CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

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June 8, 2022

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SUBJECT: Audit Report of San Antonio Police Department San Antonio Fear Free Environment (SAFFE) Program

Mayor and Council Members:

We are pleased to send you the final report of the San Antonio Police Department SAFFE Program. This audit began in July 2021 and concluded with an exit meeting with department management in April 2022. Management's verbatim response is included in Appendix C of the report. San Antonio Police Department management and staff should be commended for their cooperation and assistance during this audit.

The Office of the City Auditor is available to discuss this report with you individually at your convenience.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin W. Barthold, CPA, CIA, CISA
City Auditor
City of San Antonio

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CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR

Audit of San Antonio Police Department

San Antonio Fear Free Environment (SAFFE) Program

Project No. AU21-021

June 8, 2022

Kevin W. Barthold, CPA, CIA, CISA
City Auditor

Executive Summary

As part of our annual Audit Plan approved by City Council, we conducted an audit of the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD), specifically the San Antonio Fear Free Environment (SAFFE) Program. The audit objectives, conclusions, and recommendations follow:

Determine if the SAFFE Program is operating effectively and efficiently and in compliance with program guidelines.

The SAFFE Program is operating effectively and in compliance with program guidelines and expenses are allowable. SAPD has adequate controls in place to ensure compliance with program operations as it pertains to Officer training, day-to-day duties performed, completion of daily activity logs, and compilation of weekly activity reports. Additionally, program expenses were adequately supported and reasonable per program mission.

However, there are opportunities to improve administrative items to address program inconsistencies, project documentation, and user access reviews. Currently, program inconsistencies exist due to decentralization of the program. In addition, projects status and completion were not adequately documented. Lastly, user access was not appropriate for users with access to the SAFFE Activity Database.

We made recommendations to improve these areas and SAPD Management agreed with the audit findings and has developed positive action plans to address them. Management's verbatim response is in Appendix C on page 9.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary i

Background 1

Audit Scope and Methodology 2

Audit Results and Recommendations 3

A. Program Operations 3

B. Program Inconsistencies 4

C. Project Documentation 6

D. User Access 6

Appendix A – SAFFE Service Area Map 7

Appendix B – Staff Acknowledgement 8

Appendix C – Management Response 9

Background

First established in 1994, the San Antonio Fear Free Environment (SAFFE) Program is an integral component of the SAPD's approach to Community-Oriented Policing. This program embraces a partnership between the community and police in identifying, evaluating, and resolving community concerns, problems, quality of life issues and reducing fear of crime. To accomplish this mission, nearly 120 SAFFE Sergeants and Officers establish and maintain day-to-day interaction with residents and businesses within one of the six service areas (as shown in **Appendix A**). Additionally, SAFFE Officers serve as liaisons with other entities, both public and private.

In an effort to engage members of the community, outreach initiatives include:

- Engaging with citizens via phone, email, and in-person during patrol of their service areas
- Attendance at Homeowners Association (HOA) and/or Neighborhood Association (NA) meetings
- Social media usage (Facebook and NextDoor)
- Conducting school presentations
- Now San Antonio Neighbors Together

Additionally, SAFFE Officers work in tandem with the subordinate SAPD programs identified below to leverage synergies and engage citizens:

- Volunteers in Policing
- Citizen on Patrol
- Citizens Police Academy
- Police Athletic League
- Public Safety Corp

On an as-needed basis, SAFFE Officers work with other SAPD units, City departments, and outside entities to develop action plans to address problems within the community. SAFFE Sergeants provide oversight and direction as needed. Additionally, on a periodic basis, SAFFE Sergeants perform reviews over activity and project entries, video footage, personnel files, and inventory performance.

As requested by SAPD Command staff, council members, citizens, etc., status updates are provided for projects.

Audit Scope and Methodology

The audit scope included program operations, projects, training, expenses, and system user access for FY 2019 thru 2021.

