capabilities of investigations will also impact the legitimacy of patrol services in these ways (see discussions by Bottoms &

Tankebe, 2017). Community members may also stop reporting certain offenses to the police department if they believe nothing will be done about their victimization. Agencies in which patrol and investigative bureaus are excessively independent operationally and strategically can deteriorate into low-performing agencies. Some suggestions to approve this situation in the SPD include the following:

1. Leaders and supervisors within the Patrol and Investigation Bureaus must collaborate and have strategic discussions and problem-solving sessions on shared concerns. This requires leaders and command staff within both Bureaus to emphasize the symbiotic relationship between patrol and investigations and develop these strategic collaboration activities.

2. To improve two-way feedback and work between patrol and investigative units, both cannot simply blame the other for poor work or effort. If investigators feel that patrol officers are not conducting initial investigations in ways that maximize successful outcomes, the Investigations Bureau must be more actively involved in guiding the initial investigative efforts of patrol officers. In some agencies, this involves having detectives respond more frequently to initial crime scenes to support officer work. If this is less feasible, then having a formal, structured, and regularly used feedback and information exchange system between officers and detectives is needed.

3. At the very least, officers also need guides and manuals that provide specific requirements for report writing for particular cases that will receive investigative follow-up. As noted above, this could involve guidance about ensuring that certain elements of cases are reported that are needed for investigations. However, guides may also be used for “rush” cases. If time is being spent on rush cases by GIU detectives because the patrol officers are not adequately collecting enough case information, then more guidance to patrol on the initial investigation and how to conduct a rush investigation could be helpful.

10. Conclusions

The SPD has seen its share of turmoil during the last three years, especially from COVID and the Floyd protests, which has led to its current personnel crisis. Many who remain in the SPD suffer from low morale and feel that fixes are far off. However, many challenges facing SPD's Investigations Bureau and the agency reflect longstanding organizational practices and characteristics that existed well before COVID and Floyd. Research has found that many organizational characteristics of SPD's Investigations Bureau are common in agencies that do not perform effectively regarding investigative outcomes. As a result, these challenges have impacted the SPD's ability to weather several current crises and external problems that have impacted the agency's investigative functioning.

The GMU team found that the SPD has been focused on the physical organization and reorganization of its investigative units rather than on more substantive, strategic, and operational concerns of the bureau and its units. Because of this, the agency has been impacted by the loss of detectives and has been unable to weather current crises. Even if the SPD returns to full sworn and nonsworn capacity in the future, these organizational weaknesses will remain if unattended. The leadership of the SPD across all bureaus should consider finding and fostering opportunities for strategic planning, discussion, analysis, and assessment of operations using a team-oriented and problem-solving approach.

No articulated unit, section, or bureau-level manuals, policies, or procedures were discovered for investigations. Thus, investigative practices (whether for casework or management) are informal and by word-of-mouth. Developing more formal, written, and robust policies, bylaws, manuals, and standard operating procedures for the bureau and its specific sections and units is needed to strengthen the investigative case process, supervision, and case review; selection, onboarding, and training of new detectives; performance management; information sharing; and effective command, control, and leadership of these units. SPD Investigations Bureau should embark on a team-oriented, organized, resourced, and professionally guided effort to create clearly written and described policies, standard operating procedures, operational guidelines, and bylaws for the Investigations Bureau generally and for each of its sections and units. This exercise should not be a discretionary, informal, or individual task but a highly coordinated, transparent, and inclusive activity.

Related to this problem is a selection, onboarding, and training process for detectives that is informal and uneven across the investigative units. This characteristic of investigations existed in Seattle long before the current crises and, in turn, exacerbated (and was exacerbated by) the recent loss of detectives. The research in this area is clear: informal and social network systems of application and hiring create multiple problems and biases in hiring and transfers. Such approaches can limit opportunities for those not within social networks or who do not have advocates in the right positions. These approaches also reflect the lack of clear expectations and guidelines about hiring, onboarding, and investigative performance. In the SPD, fair,

consistently practiced, formalized, and written application, interview, and onboarding processes and guidelines are needed for all transfers (detectives or supervisors) to investigative units. These processes should also apply to training opportunities in investigations (such as the 30-day details). Additionally, regular, formalized, updated, and consistently available training and mentoring systems should be developed for investigators and investigative supervisors.

