CONNECTICUT RACIAL PROFILING PROHIBITION PROJECT

BEYOND THE NUMBERS:

A Qualitative Evaluation of the Connecticut Racial Prohibition Project for Addressing Disparities in Traffic Stops

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym/Abbreviation	Full Term
BWC	Body-Worn Camera
CAD	Computer-Aided Dispatch
CFIR	Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research
CTRP3	Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
DOJ	Department of Justice
DOT	Department of Transportation
DUI	Driving Under the Influence
EPIS	Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainment
FHA	Federal Highway Administration
IMRP	Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy
IS	Implementation Science
IT	Information Technology
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NBER	National Bureau of Economic Research
Penn Act	Alvin W. Penn Act
PERF	Police Executive Research Forum
PJ	Procedural Justice
POST	Police Officer Standards and Training Council
RMS	Records Management System

Executive Summary

Background

The Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project (CTRP3) is nationally recognized as one of the longest-standing statewide initiatives to reduce racial disparities in traffic enforcement. For more than a decade, CTRP3 has combined statewide data collection, independent statistical analysis, and multi-stakeholder collaboration to address persistent disparities in traffic stops. This qualitative evaluation assesses how Advisory Board members and police chiefs, two groups central to the initiative's design and implementation, perceive CTRP3's effectiveness, successes, and challenges. It complements a separate quantitative assessment that documented measurable declines in racial disparities, particularly through reductions in pretextual stops, and situates stakeholder perspectives alongside those outcomes (Parker et al., 2025). In that analysis, stops of Black and Latino motorists fell by 19–24%, with roughly 85% of that decline tied to decreases in pretextual stops, and without increases in traffic crashes or decreases in violent-crime clearance rates.

Purpose and Method

We conducted 28 semi-structured interviews with 19 Advisory Board members and nine police chiefs from July 2024 to April 2025. The study was guided by implementation of science models that emphasize context, process, and sustainability. We explored participants' views of CTRP3's trajectory with particular focus on effectiveness, successes, and challenges/barriers.

Key Findings

Effectiveness. Participants generally described CTRP3 as effective at building a credible statewide data system, creating structured dialogue about disparities, and nudging enforcement away from equipment-based stops toward safety-relevant practices. At the same time, they pointed to uneven engagement across departments, resource constraints, and broader conditions such as COVID-19, heightened media scrutiny, and staffing shortages, that shaped how reductions in disparities happened and were understood. Quantitative analyses are consistent with these views, showing statistically significant declines in minority stops largely driven by reduced discretionary and pretextual enforcement.

Successes. Interviewees cited technical, relational, and accountability gains: peer-reviewed data and public reports; meaningful collaboration; acknowledgment of disparities; legislative and policy changes (e.g., consent search legislation and refined enforcement priorities); and oversight practices (e.g., supervisory reviews and use of body-worn camera footage). These successes helped recast CTRP3 as a tool for improvement rather than punishment and contributed to perceptions of legitimacy.

Challenges and Barriers. Respondents distinguished addressable challenges (e.g., defensiveness, complex reporting, and uneven community engagement) from more durable barriers (e.g., small-agency capacity limits, reliance on a few key champions, and long-term funding). These issues did not derail CTRP3, but they slowed momentum and put sustainment at

risk. The quantitative research paper similarly shows unevenness, aggregate progress with variation across agencies, reinforcing concerns about the role of local culture, leadership, and capacity.

Recommendations

To strengthen legitimacy, equity impact, and long-term sustainability, we draw on the collected data and participants' explicit suggestions to offer nine recommendations, ordered below by priority, to highlight the structural and organizational conditions that enable all other reforms. These recommendations complement the quantitative findings (19–24% fewer stops of Black and Latino motorists, driven by fewer pretextual stops; roughly 30% drops in warnings and arrests; no public-safety trade-offs) and focus on the institutional and cultural supports that are needed to maintain those gains (Parker et al., 2025):

1. Institutionalize reform infrastructure. Establish succession planning, develop clear implementation guides, and shared practices so that the project's durability is driven by established systems rather than by a few individuals, ensuring that it operates effectively during changes in leadership, whether expected or unexpected.

2. Expand and diversify community engagement. Include youth, justice-impacted residents, and individuals who do not speak English; partner with schools, community organizations, and faith leaders; close the loop ("You Said / We Did").

3. Formalize patrol officer inclusion and patrol-level information gathering and sharing. Create structured opportunities for patrol officers to engage with CTRP3 data, offer local knowledge, and provide feedback on implementation challenges. This could include brief officer surveys, small-group data conversations, or mechanisms for frontline-level concerns and insights to travel up the supervisory ranks and out to the Advisory Board.

4. Build departmental capacity. Focus support on smaller agencies via regional hubs, shared technical staff, and peer learning; provide plain-language tools and quick-reference guides.

5. Embed reform into daily practice. Make brief reviews of the data a routine part of roll calls, staff meetings, and in-service training, so that reform practices are not viewed as crisis-driven.

6. Make data and reports accessible. Produce layered, audience-specific products (dashboards for officers, concise summaries for chiefs, visual briefs for the public) and interactive formats.

7. Strengthen the Advisory Board. Formalize the Board as a hub for continuous learning; rotate learning sessions so that departments and community partners can share strategies and outcomes.

8. Develop a long-term evaluation and learning agenda. Develop a plan that regularly gauges CTRP3's impact using qualitative and quantitative approaches. This can be done through ongoing analyses of traffic stop data, interviews with patrol officers and civilians, community surveys, and scheduled learning sessions to adjust policies and fine-tune practices when necessary.

9. Reframe the public narrative about the project. Spotlight CTRP3's dedication to fairness, professionalism, and shared responsibility; enlist Advisory Board members' voices to help ease defensiveness while maintaining focus on equity.

Limitations and Conclusion

This assessment primarily reflects the perspectives of Advisory Board members and police chiefs; frontline officers and directly impacted community members were not included and should be part of future evaluations. Even so, leadership views are uniquely valuable for understanding how statewide reforms are framed, coordinated, and sustained. The combined evidence, quantitative and qualitative, shows that the reductions in disparities were real and measurable, and that stakeholders experienced CTRP3's progress as both technical and cultural. The next phase is sustainment, which involves embedding practices into organizational routines, broadening leadership beyond a few key individuals, investing in capacity to implement and sustain reform (especially for small agencies), and keeping equity and legitimacy at the center of public messaging and everyday practice.

Although the evaluation documents meaningful reductions in disparities and strong collaborative processes, CTRP3's progress remains uneven across departments and is limited by structural constraints, including low engagement with patrol officers and insufficient community-facing infrastructure. Making improvements in these areas is essential for ensuring that the initiative's gains are both durable and broadly experienced.

I: Introduction

Efforts to monitor and curb racial disparities in American policing have been a national issue for decades. Though public outrage often erupts in response to high-profile incidents of police violence, it is in the more routine, everyday encounters, like traffic stops, where systemic inequality is frequently reproduced. Such interactions occur by the millions annually, thereby making traffic stops a key point of officer-civilian contact that carries serious implications for public perceptions of police fairness, trust, and legitimacy.

A large body of academic work has demonstrated that racial disparities in traffic enforcement persist even after controlling for factors like driving behavior, neighborhood crime, and officer deployment patterns (Baumgartner et al., 2018b; see also Carvalho et al., 2022; Epp et al., 2014; Pierson et al., 2020). In these studies, Black and Latino drivers are more likely to be stopped, searched, and subjected to discretionary enforcement actions than White drivers, although police are more likely to find White motorists in possession of contraband. These disparities raise pressing concerns about equity, constitutional rights, and community confidence in local law enforcement and policing more broadly (Boehme et al., 2024; Fliss et al., 2020).

To address this enduring national issue, some cities and states have established oversight mechanisms and implemented policy changes. These include, for example, community-police boards, data collection mandates, and more recently, policy updates limiting pretextual stops (Boehme et al., 2024, Fliss et al., 2020). Despite all this, disparities still exist. While past and recent reform efforts certainly have not been complete failures, they have generally fallen short of yielding meaningful and lasting changes in terms of disparities surrounding traffic stops or trust with marginalized communities. Scholarship indicates that this pattern is, in part, perpetuated by implementation problems, as shallow or haphazard execution, short-lived enthusiasm, and inconsistent enforcement have played significant roles in these shortcomings (del Pozo et al., 2025b; Goldani, 2025).

Amid a persistent pattern of failed reforms, CTRP3 presents an innovative and promising path to lasting change. It is a statewide initiative that collaborates with police departments to facilitate collecting traffic stop data and conducting systematic analysis to uncover demographic, especially racial, disparities. The initiative publicly reports findings for accountability reasons and provides evidence-based recommendations to help departments address identified disparities. While CTRP3 places a great deal of focus on data, it is fundamentally about convening diverse stakeholders to find utility in that data.

In this collaborative process, police officers, researchers, community leaders, and policymakers collaborate to co-produce reform strategies grounded in transparency, mutual accountability, and evidence. This qualitative assessment builds on a 2024 quantitative evaluation of the same project, which found a significant decrease in traffic stops involving minority drivers in participating departments (Parker et al., 2025). The data showed that these decreases were mainly due to declines in pretextual stops. While our qualitative analysis is a standalone undertaking, it complements the quantitative work by examining how stakeholders made sense of those reductions, the processes that supported them, and the barriers that remain.