To establish our testing criteria, we reviewed the SAFFE Unit Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and relevant City Administrative Directives. Additionally, we interviewed SAPD Sergeants and Officers to review their processes and identify controls related to usage of the SAFFE Activity Database, program reviews and communications, project creation and documentation, and Officer training.

We assessed internal controls relevant to the audit objective. This included a review of written policies and procedures, authorization practices, quality of information, and ongoing monitoring efforts.

As part of our testing procedures, we confirmed compliance with program operations as it pertains to Officer training, day-to-day duties performed, completion of daily activity logs, and compilation of weekly activity reports. In addition, we reviewed projects for adequate documentation. We also assessed consistencies between the six units as it pertained to processes, reporting, and communication.

Additionally, we reviewed program expenses for allowability and confirmed inventories were performed for specialized SAFFE equipment.

Furthermore, we reviewed SAFFE Activity Database (Database) user access listings to confirm access was appropriate. Lastly, we reviewed the latest iteration of the Database, which was launched October 2021, to confirm information captured is sufficient to allow for the measurement of program activities.

We relied on computer-processed data in the Database to validate the existence of daily activity logs and projects. Our reliance was based on performing direct tests on the data rather than evaluating the system's general and application controls. Our direct testing included confirming the adequacy and completeness of daily activity logs and projects. Additionally, we performed a user access review of the Database. We do not believe that the absence of testing general and application controls had an effect on the results of our audit.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Audit Results and Recommendations

A. Program Operations

SAPD has adequate controls in place to ensure the SAFFE Program is operating in compliance with program guidelines and expenses are allowable.

Civilian interaction and continuous education trainings were completed for all 48 Officers sampled.

In addition, day-to-day duties were consistent with expectations set forth in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) per ride-alongs performed by the audit team for each of the six SAFFE units. Examples of duties performed by Officers during ride-alongs included the following:

- Attending Homeowners Association (HOA)/ Neighborhood Association (NA) meetings,
- Monitoring homeless encampments and performing outreach,
- Following up on citizen complaints/disputes,
- Patrolling nuisance properties/businesses,
- Meeting with community members/organizations,
- Assisting the City Attorney's Office in Dangerous Assessment Response Team (DART) warrant execution, and
- Serving as back-up to other SAPD units.

Furthermore, we confirmed completion of daily activity logs and compilation of weekly activity reports as required per the SOP for a random selection of four weeks for each unit. Additionally, each of the six units maintain HOA/NA listings which cumulatively identify 445 associations, for which SAFFE Officers attend meetings where associations are active.

Lastly, all 25 expenses reviewed were adequately supported and reasonable per the program mission.

Recommendations

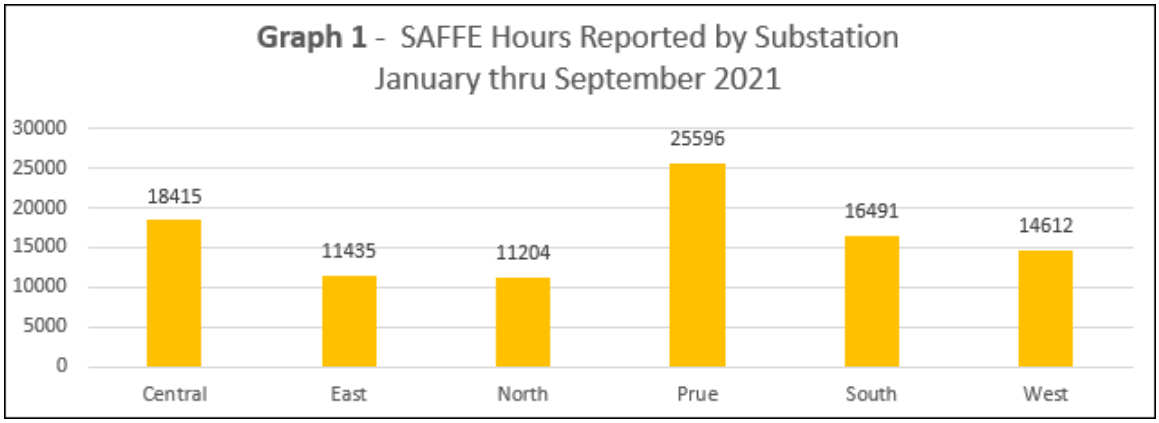
None.