The GMU team was unable to speak to many detectives during our visit. However, we determined that investigative processes likely vary greatly across (and even within) units. Supervisor involvement and case review also vary across units, and it was unclear how cases are reviewed or if checklists for cases existed. Certain investigative practices that characterize high-performing investigative units were not found in the SPD Investigations Bureau (due to many factors). For example, the SPD should consider increasing initial response to crime scenes for more types of crimes (and not just homicide). The Investigations Bureau should reconsider its solvability triaging practices for serious crimes, as investigative efforts can help clear crimes that may seem less solvable. Units should consider employing checklists and other articulated expectations or guidelines about elements of an investigation that need to be completed in case folders and have supervisors actively involved in regular case review. Regular and formalized feedback and information-sharing loops should be developed between investigators, support services, and patrol officers to facilitate relationships and casework.

Strategic command, control, and supervision are relatively weak in the SPD. Factors contributing to this environment include a culture of shunning supervisory review of investigative cases in some units and the lack of formal expectations, policies, guidance, training, onboarding, professional development, or performance management tools for investigative units and supervisors. The highly discretionary, informal, and voluntary approaches to command and control in the SPD have resulted in weakened supervisory authority. There appear to be few opportunities for strategic work amongst SPD leadership, commanders, and supervisors. SeaStat is not viewed as a forum for strategic discussion, nor are quarterly or monthly meetings between commanders and bureau chiefs. In sum, first- and second-line investigative supervisors need stronger training, professional development, guidance, support, and authority to mentor, monitor, manage, and assess the performance of their units.

A significant challenge with supervision, leadership, and command and control in investigations is the inability to track case efforts and the performance of various units in a standard way. The SPD should implement a more standardized and mandatory approach to updating case jackets in Mark43 to facilitate more consistent tracking and assessment of investigations. In addition, agency guidelines should be more explicit about the types of updates that should be entered into Mark43 and the timeliness for such updates. Other information-sharing venues and systems should be identified, developed, and regularly used.

Strong support for investigations is an essential trait of high-performing investigative units. These support units encompass various specialties, including forensics, intelligence and crime analysis, technology use, and victim support. The knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals

within these units are specialized, often requiring education and training not found in sworn personnel. Given the importance of evidence collection and intelligence analysis to successful investigations, the SPD should reconsider how it organizes its investigative support units and consider expanding them, employing nonsworn individuals. Analysts (crime, intelligence, forensics, and information technology specialists) are essential positions in modern police agencies. The agency needs many more analysts to support both patrol and investigative functions. Other nonsworn positions removed from the agency, including victim advocates, should be brought back into the agency but with clearly defined expectations, roles, and supervision. However, cultural and contractual impediments to hiring nonsworn employees are significant problems for the SPD. Further, separating sworn and nonsworn individuals may unnecessarily isolate knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources for crime scene and forensics investigations and signal nonsworn employees that they are less valued.

Despite their symbiotic relationship, there are several areas of disconnect between the Patrol and Investigation bureaus. The two bureaus appear to have limited opportunities for innovative collaboration, information exchange, feedback loops, or coordinated strategic planning. This situation impacts work at the micro level (e.g., the investigation of a particular crime) and the macro, organizational level (for example, removing personnel from one bureau to supplement the other). The GMU team found that leaders in both bureaus valued the other and understood the importance of each other. The challenge was that organizational impediments or gaps did not help to facilitate what could be a positive, symbiotic relationship. Thus, SPD leaders within the patrol and investigative bureaus must collaborate and have strategic discussions and problem-solving sessions on shared concerns. This includes finding more opportunities and systems for officers and detectives to share information and problem-solve together. Patrol officers and supervisors need clear guidance and support to ensure they respond optimally to cases that are later investigated.

Overall, many interviewees directly or indirectly suggested that more strategic planning and discussion, inter-unit and inter-bureau communication, and stronger leadership and supervision are needed in the SPD. Many of our recommendations in each section point to these needs. However, strengthening strategic planning, leadership, and supervision requires developing systems and infrastructure to support these goals. Formal organizational elements, including policies, procedures, guidelines, checklists, manuals, and information systems, are needed for case processing, onboarding of new detectives and supervisors, and performance tracking and management. Old-fashioned views about not hiring nonsworn individuals, determining areas of responsibility, solvability factors, and command and control must be reassessed and, in some cases, let go.

Despite the challenges that the SPD faces, it was clear that many of its investigative and support staff care deeply about the future of the department and its ability to serve the community. Many employees work diligently at their responsibilities and are willing to “go the extra mile” to overcome significant challenges they face in accomplishing their work. Like all organizations, the challenges and findings highlighted throughout this report are not about specific people or units but more about the agency’s systems and environment. We hope our findings and

recommendations are received with the understanding that they are meant to help the agency and those that inhabit the great city of Seattle.

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