This evaluation examines the implementation and perceived impact of CTRP3 from the viewpoint of the people most intimately involved in its planning and execution (i.e., members of the project's Advisory Board and police chiefs from engaged agencies). It draws on qualitative interviews to explore not only what has worked, but also what challenges remain as the initiative evolves. Using implementation science (IS) frameworks such as the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) and the Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, and Sustainment (EPIS) framework, this study offers a structured way to interpret how reform ideas translate into institutional change under real-world conditions (Bauer et al., 2015; del Pozo et al., 2025a).

II: Racial Disparities: The Persistent Problem

Traffic stops are the most common way people interact with the police (Chenane et al., 2019; Pierson et al., 2020). For many drivers, these encounters are just a brief inconvenience. However, for Black and Latino motorists, they carry far more weight because each stop serves as a reminder that they are not viewed as regular drivers but as suspicious persons. They are scrutinized not for their driving behavior but based on racialized cues and other extralegal factors officers typically use as a proxy for criminality (Rushin & Edwards, 2021). Evidence shows that even after accounting for contextual influences that could reasonably justify higher stop rates, such as higher crime rates in certain areas, greater call volume, and heavier traffic patterns, Black and Latino drivers are still more likely to be stopped, searched, and cited than their White counterparts, despite data showing officers are less likely to recover contraband during these searches (Baumgartner et al., 2018a; Epp et al., 2014; Pierson et al., 2020).

These disparities are not simply caused by individual bias or isolated decision-making. Rather, they are shaped by organizational cultures, discretionary policies, and historical policing patterns that have disproportionately affected communities of color (Carvalho et al., 2022; Fliss et al., 2020; Headly and Wright, 2019; Rushin and Edwards, 2021). In many jurisdictions, including Connecticut, traffic enforcement data have revealed noteworthy racial disparities in stop outcomes, including the use of consent searches, equipment violations, and discretionary citations (Ekstrom et al., 2022; Lofstrom et al., 2022; Pierson et al., 2020).

These racialized patterns in traffic enforcement have consequences that ripple far beyond the encounter itself. Studies show that routine and repeated experiences of being stopped, especially in the absence of reasonable justification and contraband recovery, foster feelings of being racially profiled and dissatisfaction with those stops (Fliss et al., 2022; Lofstrom et al. 2022). Furthermore, these accumulated unfavorable experiences can erode public confidence and reinforce the belief that the criminal justice system is itself biased. This dynamic is especially damaging because police represent the system's entry point and most frequent contact with civilians (Boehme et al., 2024; Chenane et al., 2019).

Racial disparities in the frequency of traffic stops and in their outcomes are a well-established reality in Connecticut. In past and recent reports, including those produced by the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP), analyses of traffic stop data have consistently found that Black and Latino drivers are overrepresented in stops, particularly for

discretionary reasons, such as equipment and inspection-related infractions. These trends have continued to exist despite various efforts by outside organizations and police departments themselves to reduce disparities and improve public trust (Alpert and McLean, 2021; Engel et al., 2022; Harris, 2023). The fact that evidence of racial disparities in traffic stops keeps showing up in the data suggests that simply gathering and sharing data is not enough to change how officers assess drivers or make their enforcement practices more equitable.

To generate substantial change, data must be paired with credible analysis, ongoing multi-stakeholder collaboration, and a sustained commitment to the deeper work required for long-term reform. While traffic stop data can provide practical insight into patterns of disparity, what ultimately matters is how reform implementers analyze, interpret, communicate, and translate that data into action. That is what determines whether equity and evidence-informed reform initiatives like CTRP3 are promoted or hindered. In the next section, we examine why past reforms have fallen short of their goals, providing context for understanding what sets CTRP3 apart as a promising evidence-informed, innovative, and collaborative strategy for addressing racial disparities in traffic stops.

III: Previous Reform Efforts and their Limitations

In the face of public pressure and continuing racial disparities in policing, many cities and states have introduced reforms aimed at increasing accountability and promoting equitable practices. The application of body cameras is perhaps the most notable of these reforms (Dunbar & Hanink, 2023; White et al., 2021). Beyond techno-fixes, jurisdictions have also made changes to pretextual stop practices, stop-and-search policies, bias training, citizen oversight boards, and data transparency initiatives. Even though these reforms are well-intentioned, they have generally failed to deliver their expected outcomes due to several factors, with their impact often being inconsistent, short-lived, or symbolic in nature (Chanin, 2015; Engel et al., 2022; Walker, 2012). A key reason is that reforms have historically been introduced in response to legitimacy crises.

This reactive pattern has led to rushed planning and haphazard implementation of new initiatives. Moreover, the same pressures that prompted reformers to act have also influenced a tendency to concentrate on quick, surface-level fixes over the deeper, systemic changes needed to confront the root causes of racial disparities (Channi, 2014; Engel et al., 2022; Headley & Wright, 2019; Kalyal et al., 2018; Simmons, 2010; White et al., 2021). Many past reform efforts have struggled to maintain their momentum. Often, interest fades or priorities change in the sociopolitical landscape, causing these initiatives to become short-lived. Further, they have prioritized policy changes while directing little attention to the deeper organizational culture, infrastructure, and capacity needed to sustain reform over time (Alpert & McLean, 2021; Chanin, 2015; Walker, 2012).

Some agencies, for instance, have introduced policy changes to reduce racial disparities, such as updating consent search procedures, limiting pretextual stops, and shifting away from enforcement of minor traffic violations. Whereas some reforms have shown promising results (Fliss et al., 2020; Lofstrom et al., 2022), others face structural barriers and institutional

resistance that make it difficult to embed them into routine practice. These difficulties are often compounded by competing incentives and inconsistent agreement among local stakeholders, especially reforms that are centered on increasing transparency or accountability (del Pozo et al., 2025b; Heydari, 2024; White et al., 2021). More broadly, many reforms have failed to make a mark because their implementations were not informed by systematic strategies. Evidence of this trend includes the absence of review mechanisms, follow-up protocols, and reinforcement systems, pointing to a critical gap between reform on paper and in practice (Chanin, 2015; Fixsen et al., 2009).

As a result, reforms were typically implemented as superficial additions to existing systems, failing to alter the foundational culture, reward structures, or day-to-day practices that generated racial disparities (Chanin, 2015; Engel et al., 2022; Fixsen et al., 2005; Schein, 2010). Over time, this layering of short-lived and largely symbolic initiatives, which were often poorly implemented, created a "band-aid society" within policing (Weinberg, 1978). In this environment, new reforms were simply stacked on top of earlier ones, none of which truly addressed the root causes of racial disparities, or the legitimacy crises that necessitate further change. This continuous cycle of new but ineffective reforms gives a false impression of progress while also masking deeper police resistance to meaningful change (Chanin, 2015; Engel et al., 2022; Alpert & McLean, 2021; Worden & McLean, 2017).

Decades of failed attempts to achieve substantial and sustainable change in policing have deepened reform fatigue, which is the common, and often dreaded, feeling of "here we go again" experienced across stakeholder groups, including community members, police chiefs, and reform implementers (Bell, 2017; Rushin, 2014). For community members, the fatigue is explained by a long history of being promised structural change but receiving only surface-level reforms (Bell, 2017; Fair and Just Prosecution, 2020). In the case of police, especially patrol officers, reform fatigue primarily comes from frustration caused by exclusion from decisions around policy, thereby overlooking important gaps in policy, and a chronic lack of support to help them adjust to their ever-changing working environment. This pattern adds to job stress, leading to inconsistent buy-in, noncompliance, or resistance (Kuen et al., 2023; Vila et al., 2000).

For reform implementers, fatigue mainly stems from pressure to deliver quick results while facing time constraints, limited resources, and a lack of infrastructure for sustainable change. Further, they are often confronted with challenges caused by inadequate data and evaluation tools, making it difficult to track progress and make needed adjustments (Chavis, 2021; NIJ, 2025; Parsons, Laidler, & Sinclair, 2021). In many cases, reformers must compete for department leaders' attention and buy-in due to other initiatives or internal priorities that they may view as more pressing than long-term equity or accountability reforms. At the same time, they operate within a constantly shifting political environment, which can alter police priorities and undermine their work toward building sustained organizational commitment (Fisher et al., 2024; Kalyal et al., 2018).

The structural implementation challenges described above (i.e., reactive rollouts, inadequate adoption strategies, and the layering of symbolic fixes), have produced a cumulative, compliance-oriented reform pattern that leaves core culture and practice unchanged (Fixsen et al., 2005; Schein, 2010). This history has fueled reform fatigue among stakeholders, and the

resulting skepticism makes sustainable change more difficult to achieve (Engel et al., 2022; Goldsmith, 2005).

It is against this backdrop of unsuccessful reforms and continuing problems that CTRP3 represents a potentially effective strategy to address these interconnected challenges through a collaborative framework that should facilitate systematic implementation, including stakeholder engagement. Rather than developing top-down recommendations without meaningful stakeholder input, CTRP3 prioritizes collaborative partnerships among police chiefs, community members, academics, and law professionals. Empirical evidence consistently indicates that meaningful inclusion of diverse groups of stakeholders in all phases of the implementation process can help counteract reform fatigue and promote sustainability (del Pozo et al., 2025a; Engel et al., 2022; Headley & Wright, 2019; Kalyal et al., 2018; and Simmons, 2010 and 2016). This is because substantive multi-stakeholder collaboration fosters buy-in, lessens defensiveness and resistance, and helps ensure that reforms become self-sustaining and institutionalized in departmental practice and avoid the implementation failures and limited sustainability that have characterized many previous interventions. However, understanding what facilitates or stymies CTRP3's effectiveness requires due attention to its implementation process. The following section provides an overview of the two implementation science frameworks, which serve as the analytical and interpretive lens for evaluating CTRP3.