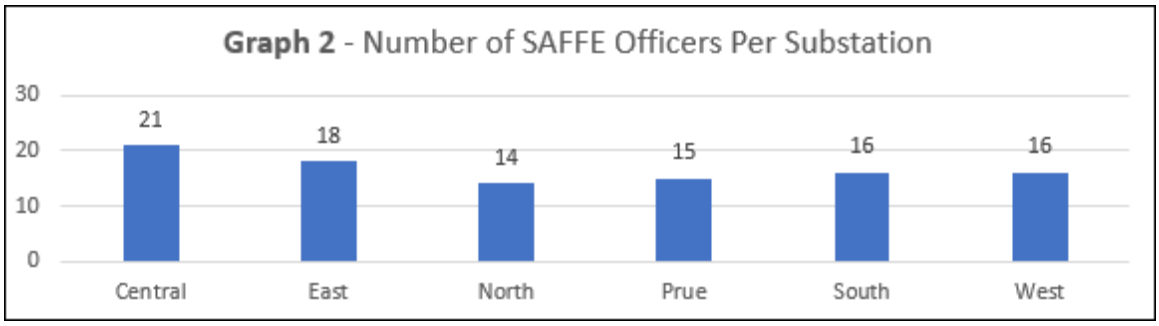
B. Program Inconsistencies

Overall, we observed inconsistencies between the six SAFFE units. The inconsistencies are attributed to the decentralization of the program. Inconsistencies were identified in the following areas:

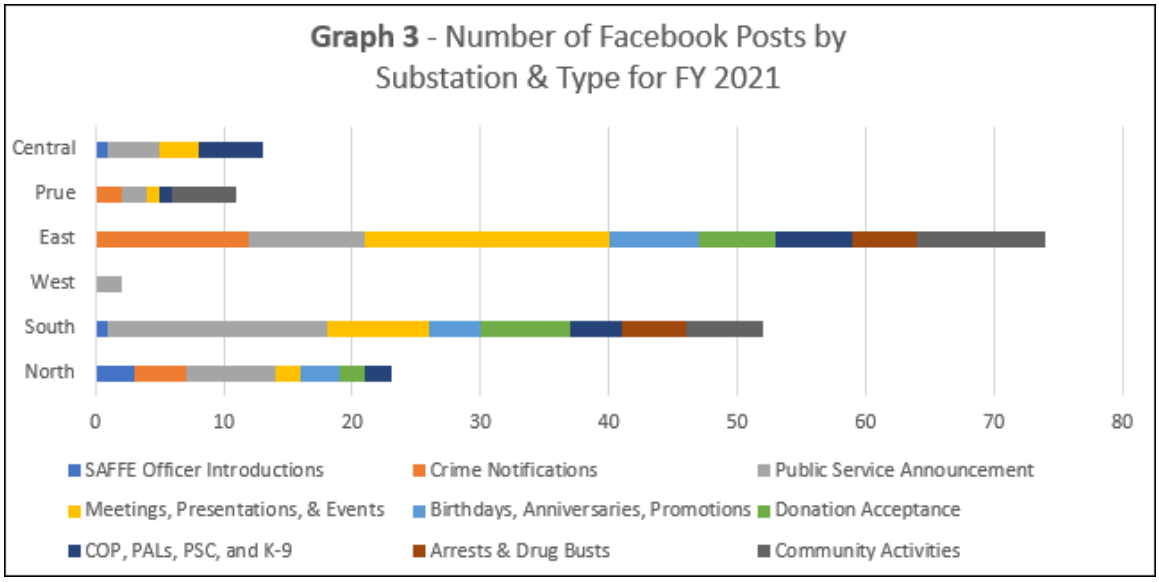
Time Reporting – Examples of inconsistencies included significant variability in number of hours reported, assigning work performed to different categories despite performing the same work, and recording SAFFE related activities to the Patrol Activity Database rather than the SAFFE Activity Database or vice versa. It is important to note hours reported were indeed worked by SAFFE Officers, however, some activities reported were patrol-related or administrative in nature. Examples of activities erroneously included within the SAFFE Activity Database include training, special assignments, and days off.

