



Waco awarded \$1.46 million federal grant to promote violence prevention and intervention

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WACO, Texas (September 30, 2022) — The U.S. Department of Justice announced Waco will receive a \$1.46 million grant to promote violence prevention and intervention. Prosper Waco will administer the grant that is the result of a collaborative effort involving the City of Waco and Waco Police Department.

The Waco grant is part of \$100 million in grants awarded by the DOJ's Office of Justice Programs. The Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative (CVIPI) funds are to help communities across the U.S. reduce gun crime and other serious violence.

"I am delighted the City of Waco has been selected for this grant," said Waco Police Chief Sheryl Victorian. "It supports our violent crime strategic initiative and affords us the opportunity to be proactive in crime prevention and intervention. Our community has been remarkable in joining the Waco Police Department's efforts to keep our communities safe, and this is another way to multiply the work being done."

Prosper Waco CEO Suzii Paynter March said: "Violence is a thief; it steals vitality and the strength of the future. A few months back, Chief Victorian convened community groups, and they are ready to make a difference by preventing and interrupting violence. So many in Waco have a heart for curbing violence and crime. As a backbone organization, Prosper Waco is ready to support community partners for a strong response."

Mayor Dillon Meek said: "Waco is committed to ensuring every neighborhood is safe. This grant will help ensure that we can implement diversified strategies to achieve this goal. I'm thankful for our police department's commitment to our community and for Prosper Waco's strategic partnership."

The Waco grant is in response to an application from Prosper Waco, developed with the City of Waco and the police department. It will support a three-year effort called Change Matters locally and will involve community-based organizations.

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The awards announced today, funded in part through the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, mark a historic investment in community violence intervention programs, said a Department of Justice release.

Attorney General Merrick B. Garland noted the “heroic work” of America’s law enforcement professionals, and added, “we must enlist the help of trusted messengers and local organizations that have their pulse on community needs. These investments represent a significant step towards finding durable solutions to our most pressing public safety challenges.”

The CVIPI funds will develop and expand the local infrastructure needed to build community safety and strengthen neighborhoods, the DOJ release said. They will support holistic, cross-agency collaborations, seed new efforts and fund expansion plans in both community-based organizations and local government agencies.

It is intended to “build the capacity of smaller organizations, offer technical aid to jurisdictions that do not receive federal funding and invest in research and evaluation to better understand what works to reduce violence,” the release said.

“Gun violence has claimed far too many lives, damaged too many communities and taken an especially heavy toll on historically marginalized neighborhoods,” the attorney general said.

A Bureau of Justice Statistics analysis says that of more than 21,500 murders known to law enforcement in 2020, more than half (56%) of the victims were ages 15-34. “Research has shown that social factors such as income inequality, the level of trust in institutions and a lack of economic opportunities are associated with firearm-related homicide rates,” the DOJ said.

Evidence also shows that fear and the desire for physical safety, more than any criminal inclination, drive young people to carry and use firearms in the most violence-torn sections of our cities. Community violence interventions are grounded in research and have shown a promising track record of curbing gun traffic, reducing shootings and saving lives.”

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