IV: Implementation Science as a Framework for Understanding Reform

Recognizing pitfalls in earlier reform efforts, scholars argue that how reforms are implemented often matters as much as the intervention itself (del Pozo et al., 2025b; Taxman, 2025; Walker & Archbold, 2018). Implementation science makes that focus explicit by studying methods to promote the systematic uptake of evidence into routine practice and the contextual factors that shape success (Eccles & Mittman, 2006). Guided by this perspective, we use the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) and the Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainment (EPIS) model to organize our analysis of context, process, and sustainment (Aarons et al., 2011; Damschroder et al., 2009).

Whether explicit or implicit, police reform initiatives typically oversimplify the complex social and cultural issues they aim to address. These problems are often framed as technical issues that can be superficially remedied through hasty policy changes, technological intervention, or short-term training programs (Chenane et al., 2019; del Pozo et al., 2025a; Engel et al., 2022; Simmons, 2011; Walker, 2012). This tendency has repeatedly resulted in limited success and an inability to achieve sustainable, institutionalized change (Chanin, 2015; Goldani, 2025; Taxman, 2025; Walker, 2012).

This checkered history suggests not only a possible lack of understanding of what needs to change, but also how to achieve and sustain that change. While updating policies is an essential aspect of police reform, it must be paired with equally serious efforts to shift organizational culture and the day-to-day practices that shape how policing is carried out on the

ground. Scholars agree that even the most carefully designed and well-intentioned interventions can fail unless they are implemented in a sound and systematic process. They further stress that the process must also meaningfully account for the organizational realities of the departments tasked with putting them into practice (del Pozo et al., 2025b).

The field of implementation science (IS) provides promising frameworks for guiding reform implementation and for critically evaluating why some efforts succeed and others fail (Taxman, 2025). Rather than focusing exclusively on measurable intervention outcomes, IS approaches place a premium on the processes and internal and external contextual factors that influence the course of reforms in organizations, such as police agencies (Eccles & Mittman, 2006). For the present assessment, we employed two IS frameworks, the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) and the Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainment (EPIS) model, to guide our analysis and interpretation of our discoveries.

CFIR provides a structured approach for the identification of implementation barriers or drivers. It specifies five domains (innovation characteristics, outer setting, inner setting, characteristics of individuals, and implementation process) that shape whether reforms take root (Damschroder et al., 2009). The innovation characteristics domain is concerned with stakeholders' views on the legitimacy, adaptability, complexity, and potential benefits of the initiative, including the factors that shape their buy-in. The outer setting examines the degree to which external factors such as legal requirements, media reporting, public expectations, and resource availability, influence departmental readiness or willingness to take up and continue reform. The inner setting centers on how internal organizational dynamics, such as leadership engagement, departmental culture, structural readiness, and the presence of reform proponents, influence the adoption of reform. The domain of characteristics of individuals looks at who is involved, what motivates their engagement, and how they influence the project. Finally, the implementation process considers stakeholder perspectives on the strategies and procedures used to take reform plans from paper and put them into practice and maintain them over time (Damschroder et al., 2009).

The EPIS model complements CFIR by offering a phased roadmap that helps explain how reform efforts unfold over time. It divides implementation into four interconnected phases. The exploration phase entails the identification and definition of the problem and the consideration of possible responses. The preparation phase centers on laying the groundwork for reform, including the establishment of partnerships and development of the systems needed to launch and sustain the project. The implementation phase focuses on the processes and procedures employed to transition intervention plans into practice. Finally, the sustainment phase concentrates on evaluating reform to gain insights into the factors driving or hindering its success and sustainability, and how feedback from ongoing assessments is applied for improvement. This phased approach provides a useful blueprint for understanding how stakeholder readiness, perceptions, and on-the-ground experience across each stage of implementation shape the course and long-term durability of reform (Aarons et al., 2011).

Stakeholder Engagement and Equity Considerations

Organizational change is, above all, a human-centered endeavor, which is why stakeholder engagement has emerged as a central principle in implementation science. This element is regarded not just as a procedural step, but as a vital mechanism for building the legitimacy, trust, and buy-in necessary for sustainable change. Research shows that early, genuine, and ongoing collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including independent researchers, builds credibility, fosters transparency, improves and grounds reforms in local organizational and community conditions (Damschroder et al., 2022; del Pozo et al., 2025a; Taxman, 2025). This is especially important in policing because the institution is historically unwelcoming of ideas from outsiders and resistant to organizational change. Furthermore, police departments operate in vastly different environments, and variation in characteristics like size, culture, leadership, and community relationships adds to the complexity for how reform initiatives are received and implemented (del Pozo et al., 2025b; Engel et al., 2022).

These organizational dynamics and differences point to why implementation strategies need to prioritize equity, flexibility, and inclusion of diverse stakeholders, especially the people most affected by policing and its reform, community members and frontline officers (del Pozo et al., 2025a). Research shows that moving beyond superficial collaboration requires learning-focused implementation strategies, where ongoing feedback helps departments and reformers reflect on what is working and builds their confidence to make necessary changes when and where needed (del Pozo et al., 2025a; Engel et al., 2022). This learning-centered approach is fruitful because it allows organizations to address local barriers and tailor reform efforts to their specific contexts, making successful implementation more likely (Bauer et al., 2015; Taxman, 2025). When equity is built in from the beginning, reform is more likely to take root, build trust, and respond meaningfully to public expectations (Damschroder et al., 2022).

Mindful of these dynamics around stakeholder engagement and the complexities of generating substantive change in policing, this evaluation moves beyond the typical dichotomous focus on determining whether CTRP3 is a success or failure. Instead, it uses the CFIR and EPIS frameworks as analytical and interpretive lenses to explore the underlying processes and contextual factors that shape the initiative's outcomes and long-term sustainability. In doing so, this evaluation prioritizes the 'how' of the intervention, examining implementation processes that facilitate or impede meaningful change.

V: Connecticut Context

National discourse about racial disparities surrounding traffic stops tends to emphasize sweeping trends and related federal reform efforts. However, attempts to address inequities have been undertaken at the state and local levels, where practical jurisdictional realities and organizational cultures influence interventions. Connecticut serves as a sterling case study. Though the state is relatively small in terms of population, ranking as the 29th most populous in the country, it is recognized for its political progressiveness and increasing racial diversity. This diversity is compounded by high mobility, with roughly 2.6 million of its residents being licensed to drive as of 2023 (DOT and FHA, 2025; Seaberry et al., 2021, 2023).

Through the work of IMRP and CTRP3, a centralized electronic traffic stops data infrastructure (developed after 2012) has been established and is widely regarded as a national model for identifying and addressing disparities. This infrastructure is crucial in a state with a sizeable state police agency of almost 1,000 troopers (927 as of 2023) and 95 local police departments, each operating with a high degree of autonomy. This blend of growing diversity, high population mobility, centralized oversight, and decentralized policing makes the state a compelling site for studying how equity-focused traffic enforcement reform unfolds and is maintained in real-world conditions.

Official efforts to address racial disparities in Connecticut began in 1999 with the passage of the Alvin W. Penn Act (henceforth, Penn Act). This law prohibits racial profiling and requires all law enforcement agencies within the state to collect traffic stop data for external analysis to identify and remedy racial disparities surrounding traffic stops. However, data analysis in the years immediately following the passage of the Penn Act was inconsistent at best. Moreover, it was hampered by non-standard, paper-based reporting systems, limited statewide coordination, and inconsistent compliance across departments. Although the Act marked a move in the right direction, it lacked the stringent regulations, support mechanisms, and transparency necessary to effect substantive change. Initially, paper forms were used by agencies, and compliance with data collection and reporting was sporadic. Without a centralized electronic database or standardized reporting procedures, the data did not lend themselves to systematic analysis and seldom produced actionable reforms.

The shift toward a more effective system began with the passage of Public Act 12-74 in 2012, which created CTRP3 and tasked IMRP with building a centralized electronic reporting system, standardizing data collection, and conducting annual public analyses of racial and ethnic disparities. Fundamentally, CTRP3 is a collaborative strategy that brings together diverse stakeholders, including police leaders, civil rights advocates, researchers, and community members, rather than imposing top-down reforms. Since its creation, CTRP3 has strengthened annual public reporting mandated by the Penn Act by refining electronic submission processes, further standardizing data collection procedures, and conducting systematic analyses that enable targeted, data-driven follow-up in departments where disparities persist. Though disparities in traffic stops remain, this approach has achieved notable progress. For instance, it has led to reductions in traffic stops involving racial minority motorists and pretextual stops (Parker, et al., 2024). However, the stakeholders guiding these efforts are aware that the path toward institutionalizing equitable traffic enforcement practices across the state is still far from complete.

These improvements to infrastructure have established the groundwork for meaningful reform. Nonetheless, challenges persist due in part to departmental resource variability, leadership differences, and the broader sociopolitical environment, shaped in part by the nationwide protests following the murder of George Floyd in 2020. This context of progress and persistent challenges is important for understanding how department leaders and Advisory Board members perceive the project's effectiveness, successes, challenges, and long-term sustainability.