Refer to **Graphs 1 and 2** for further detail.





Social Media Usage - Number of Facebook posts and types varied from unit to unit. Total number of posts per unit ranged from 1-144 and 2-74 for FY 2020 and 2021 respectively. Additionally, 3 of 6 units did not have SAFFE Officer rosters uploaded. The remaining 3 units did have rosters uploaded; however, they had not been updated in at least two years. Refer to **Graph 3** for further detail for FY 2021 posts.



Weekly Activity Reports –The weekly activity report is compiled and distributed to the Police Chief on a weekly basis to communicate significant patrol and SAFFE program activities. Differences existed in the type of information reported and the format itself. For example, some units reported number of patrol activities (e.g., traffic citations, arrests, warrants, etc.), outside units assisted, problems areas addressed, and/or significant events, while others did not.

SAFFE Equipment – Variances in what was considered specialized SAFFE equipment existed between units. Examples of equipment include bicycles, ATVs, radars, night vision binoculars, etc.

As a best practice, where feasible, uniform requirements should be established. Inconsistencies throughout a program can make it difficult to measure performance and can result in inefficiencies.

As of November 2021, SAPD had begun developing a standardized Weekly Activity Report template and updating the SOP to reflect what constitutes SAFFE equipment.

Recommendations

The Police Chief should ensure SAFFE Sergeants periodically perform the following to encourage program consistency:

1. Offer SAFFE Program specific trainings,
2. Hold Sergeant meetings to share best practices, and
3. Update the SOP with specific guidance.

C. Project Documentation

Projects were not adequately documented in the SAFFE Activity Database. We reviewed 29 completed and 30 active projects (for a total of 59) within the Database to confirm project records were up-to-date, detailed enough to be followed, and project completion was adequately justified and documented. We determined 4/59 (7%) projects were not up-to-date and 7/29 (24%) completed projects did not identify a reason for project completion.

Due to lack of thorough documentation and review, project records were incomplete. Incomplete project records can result in program inefficiencies and duplication of efforts. As a best practice, project records should be periodically updated and reviewed.

Recommendations

The Police Chief should ensure project records are periodically updated and reviewed by Sergeants, and where applicable, project completion is justified.

D. User Access

User access is not appropriate for users with access to the SAFFE Activity Database. We reviewed the user access listing and determined 46/249 (18%) individuals not assigned to the SAFFE Unit or part of SAPD Command team had access to the Database.

Administrative 7.8d Access Control states access controls should be periodically reviewed, and access should be disabled upon separation of the employee. SAPD does not have an adequate process in place to perform user access reviews and modify access accordingly.

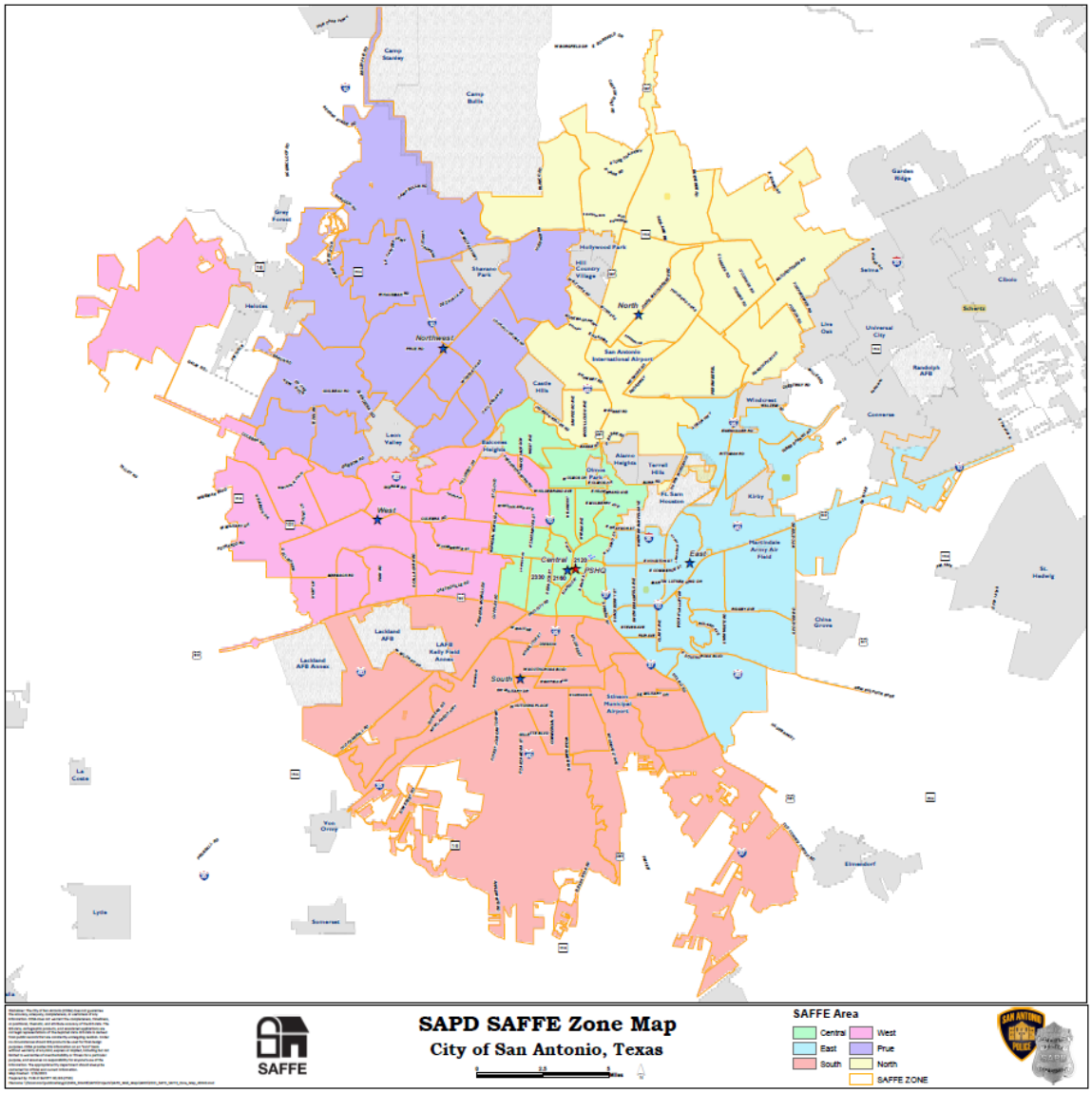
Removing unnecessary access within the Database ensures only authorized individuals have the ability to make additions, deletions, or changes to Database records.

As of September 2021, SAPD had begun to revoke access from the 46 individuals identified above.

Recommendations

The Police Chief should perform periodic user access reviews and modify access to comply with the least privilege principle.

Appendix A – SAFFE Service Area Map



Appendix B – Staff Acknowledgement

Buddy Vargas, CPA, CIA, CFE, Audit Manager
Abigail Estevez, CPA, CIA, CISA, Auditor in Charge
Michael Gutierrez, Auditor

Appendix C – Management Response

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

SAN ANTONIO TEXAS 78283-3966

May 17, 2022

Kevin W. Barthold, CPA, CIA, CISA
City Auditor
San Antonio, Texas

RE: Management's Corrective Action Plan for Audit of SAPD San Antonio Fear Free Environment Program

The San Antonio Police Department has reviewed the audit report and has developed the Corrective Action Plans below corresponding to report recommendations.