VI: Study Purpose and Research Questions

Over the years, anecdotal accounts and a growing body of empirical studies using rigorous statistical strategies have positioned CTRP3 as one of the most effective and sustained statewide efforts to address racial disparities in traffic enforcement (Parker, S.T., et al., 2024). Yet there is little empirical knowledge of how the people guiding the project, as well as the reform recipients most directly affected, experience the process of implementation and maintenance. Although CTRP3 has been operating for over a decade, this knowledge gap is not surprising. Stakeholders, including policymakers, often focus on measurable outcomes, such as reductions in disparities, rather than the everyday processes that sustain those outcomes (Chanin, 2015).

This evaluation was designed to take a closer look at that internal dimension. We specifically conducted interviews with members of CTRP3's Advisory Board and with police leaders from participating agencies to understand their perspectives on the initiative's effectiveness, successes, and the factors shaping its long-term momentum. These two groups were selected because of their close involvement in CTRP3, either by actively implementing and maintaining it or by engaging with it as recipients of reform. Their perspectives offer valuable insight into the micro-level processes, institutional dynamics, and external conditions that have shaped CTRP3's trajectory. While this report is qualitative in focus, it complements a separate quantitative evaluation that measured CTRP3's statistical impact on racial disparities in traffic stops. That study found significant reductions in minority stops, particularly through declines in pretextual enforcement, but also suggested that external pressures may have contributed. Our focus here is on how stakeholders understood and experienced those changes, and on the processes that undergird or complicate them (Parker et al., 2025).

By examining these views, our goal was to highlight the mechanisms that drive and hinder CTRP3's progress. This includes not only how Advisory Board members and police chiefs think about the initiative, but also how those opinions are shaped by organizational role, departmental context, and evolving relationships with the project over time. We organized the evaluation around three core research questions:

1. How do CTRP3 Advisory Board members and police chiefs view the project's effectiveness in addressing racial disparities in traffic stops?

2. What successes do CTRP3 Advisory Board members and police chiefs attribute to the project?3. What barriers and challenges do CTRP3 Advisory Board members and police chiefs identify as limiting the project's long-term effectiveness and sustainability?

The following section describes the methodology we employed to address these questions. Before turning to methodology, however, it is important to clarify how we use key terms throughout the report.

Defining Key Terms

Because terms like effectiveness, success, and impact are sometimes used interchangeably in discussions of reform, this report distinguishes them as follows:

- **Effectiveness** refers to whether CTRP3 achieved its intended goals, such as reducing racial disparities in traffic stops, improving transparency, and strengthening accountability.
- **Success** refers to milestones or perceived value from the perspective of stakeholders. This includes, for example, the building of dependable data systems, fostering stronger collaboration, or cultural shifts in how disparities are discussed.
- **Impact** refers to the wider and longer-term influence of CTRP3. This includes interviewees perceptions of how the initiative shapes police legitimacy, organizational culture, and the sustainability of the project.

We also distinguish challenges from barriers in our discussion regarding obstacles related to CTRP3:

- **Challenges** refer to the obstacles that participants believed could be addressed or mitigated through adjustments in leadership, resources, or strategy (e.g., defensiveness, technical complexity, uneven engagement).
- **Barriers**, refer to deeper structural or resource-based limitations that are more difficult to overcome (e.g., small agency capacity, reliance on a few key individuals to guide the project, long-term funding constraints).

We call attention to these distinctions to ensure consistent interpretation of findings. While interviewees did not always use these terms according to our definitions, our analysis applies these standardized distinctions throughout to avoid confusion.

VII: Methodology

Study Design and Rationale

We used a qualitative design to examine how implementers and reform recipients perceive CTRP3's implementation and progress. While some discoveries may help contextualize quantitative trends, our aim was not to measure impact in numerical terms. Instead, we sought to capture how those most intimately involved in the initiative experienced its performance and direction. By conducting semi-structured interviews, we were able to explore a core set of topics with all participants from both groups while leaving space to delve into other topical areas that emerged. This approach is especially useful for studying complex and sensitive topics such as racial disparities and police reform (del Pozo et al., 2025a).

Setting and Context

CTRP3 operates within a distinctive institutional and legal context. The initiative is coordinated by the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) at Central Connecticut State University under the Penn Act. While the state provides a centralized platform for

collecting and reporting traffic stop data, departments vary widely in their engagement with the initiative. What sets CTRP3 apart is its collaborative structure. It is a multi-stakeholder Advisory Board that includes police officials, legal professionals, academics, civil rights advocates, and community members that guide the project. IMRP functions as a neutral facilitator, producing annual reports and assembling public forums to connect statewide data with public dialogue.

The longevity of this collaboration, now more than a decade old, provides a relatively unique opportunity to study reform not as a one-time launch but as an evolving practice. As documented in the 2022 CTRP3 annual report, Black drivers were pulled over nearly twice as often as their White counterparts. It also noted that disparities in consent searches persisted even as overall stop rates declined (IMRP, 2023; Ross et al., 2024). When looking at statewide data, the numbers do not clearly show that there is racial bias in the likelihood of stops. However, the rates at which searches are conducted and the joint stop outcomes (e.g., being stopped and searched) hint at possible disparities. Looking at individual departments, we can see that some local and state agencies are stopping a higher percentage of Black and Hispanic drivers. In certain towns, these disparities seem to be more about non-resident drivers and major traffic routes rather than any excessive targeting. Taken together, these quantitative patterns (statewide and jurisdiction-specific) provide important context for interpreting the qualitative findings in this report.

Participants

We conducted 28 semi-structured interviews with 19 Advisory Board members, and nine police chiefs (all but one police participant was a chief). Some police participants also served on the Advisory Board, which provided insight into both agency-level implementation and statewide oversight. Each participant was interviewed once, and participation was voluntary. Considering the small size and visibility of this population, and our commitment to confidentiality, we intentionally limited details that could risk identifying individual participants. The sample reflected diversity across race, gender, vocation, and positionality, which added important variation in perspectives. While our sample reflects leadership-level voices, it captures how those most directly engaged in guiding and implementing CTRP3 understand its effectiveness, successes, and challenges.

Recruitment and Data Collection

We used a combination of convenience, purposive, and snowball sampling. IMRP staff helped initiate contact by introducing the research team to potential participants via email and during an Advisory Board meeting. Additional participants were recruited through referrals as the study progressed. The interviews were conducted via Zoom from July 2024 to April 2025. All but three of the interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent. The others were documented with detailed notes. On average, interviews ranged from 30 to 60 minutes, producing 338 single-spaced pages of data. We used a single interview guide, with slight adjustments tailored to each participant group. The development of the interview guide was shaped by prior CTRP3 reports, the two implementation science frameworks described above,

and research on procedural justice and police reform. We used this approach to ensure that our interview questions closely aligned with the evaluation's theoretical framework.

The core questions in the guide fell into the following seven categories:

1. Knowledge about CTRP3 and motivation for participation.
2. Views on the project's implementation, operational processes, and police engagement.
3. Perceptions of CTRP3's successes and challenges.
4. Evaluations of data analysis, reporting, and policy adjustments.
5. Perceived cultural shifts and observed changes in departments.
6. Assessments of community outreach and trust-building.
7. Views on long-term sustainability and recommendations.

Theoretical Framework Application

As previously discussed, this evaluation's design was informed by the CFIR framework and EPIS model, which also served as analytical lenses for interpreting our findings. CFIR helped us focus on key areas such as organizational culture, leadership, and resource capacity, while EPIS provided a temporal framework to examine the phased adoption processes, implementation obstacles, and sustainment factors. We leaned on these frameworks to draft our interview questions, support our thematic analysis and organize our discoveries.

Data Analysis

To protect confidentiality, all transcripts were anonymized before analysis. We then applied a hybrid coding approach that combined deductive codes (drawn from CFIR/EPIS constructs and prior CTRP3 reports and evaluation) with inductive codes developed directly from participant responses. Codes were grouped into thematic tables to identify patterns and overarching categories, which were then mapped onto the three research questions to structure the presentation of discoveries. Three core research team members conducted the coding process. This process began with each coder independently coding an initial set of interview transcripts (including summaries of the interviews that were not recorded). We then convened to compare our results and address any differences in how we labeled the same pieces of data through multiple discussions. Instead of using statistics to measure how consistently we coded similar pieces of data, we built reliability by refining the codebook together and reaching consensus while staying attentive to themes that emerged from the data.

Researcher Positionality

As external researchers, we recognize that our outsider status in relation to Connecticut policing and CTRP3 may have shaped how participants responded to our questions and how we interpreted their responses. To minimize potential bias, we based our analysis on existing theoretical frameworks and relied heavily on the words of the participants. Moreover, we cross-checked our discoveries with available quantitative data.

VIII: Findings

Perceived Effectiveness of CTRP3

As mentioned earlier in Section VI, "effectiveness" in this report refers to whether CTRP3 has been effective in its effort to reduce racial disparities in traffic stops, boost transparency, and improve accountability. This section provides a summary of participants' perceptions of the project's effectiveness, based on themes and nuances articulated in the qualitative interviews.

Overall Assessment

Advisory Board members and police chiefs generally described CTRP3 as effective, while acknowledging limitations. Among the nineteen interviewed Advisory Board members, most pointed to concrete evidence of effectiveness and noted challenges. All nine police chiefs described CTRP3 as effective in important ways, though many raised concerns about implementation and sustainability. Across both groups, three themes emerged: the initiative convened a sustained collaborative forum, developed a credible statewide data and analytic system, and influenced enforcement practices. Participants also highlighted constraints, including uneven engagement across departments, limited resources, and broader pressures such as media scrutiny, reduced officer proactivity during the COVID-19 period, and staffing shortages. Quantitative results are consistent with these perceptions and are detailed in the next subsection. Some interviewees attributed part of the observed reductions to external factors, so interpretations of what explains the shifts remain contested.

Key Areas of Effectiveness

When we asked Advisory Board members and police chiefs about CTRP3's effectiveness, they focused on three closely connected areas: reductions in racial disparities in traffic stops, increased transparency, and greater accountability.

Reducing Racial Disparities in Traffic Stops

The stated primary goal of CTRP3 is to reduce racial disparities surrounding traffic stops. Results from the independent quantitative assessment of the project conducted in 2024 show that it has been significantly effective in lowering disparities in traffic enforcement. Specifically, statistical analyses found a notable reduction in traffic stops involving minority motorists, including a relative decline of nearly 31% in stops resulting in arrests and about a 30% drop in stops resulting in warnings. The most significant change was the drop in pretextual stops, which made up about 85% of the overall decrease in disparities. Importantly, these reductions occurred without measurable increases in traffic crashes or decreases in violent crime clearance rates, reinforcing participants' claims that public safety was not compromised even as enforcement patterns changed.

These patterns were consistently confirmed by police chiefs. When asked whether these trends were observed in his department, one chief stated, "yes, absolutely." This participant then explained that his agency's engagement with CTRP3, particularly exposure to the data, has raised patrol officers' awareness about racial disparities, making them more mindful of their actions, prompting them to shift from prioritizing the number of stops they make to focusing on the quality of their traffic stops and justification of each interaction. As this chief put it, "the data indicated that as officers became more conscious of their actions, there was a noticeable reduction in stops that were not justified…what some might call 'pretext stops.'" Another chief emphasized that "Pretextual stops have largely shifted… we've increased our overall number of motor vehicle stops, but the focus has been on stops that are justifiable based on hazardous behavior rather than on the basis of race." Other chiefs tied this change to broader improvements in trust and transparency, noting that "Community involvement and trust-building, as well as transparency and accountability, helped lower pretextual stops."

Advisory Board members pointed to measurable, year-to-year improvements as evidence of effectiveness. One member illustrated this point by describing how the project's effectiveness becomes evident across annual reports, explaining, "Say that a police department shows up on the [annual report] as having a disparity. Then [CTRP3 staff] show that they met with [that agency], and then [in] the next [annual report]… they're not on our list anymore. And this is the policy change that [the department] made." This cyclical process, explained by this Board member, illustrates how CTRP3 functions in practice. It examines data to identify disparities, offers solutions to remedy them, and tracks the corrective actions taken by departments. This strategic approach creates a direct link between data analysis and policy changes.

Effectiveness also came through in how CTRP3 exposed enforcement practices that, while seemingly neutral and public safety-oriented, were both ineffective and inequitable. Another Advisory Board member described how IMRP staff worked with departments to analyze problematic enforcement patterns, noting that "there have been some departments that have completely changed the way they used… secondary stops, for example, based on the data from the collection and the work of the entire Board, but more specifically, IMRP staff who broke things out and showed [departments], 'you're trying to get people for DUIs at night through this kind of… policing. You're not getting anyone on DUIs, but you are… casting a net and a lot of Black and brown folks into it.'" This comment illustrates how CTRP3's systematic approach operates on multiple levels. Not only does it track departmental progress over time, but it also highlights when well-intentioned traffic enforcement strategies miss their safety goals and perpetuate racial disparities.

For many participants from both groups, the clearest indicator of progress was the measurable decline in racial disparities. As one Board member emphasized, "the most successful [measure of CTRP3's effectiveness] is that we have brought down the numbers [of traffic stops] and the disparity and racial profiling throughout the state." Similarly, a police chief echoed this sense of progress, noting that "our latest report [indicates that] the disparities are almost gone." These perspectives align with the quantitative findings that overall disparities declined by nearly one-fifth to one-quarter statewide, with the sharpest declines concentrated in arrests and warnings. Participants cited such trends as concrete evidence that cultural and organizational change was occurring and that CTRP3 was working.

Transparency and Accountability as Interconnected Mechanisms of Effectiveness

Participants consistently identified transparency and accountability as dual mechanisms that gave CTRP3 its effectiveness. Transparency made disparities visible and accessible, while accountability ensured that problems were confronted and changes sustained. Collectively, these elements were commonly referred to as the "engine" of reform, fostering credibility, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and cultural shift.

Transparency: Making Disparities Visible and Building Trust.

Transparency was frequently described as a key aspect of CTRP3, with annual reports regarded as the most straightforward demonstration of this commitment. One Advisory Board member put it plainly: "I think one of the successes of CTRP3 has been their annual reporting." Others emphasized that credibility and clarity were essential: the Board sought to provide "the best product it can, so that all of the stakeholders in the state of Connecticut have accurate information and can make informed decisions." Police chiefs underscored that presentation and timing shaped reception: "It's built trust, so it doesn't seem like a gotcha game anymore." When reports showed reductions, "to the extent that the public sees that, [it] increases the confidence in their… local police departments." Participants also noted that earlier reports were too technical or lengthy, but later efforts made them "more concise" and "user-friendly."

Transparency extended beyond documents. Public forums and legislative sessions were described as a "very open process where individuals can come and be a part of it," drawing community members into dialogue on "the same level playing field." Some chiefs practiced transparency locally: "When the data comes out, I immediately send it to the NAACP President, and we talk over the results… just to be completely transparent." Independent oversight further reinforced transparency. Board members praised analytic strategies, such as the "veil of darkness" study, describing it as "really effective" at demonstrating disparities. Chiefs stressed that external review enhanced legitimacy: "The fact that there is a group that's reviewing… the stop data… provides a level of trust that police departments aren't just running amok willy-nilly." As one chief put it more bluntly, "I think the public understands there's a big brother… watching over the police." These reflections mirror the quantitative evaluation's findings that reports became progressively clearer and easier to interpret, with annual cycles of analysis and dissemination serving as the backbone of transparency. Importantly, the evaluation documented that measurable declines in disparities were most pronounced in categories consistently highlighted in public reports, suggesting that transparency not only informed stakeholders but also helped direct enforcement reforms in practice.

Accountability: Ensuring Problems Are Addressed and Change Endures.

While transparency revealed disparities, accountability mechanisms ensured follow-through. Advisory Board members described how departments often came off the "flag list" after targeted meetings and policy adjustments: "The team goes and meets with the police department… to really try to dig deep and find out well, why is there a disparity?" Chiefs confirmed the value of these interventions, noting that follow-ups helped reduce flagged departments from "seven to ten… to two to four."

Participants also connected accountability to concrete policy shifts. “We shifted away from low-hanging violations like tinted windows and instead targeted issues such as loud mufflers… we adapted them into our operational practices to ensure we stayed off the top of the racial profiling report.” Another chief said that having the data allowed “an educated change in our policy,” moving away from productivity measures that emphasized stop volume.

At the officer level, supervisory oversight and technological safeguards reinforced accountability. Auditing tools require demographic data entry before they can clear a stop, which helps ensure completeness. As one chief noted, “officers are taking accountability for their actions and understand the seriousness of accurate data collection… their initial clicks on the data entry system have far-reaching implications.” Supervisory reviews of officer practices underscored that accountability extends into training and everyday supervision. Finally, participants described accountability as fostering cultural change. “The initiative forced us to look within ourselves, examining our disparities and identifying areas for improvement. It helped us to be more accountable by integrating data into our operational and training practices.” Another chief reflected that the initiative “helped change the culture…officers now realize that their initial clicks… have far-reaching implications.”

These accounts parallel the quantitative evaluation’s finding that the bulk of disparity reductions came from fewer pretextual stops. Participants’ descriptions of transparency and accountability mechanisms show how statistical declines were reinforced by visible reporting, direct oversight, and sustained policy follow-up, turning numbers into meaningful organizational change. The quantitative report also indicated that these accountability mechanisms did not compromise public safety, as the decrease in discretionary stops did not lead to a rise in traffic accidents or the rates at which violent crimes were cleared. This alignment between statistical outcomes and stakeholder reflections accentuates why transparency and accountability were viewed as the “engine” of reform.

Variations in Perceptions of Effectiveness

Although participants broadly agreed that CTRP3 was effective, their interpretations of what “effectiveness” meant, and how it could be observed, varied across roles and departmental contexts. This report defines effectiveness strictly as reducing racial disparities in traffic stops, boosting transparency, and strengthening accountability. However, Advisory Board members and police chiefs emphasized different facets of these goals. Their reflections show that effectiveness was filtered through local conditions, leadership perspectives, and departmental readiness.

Different Dimensions of Effectiveness

Advisory Board members often cited transparency and accountability as central markers of effectiveness. The project’s ability to bring “unlikely parties and stakeholders together… and reach a safe place where a decision can be made” was described as building the consensus needed to sustain reform. Others pointed to the development of a reliable statewide data system: “It wasn’t all being collected… it wasn’t all being synthesized or analyzed, and now it is. And

then, as a state, we can look at our report card. How are we doing as it relates to fair and impartial policing?"

Many chiefs focused more narrowly on how disparities and officer practices were identified and addressed. One emphasized distinguishing systemic from individual problems: "If the whole department is operating in a certain way, maybe it's a departmental issue. But if it's one officer, maybe there's an issue with that individual… That was helpful to us." Another stressed that effectiveness depended on pre-release dialogue that "made the process a little more palatable" and encouraged engagement rather than resistance.