Recommendation					
#	Description	Audit Report Page	Accept, Decline	Responsible Person's Name/Title	Completion Date
B	**Program Inconsistencies** The Police Chief should ensure SAFFE Sergeants periodically perform the following to encourage program consistency: 1. Offer SAFFE Program specific trainings, 2. Hold Sergeant meetings to share best practices, and 3. Update the SOP with specific guidance.	4	Accept	Captain David Scepanski	Calendar year 2022

Recommendation					
#	Description	Audit Report Page	Accept, Decline	Responsible Person's Name/Title	Completion Date
	Action plan: 1. The department has already begun taking steps to create a SAFFE School, specifically designed for new SAFFE Officers. Topics of Community Policing, Crime Prevention, Hosting HOA Meetings, Neighborhood Bike Patrol and Social Media communication are just a few of the issues that will be covered. The school is being created in concert with COPS (National Standard for Community Policing see www.cops.usdoj.gov) and in-house subject matter experts. It will include TCOLE certified training and will be held at the SAPD Training Academy. Instructors have already been identified and curriculum is being developed. The goal is to host at least one SAFFE school before the end of calendar year 2022 and additional schools as necessary to accommodate new staff. Additionally, this school has been added as a requirement for new SAFFE Officers and is addressed in the SAFFE SOP #110.02. B "SAFFE Specific Training". 2. SAPD-SAFFE Sergeants meet with their individual Captains on a weekly basis. In addition to these meetings the Department will immediately implement tri-annual (May, June, September) meetings for all SAFFE Sergeants. This meeting will be hosted by the Patrol Division Executive Officer. These meetings have been formalized in the SAFFE SOP #101.01 "SAFFE Sergeant Responsibilities". 3. The recommendations mentioned above have been memorialized in the SAFFE SOP with the referenced procedure numbers attached. In addition: a. Per Audit part B page 5. "SAFFE Equipment": the SOP has already been modified to produce a standardized reporting system for "Specialized Equipment". This is memorialized in procedure 115.02.C "Self-Audit". The quarterly report will specify all the following equipment, regardless if it is assigned to the unit. If the SAFFE unit does not have specific equipment assigned, they will indicate with N/A on the report. • Bicycles / Bike Racks • Radar-Speed Trailers • Hand-held Radar Guns • All-terrain Vehicles / Trailers • Binoculars / Night Vision equipment • McGruff Suit • Pop-up Canopy • Tint – Meter b. Per Audit part B page 5: "Weekly Reports": the weekly activities report is expected to have some variance due the needs of each SAFFE unit. To bring continuity in reporting, the Operations Bureau Report has already been modified to collect specific information from each SAFFE unit and substation, so metrics and data are more easily and consistently evaluated.				

2

Recommendation					
#	Description	Audit Report Page	Accept, Decline	Responsible Person's Name/Title	Completion Date
C	**Project Documentation** The Police Chief should ensure project records are periodically updated and reviewed by Sergeants, and where applicable, project completion is justified.	6	Accept	Substation SAFFE Sergeants	May 13, 2022
	Action plan: The department is amending the SAFFE SOP to reflect the requirement for projects entered into the SAFFE Database be reviewed and closed (if appropriate) on a regular basis. Per SAFFE SOP #113.04.A "Community Policing Projects" the language has been updated to include that "Supervisors will review active projects quarterly and document the review in the database." Additionally, officers will be required to make specific notations in every project that is required to stay open past the quarterly review, justifying why the project should remain open.				
D	**User Access** The Police Chief should perform periodic user access reviews and modify access to comply with the least privilege principle.	6	Accept	Substation SAFFE Sergeants	May 13, 2022
	Action plan: The department has implemented an on-boarding and out-boarding process for every officer who joins or leaves any unit within the organization, to include SAFFE. Part of the on / out boarding process is a review of database access. This will ensure that officers who leave the SAFFE program have their database access revoked unless a departmental need remains.				

We are committed to addressing the recommendations in the audit report and the plan of actions presented above.

Sincerely,

William P. McManus
Chief of Police
San Antonio Police Department

5/19/2022
Date

3

Maria Villagomez
Deputy City Manager
City Manager's Office

5/26/2022
Date

4