These findings are consistent with the quantitative results that found differences across agencies. While aggregate results pointed to statewide disparity reductions, the evaluation documented that progress was distributed disproportionately, with some departments achieving larger declines and others showing only modest changes. This inconsistency helps explain why Advisory Board members stressed consensus-building and why chiefs focused on whether issues were systemic or tied to a small number of officers.

Variation in How Effectiveness Was Measured

Board members frequently cited year-to-year improvements in annual reports as clear indicators of progress: when a department appeared on the "disparity list," then met with IMRP and implemented policy changes, "they're not on our list anymore. And this is the policy change that they made." Analytic strategies such as the "veil of darkness" study were praised for making disparities "pretty hard to argue." Some chiefs expressed caution about crediting CTRP3 alone: "I think all the numbers went down… but… we're down staff right now… and our neighborhoods have different diversity… So that day could be totally different." Others noted broader shifts in enforcement levels over time. These reflections questioned whether observed reductions stemmed from CTRP3 itself, broader conditions, or both.

This discovery is reflected in the quantitative evaluation, which found that a significant majority (85%) of the reduction in disparities was due to the fact that officers made fewer pretextual stops. However, interviews indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic, staffing shortages, and other contextual factors also contributed to the overall decline in traffic enforcement activity. In short, the skepticism among police chiefs aligns with statistical evidence that CTRP3 was influential but not the sole driver of change.

Departmental and Contextual Variation

Departments differed in how they experienced CTRP3's impact. Chiefs from smaller or resource-constrained agencies often described the initiative as a catalyst for self-reflection and accountability: "The initiative forced us to look within ourselves, examining our disparities and identifying areas for improvement… In the long run, it strengthened our relationship with the community and helped us build a culture of continuous improvement."

Others argued CTRP3 had limited impact because their departments already emphasized community engagement: "It didn't really change what we're doing; we're just looking at things a

little differently… One of the strengths of our department is our community engagement." Leadership style also mattered. Chiefs suggested that effectiveness depended less on size or resources than on whether leaders approached findings with an "open mind." As one put it, "If you respond in a way that you're just saying we don't have any issues… I don't think your experience… is going to be positive. But if you… say, okay, you identified something, let's talk about this… then I think… your experience with them is going to be positive." Board members echoed that effectiveness required "buy-in from the police departments, and buy-in from the public to understand that this is real… It's actually an improvement moment."

Quantitatively, this variation was evident in the finding that some departments came off the disparity list within a year of targeted interventions, while others required multiple years of monitoring. These differences point to how factors like leadership, the readiness of departments, and resource availability influenced the uptake and depth of reform.

Balancing Success and Skepticism

Even among participants who pointed out successes recognized that the results were not consistent across the board. One Advisory Board member cautioned against complacency, stating that "the challenge is not to get so complacent… We haven't reached our goal right until everyone's free." Some chiefs described selectively adopting recommendations, noting that not all secondary stops were eliminated because "sometimes those stops are necessary for safety reasons." Others pointed to the need for more practical tools: "I wish there were a tool that made this more user-friendly for non-statisticians… because then we could better catch issues before they become public controversies."

These variations mirror the quantitative evaluation's aggregate finding of reduced disparities but help explain why reductions were unevenly distributed across departments. The quantitative results indicate that engagement with CTRP3 has prompted measurable change, while qualitative discoveries point to how local capacity, leadership style, and departmental culture shaped the extent to which reforms were implemented and sustained. In particular, the quantitative report noted that while arrests and warning stops among minority drivers dropped by roughly 30%, those declines were not uniform, as some agencies showed sharper declines than others. This asymmetrical pattern reinforces participants' cautions that effectiveness must be viewed in context, with both successes and limits.

External and Internal Influences Shaping Perceptions of Effectiveness

Participants communicated that CTRP3's effectiveness could not be understood without considering the bigger picture. Specifically, they expressed that the way departments interacted with the initiative and interpreted its outcomes was heavily influenced by various social, political, and organizational factors. These include external pressures stemming from the pandemic, the lingering legitimacy crisis (and associated heightened scrutiny and shift in public expectations), state-level scandal, and internal pressures created by the current staffing crisis, all of which combined to both add layers of complexity to CTRP3's effort, and at times, amplified the project's impact.

COVID-19 was the most frequently cited factor influencing enforcement patterns. Chiefs recalled that “every cop in the State pulled the plug on motor vehicle activity,” producing a sharp decline in stops, with some noting that levels “still haven’t caught up with what they were prior to COVID.” Staffing shortages compounded these effects by altering who conducted stops and where. As another chief explained, “we’re down staff right now… if the officer on Zone A is not working today, or is busy… that day could be totally different.” These constraints sometimes obscured whether disparities declined because of CTRP3 or because fewer discretionary stops were made overall. The quantitative evaluation supports this tension. While it confirmed a 19–24% reduction in minority stops across participating departments, it also cautioned that statewide spillover effects, such as pandemic-related declines in overall traffic enforcement, were not fully captured, making it difficult to disentangle initiative-driven change from broader enforcement slowdowns.

National and local events also created an environment in which officers were more hesitant to engage in proactive enforcement. Chiefs described a reluctance rooted in fear of backlash: “I don’t wanna be the next officer in some viral video… so I’m just gonna let it go.” Advisory Board members tied these hesitations to a “perfect storm of incidents” that placed policing practices under intense scrutiny. Quantitative trends are broadly consistent with these accounts. The steepest declines in pretextual stops occurred in the same period when the legitimacy crisis that emerged circa 2015 and protest activity were at their peak, suggesting that cultural and political pressures amplified or accelerated the changes CTRP3 was already prompting.

Police chiefs and Advisory Board members described how CTRP3's effectiveness was shaped by early and continuing political and institutional contexts. These participants detailed the project's transformation from initial setbacks to renewed momentum. They recalled that the original 1999 Alvin Penn Act had little to no impact, with early analyses essentially concluding "there's nothing to see here," sparking an "outcry" among minority residents who felt that such claim was contradictory to their police experiences. As one police chief explained, this dismissive approach empowered officers to view the initiative as just "another unfunded mandate [and confidently claim that they do not engage in] racial profiling" while simultaneously making them feel the project was designed as merely "a gotcha moment." The turning point, they explained, came around 2011 following the election of Governor Malloy, who received strong support from the state's minority residents. His election coincided with the East Haven police profiling case and DOJ investigation. As one Advisory Board member emphasized, "This was East Haven. That was really the impetus for this reform." Another chief reported hearing frustrated residents ask, "We have had this racial profiling law since 1999… why isn't it doing what the [federal] DOJ did [after] the fact?" This catalyzed a legislative "reboot" that brought federal funding and launched CTRP3 in 2012.

Beyond this initial shift, participants noted that federal support fluctuated with changes in administration. During more supportive periods, such as the Obama Administration, one Board member recalled high-profile endorsements, including John Marshall, the son of Thurgood Marshall, visiting and praising their work: "…saying what a good job we were doing." Conversely, under a less supportive administration, the same interviewee described the project as being seen as "very evil and [the] bane of the existence to policing," creating challenges as they

navigated "questioning what you're doing" while trying to secure federal funding. Participants also called attention to a linkage between data analysis and policy changes, with one police chief explaining that identifying disparities "led to a substantive… statute change… prohibiting consent searches on motor vehicle stops." Overall, these accounts point to the influence of changing political and institutional contexts on CTRP3's legitimacy and impact, while the quantitative evaluation demonstrated that policy reforms such as restrictions on consent searches produced measurable reductions in disparities when combined with the project's data analysis and oversight systems.

The Connecticut State Police data scandal, in which troopers falsified thousands of traffic stop records, was repeatedly cited as a turning point. Advisory Board members expressed mixed reactions to this development. Some viewed it as undermining trust, with one stating that "that caused a lot of concern and called into question… the integrity of the data." Others saw it paradoxically as reinforcing accountability, showing that "there's some accountability, there's some follow-up, and people followed that." Several described the "shock and awe" of headlines as both a "blessing and a curse," prompting more serious attention to data quality because of reputational risks. Although the quantitative evaluation did not explicitly analyze this scandal, it emphasized the importance of ongoing data integrity checks, reinforcing participants' concerns that public confidence in the numbers is as critical as the statistical findings themselves.

Participants, namely police chiefs, recalled noteworthy changes in civilian behavior during traffic stops and in policing culture that intersected with CTRP3's work. Chiefs pointed to shifts in how civilians responded during encounters. One chief specified that officers reported that civilians had become "more aggressive… less cooperative… [and] angrier," which in turn discouraged them from initiating encounters. This cultural caution was amplified by broader societal events. Another chief noted a "steep drop-off" in stops around the time of COVID-19, compounded by civil unrest and general negativity surrounding law enforcement, which made officers "more hesitant to engage with the public for anything that could be perceived as negative." Others pointed to a broader cultural shift within policing itself, especially after the murder of George Floyd, toward more cautious ticketing. This was coupled with a generational change among patrol officers. One chief, for instance, explained that newer officers often brought "a different mindset that is less punitive and more community oriented," and are more receptive to data-driven methods.

Results from the quantitative evaluation provide indirect confirmation of these dynamics, showing that the intervention generated a 38-43% reduction in potentially pretextual stops, with these discretionary stops (e.g., equipment and administrative violations) accounting for 86% of the overall decline in traffic stops of minority drivers (Parker et al., 2025). This pattern indicates that evolving officer norms and vocational trepidation may have played a significant role in driving the declines. While rigorous, the quantitative assessment did not account for all of these broader contextual shifts, which means its estimates of disparity reduction capture only part of the picture. The insights gathered from this qualitative evaluation highlight how the COVID-19 pandemic effects, staffing crisis, the lingering legitimacy crisis, police-involved scandals, and these cultural changes intersected with CTRP3, either strengthening or complicating the project's impact, and shaped how measurable reductions were achieved in practice.

Summary

Police chiefs and Advisory Board members generally agreed that the CTRP3 has been effective at reducing disparities in traffic stops. All nine chiefs interviewed, and most Board members described the project as producing meaningful change, while acknowledging important limitations. They noted that the clearest evidence of effectiveness came from measurable quantitative outcomes. Stops of Black and Latino drivers declined by about one-fifth to one-quarter statewide, with the steepest reductions driven by fewer pretextual stops (Parker et al., 2025). These results from the independent quantitative evaluation mirrored what participants observed on the ground, as chiefs pointed to officers becoming more aware of their stop patterns and adjusting their behaviors accordingly. Board members described departments that appeared in disparity reports, met with project staff, implemented policy changes, and later came off the "problem list." What made CTRP3 credible, participants emphasized, was its combination of transparency and accountability. Annual reports made disparities visible and accessible, shifting police interpretation of the intervention from a "gotcha" or punitive mechanism to a collaborative strategy. Follow-up meetings, policy reviews, and ongoing monitoring combined to create an accountability mechanism for departments with persistent disparities. Together, these mechanisms turned data into sustained organizational change by providing tools and oversight that pressed agencies to adjust their practices.

Interviewees acknowledged, however, that the project's effectiveness was shaped by broader forces during the same period. The COVID-19 pandemic, staffing shortages, and a wider legitimacy crisis all led to sharp drops in discretionary enforcement. These conditions made it challenging to disentangle CTRP3's impact from broader external and organizational pressures. Even so, participants saw the project as providing a fruitful systematic framework for monitoring and guiding reforms during normal operations and when police are experiencing legitimacy crises. Differences seen across agencies underscored the importance of leadership and organizational readiness. Chiefs from smaller agencies frequently communicated that engagement with CTRP3 served as a catalyst for meaningful self-assessment and notable operational change. On the other hand, chiefs from larger departments (especially those serving diverse communities) with existing community programs reported seeing less pronounced changes.

Commenting on all agencies who engaged with the project, participants explained that chiefs who openly engaged with the intervention's findings by inviting deeper data analysis cited positive outcomes, such as implementing targeted policy changes that reduced traffic stop disparities. Conversely, initial "defensiveness" from some chiefs (along with pushbacks from unions) created friction, which was often overcome through a collaborative, non-accusatory process that built trust over time.

Despite the favorable changes CTRP3 has engendered, participants raised concerns about complacency. The general feeling among participants is that the reductions in disparities in traffic stop signal a genuine shift in police practices. This progress has been bolstered by transparent reporting and collaborative oversight. Nonetheless, participants warned that these improvements remain fragile. They claim that sustaining CTRP3's momentum will rely on ongoing leadership engagement, adequate resources (namely for smaller departments), and

fostering a culture of accountability that ensures reforms are integrated into the daily practices of engaged departments.

Successes Attributed to CTRP3

As defined in this report, success refers to milestones or perceived value from the perspective of stakeholders through building dependable data systems, fostering collaboration, or shifting enforcement practices.

Overall Assessment

In general, participants agreed that CTRP3 achieved important successes, describing its accomplishments as both technical and relational. Police Chiefs and Advisory Board members pointed to improvements to the data collection systems and analytic processes, along with multi-stakeholder collaboration and discussions that gradually assuaged early defensiveness among the police. For many, this cultural shift was itself a milestone. The quantitative evaluation reinforced these perceptions, indicating that reductions in discretionary and pretextual enforcement accounted for about 80% of the noted decline in disparities (Parker et al., 2025). Participants made clear that these drops were not just minor technical adjustments but visible evidence that inequities were being addressed in substantive ways.

They also pointed out that public safety was not compromised, which gave added legitimacy to the reforms. Participants linked these broad outcomes to three areas of success explored in greater detail below. These include the development of reliable data collection and management systems, the fostering of collaboration and trust, and the adoption of new enforcement practices. Together, these achievements explain why both police chiefs and Advisory Board members alike viewed CTRP3 as a reform model with measurable and lasting value.

Technical Infrastructure and Data Systems Improvements

Participants from both groups consistently identified the creation of a reliable data system as a major achievement. Advisory Board members emphasized that before CTRP3, data was scattered in "boxes of paper forms" and notably inconsistent across departments. Police chiefs described the old paper slips used to collect data as "very cumbersome… very laborious," and easy to lose or ignore, which meant compliance was questionable and accuracy of collected data was lacking. The introduction of a statewide electronic data collection and management system was seen as a major leap in progress. Interviewees explained that with this change, officers could no longer close out a stop without completing the required racial profiling form, which dramatically improved data accuracy and completeness. They further noted that the drop-down menus and mobile data terminals also reduced human error by standardizing entries.

Several chiefs explained that the incorporation of peer-review in the report publication process was another milestone that improved credibility of CTPR3's annual reports and the underlying methodologies used to produce the results in them. One chief described how early

analyses flagged far too many departments as outliers, but after review, the methodology was refined and the number of flagged agencies dropped, which in turn "went a long way" in building confidence in the findings. Advisory Board members added that reports became "more concise" and "user friendly" over time, which increased their value to policymakers and the public, and more palatable and practically useful to the police.

The challenge of integrating several different vendor systems across departments was another technical success story noted by participants. They recounted how IMRP staff (namely, Ken Barone, Jim Fasalero, and Andrew Clark) "had to go essentially department by department, and vendor by vendor" to create a standardized system, even offering a free alternative to encourage engagement. Eventually, nearly all agencies complied with the electronic data collection mandate, which interviews saw as evidence of progress.

While participants praised these achievements, they stressed that the integrity of traffic stop data remains questionable. For instance, an Advisory Board member called attention to the state police falsification scandal (Barone and Fazzalaro, 2024). Members stated that ‘many, many false, like completely fictional entries’ were discovered, echoing other participants’ view that even the best systems require strong oversight to ensure they are working as designed. Both chiefs and Advisory Board members also noted that everyday issues such as officers misidentifying drivers' race on tickets ("it says that they're white, and they're clearly not white") or failing to distribute required informational cards remains an ongoing concern, despite technical improvements, in part because some departments have yet to fully transition to the electronic system. Still, participants clarified that these reminders did not undercut the technical progress that has been made but emphasized that accountability and oversight must continue alongside the integration of technology.

Relational and Cultural Gains

Many participants, both piece chiefs and Advisory Board members, described CTRP3's relational successes as its most significant achievement. For example, chiefs recalled that early meetings were "contentious at best" and often framed as battles between law enforcement and community members. This opinion was reiterated by Advisory Board members, with one describing the early Board meetings as having "two groups on opposite sides of the table (literally and figuratively)," fervently concentrated on voicing their points of view. This dynamic, characterized by heavy, direct, and often combative discussions, reflected what many participants from both groups agreed exemplified the "us versus them mentality." Over time, reconciliation efforts led primarily by the project’s director, Ken Barone, and his non-accusatory approach ("here's what we have found; here's the areas [flagged]”) created a psychologically safe, procedurally fair, and collaborative space. This environment allowed diverse stakeholders or "unlikely parties" as one Board put it, could talk through issues and ultimately "reach consensus" that was "palatable for all." Participants from both groups observed that this trust-building was essential, transforming the Board's dynamic from its contentious early days into what a Board member characterized as a "wonderful working relationship."

Another cited success was the procedural change wherein IMRP staff meet with departments to review statistical results before public release. Interviewees from both groups

identified this change, led by the project director, as a turning point in the trust-building process. Police chiefs expressed this practice gave them an opportunity to understand and respond to results before they became media headlines, which helped shift the tone from defensiveness to problem solving. Advisory Board members conveyed that the process of building consensus was not superficial but instead marked by discussions that were often "very, very heavy," with stakeholders challenging one another's positions until they landed in a "safe place." This was described as the Board's real strength, hard conversations that led to shared ownership of reform.

The structure of the Advisory Board itself was another cultural milestone cited by interviewees from both groups. Echoing what many Advisory Board members noted, one stressed that "everyone has a seat at the table," with representatives ranging from law enforcement and civil rights organizations to prosecutors, defenders, community advocates, and government officials. As another member explained, the Board brought together "the community, the government, local, state, Federal Government, the officers, the chief of police association…the FBI…the nonprofits, all of the stakeholders are at the table." A police chief likewise credited this diverse composition with building legitimacy, pointing to what one described as "a very diverse panel…civilians of all walks of life, and it's good to hear different perspectives". Several Board members went further, describing this structure as the Board's "most successful outcome...and brilliant part" of the initiative because it allowed groups that rarely sit together to engage directly and constructively. Similarly, speaking about the diverse makeup of the Board, another member affirmed that it "is not even close" to any other accomplishment. For both police chiefs and Board members, the evolution from confrontation to collaboration transformed the Advisory Board into a trusted forum for deliberation and consensus-building.

Policy and Practice Changes

Advisory Board members and police chiefs frequently cited concrete reforms in policy and enforcement practices as among CTRP3's most significant achievements. Expressing the views of many Board members pointed, one noted that some departments "completely changed the way they used… secondary stops" once the data revealed these tactics were inequitable and ineffective. Some police chiefs provided parallel examples from their own jurisdictions. For instance, one chief described moving his department away from "the low-hanging fruit of equipment violations like tinted windows and instead targeted hazardous moving violations and quality-of-life issues such as loud mufflers, because those directly affect quality of life."

Several chiefs highlighted how the engagement with CTRP3 helped reshape how they approached DUI enforcement strategies. They reported that relying heavily on equipment violations was both inefficient and ineffective, whereas focusing on hazardous moving violations yielded far greater results. One chief reflected on a CTRP3 report, noting that when one department emphasized "hazardous moving violations like speeding and running red lights, their DUI numbers actually went up," concluding that "targeting hazardous moving violations…is more effective than stopping cars for minor equipment violations." This point was echoed by another chief who explained that "if you were doing 200 equipment violations you were finding, like three people who were driving while intoxicated. But if you concentrated on speeding or other moving violations…the proportion of DUI operators…was much higher." In a similar vein,

but different context, a different chief described how some departments moved away from focusing on “border patrol,” a strategy where officers would linger on the edges of large cities and disproportionately stop minority drivers and focus traffic enforcement in areas with high crash rates, thereby reducing disparities and improving public safety. One chief recounted how one department that had been flagged for disparities for years eventually “made their way off the list” after adopting this approach, underscoring the effectiveness of this strategic shift.

Perhaps most strikingly, CTRP3 analyses helped drive a legislative change prohibiting consent searches during motor vehicle stops. Advisory Board members repeatedly described this as a landmark reform because the data showed that consent searches were both racially skewed and ineffective at advancing public safety. Chiefs echoed this sentiment, crediting the statute change as one of the clearest examples of data-driven reform. Participants also stressed that the way these findings were framed was as important as the reform itself. Advisory Board members emphasized that a finding of disparity “is not a finding of discrimination,” a distinction that allowed departments to recognize that “a neutral policy…has a discriminatory effect” without being forced to admit intentional bias. Chiefs agreed that this framing lowered defensiveness and helped keep them engaged in reforming conversations. By maintaining the focus on solutions rather than blaming, both groups credited CTRP3 with securing one of the initiative’s most visible and broadly supported accomplishments.

Transparency and Accountability Gains

Participants from both groups identified transparency and accountability as major successes of CTRP3. One Advisory Board member remarked that public forums were "a very open process" where "everyone has a voice and everyone [is] heard." Moreover, it was noted that these forums were held in a public legislative space, deliberately constructed for the purpose of making "the public [feel] welcome [and] to attend," which reinforced the project's legitimacy. The inclusion of diverse stakeholders competing views was frequently deemed a strength of the initiative. As one board member specified, the effort was getting "competing perspectives" on the table and "spending hours and hours in discussion." Another board member reiterated the importance of public openness by expressing "getting people to... the table together,' when asked how important this was to the process, and then claiming, "it's not even close."

Police chiefs and Board members alike also recounted that the public reporting process itself underwent a major transformation. Early on, departments felt blindsided when reports were released publicly before they had the chance to understand or contextualize the results for IMRP staff. One chief described this old approach as “unfair,” recalling that reports were published and “a newspaper headline would hit before we could even conduct our own investigation.” Advisory Board members echoed this, with one explaining that a report would come out showing disparities “with no input from the police as to why those might logically exist,” which often led to the public interpreting results as racial profiling “without the necessary context," which board members viewed as unhelpful to the police, CTRP3, and the morale of police officers. Another Board member went further, noting that police during the early years felt like a trap, which created a difficult dynamic between law enforcement and the community.

Participants stressed that this process was deliberately changed, and they viewed the shift as a critical success. Instead of releasing results unilaterally, IMRP staff began meeting with departments beforehand to review findings and incorporate follow-up information. As one Board member explained, “They used to do it where they just released it, and then everyone be up in arms… And so, we changed that system. And then it went to ‘Okay. We’ll meet with you.’” A police chief confirmed that the IMRP team was “great about, ‘Look, we’re not gonna release the final report until we’ve done the follow-up so the follow-up can be included,’” which helped build trust and prevented the “gotcha game.” Advisory Board members praised the new approach as one that “builds more trust with the community” and “builds more trust with the police departments” because the reports now included context and departmental responses alongside the data.

Participants from both groups emphasized that accountability extended from chiefs and administrators down to officers in the patrol unit, producing a cultural shift in traffic enforcement practices. One chief described a key success as getting officers to recognize “the seriousness of accurate data collection,” as they began to realize that “their initial clicks [in the system] have far-reaching implications.” Other chiefs noted that the availability of detailed data allowed departments to pinpoint problems down to an “individual officer if necessary.” These accounts are consistent with results from the quantitative analysis showing that 27% of the reduction in minority stops could be traced to changes in the behavior of “high-disparity officers” who had been identified to command staff. One Board member called this a “real success,” explaining that departments flagged by the reports often made tangible “changes to the way they police” and were subsequently removed from the list. Chiefs admitted that no agency wanted to be on the so-called “naughty list” or, as another put it, “put on blast.”

Voicing what many participants expressed, one Board member noted that while the Penn ACT had no formal penalties, "the teeth behind it is [that departments] don't want to be on that list." This accountability mechanism was reinforced by the ever-present threat of a “flashing headline," further incentivizing agencies to engage with the project and implement necessary operational changes. As one Board member recalled, the widespread media attention in the early years was itself “a massive success… amazing statewide coverage every time, and hard conversations” that forced departments and communities to confront racial disparities. Together, these dynamics (i.e., internal behavioral change, departmental accountability, and external public scrutiny) made CTRP3’s accountability mechanisms effective.

Police chiefs and Board members alike broadly agreed that the data falsification scandal involving the state police was a serious but important test of CTRP3's integrity. They acknowledged that even though the scandal was damaging, its discovery and the subsequent response ultimately validated the project's accountability mechanisms. Police participants acknowledged the significant negative impact of the episode, noting that it "hurt the agency's reputation" and diminished personnel morale, with some officers fearing that career-ending mistakes could jeopardize their futures. The discovery of what one Board member described as "many... completely fictional entries" prompted leaders to confront difficult questions about whether they should consider the fabrications as some sort of clerical error, "creativity," or deliberate misconduct.

Police chiefs noted that the scandal also had a cascading effect because it ignited renewed scrutiny of data integrity within their own departments, as well as questions about whether officers were correctly identifying race or gender during their traffic stops. Participants recalled that the media firestorm sparked by the scandal added additional pressure on local departments to actively and meaningfully engage with CTRP3 to address any disparities identified within their traffic stop data. In the words of one Board member, the "shock and awe" of the headlines was a "blessing and a curse," in that it was damaging but also forced departments to "take this stuff (data collection, accountability for racial disparities, and public transparency) seriously" to avoid negative press.

At the same time, participants emphasized that the scandal ultimately reaffirmed CTRP3's accountability mechanisms. As a Board member noted, the rigorous and "very conservative analysis" used by IMRP to "screen out anything that might just be an error" to uncover the falsifications "was smart" and lent the findings legitimacy and prevented dismissal as simple sloppiness. Another Board member explained that the public exposure, though a "real blemish," was "beneficial in showing the members of the public that there's some accountability," as illustrated by the non-superficial "some follow-up" or investigation into this issue. Importantly, the investigation showed that the falsification was contained to the state police and did not undermine the overall trust in the data collected by local police departments. For many participants across both groups, this scandal, while concerning, showed that accountability was not symbolic, but rather tangible; evidence that both technical systems and oversight led by CTRP3/IMRP could uphold legitimacy.

Summary

According to police chiefs and Advisory Board members, CTRP3 has achieved substantial successes. It developed a reliable technical system, convened multi-stakeholder groups with diverse expertise, inspired legislative and policy reforms and operational changes, and notably strengthened transparency and accountability. What began as a law that lacked "teeth" or formal penalties has evolved into a nationally recognized model of data-driven reform. Results from the independent quantitative assessment highlighting significant reductions in traffic stops of minority motorists serve as evidence that the changes were real. Discoveries from this qualitative evaluation revealed how those changes were experienced in practice as cultural, organizational, and relational milestones. Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that CTRP3's successes were not symbolic but measurable and observable in practice. Both the quantitative data and insights from individuals most intimately involved in the project point to the same conclusion: systemic reductions in racial disparities were achieved through technical innovation, collaborative processes, and cultural transformation.

Challenges and Barriers

As defined in this report, challenges refer to obstacles that participants believed could be addressed or mitigated through adjustments in leadership, resources, or strategy (for example, defensiveness, technical complexity, uneven engagement). Barriers refer to deeper structural or

resource-based limits that are more difficult to overcome (for example, small agency capacity, reliance on a few key individuals, long-term funding constraints).

Overall Assessment

Interviewees described both challenges and barriers across culture, infrastructure, engagement, and sustainability. None of these obstacles derailed the initiative, yet together, they created recurring vulnerabilities that slowed acceptance, limited reach, and threatened momentum. The quantitative evaluation found no measurable increase in crashes or violent crime clearance rates following reductions in stops (Parker et al., 2025). Even so, many participants worried that scaling back discretionary enforcement could harm safety or officer initiative. That perception gap remains a live issue to address. The evaluation also documented that reductions in discretionary and pretextual stops were widespread yet uneven across agencies, which tracks with participants' accounts that local culture, capacity, and leadership style influenced whether statistical declines were embraced, resisted, or delayed. Interviewees linked this unevenness to everyday implementation mechanics (for example, who monitors monthly trends, who has time to retrain line supervisors, and whether a simple dashboard exists for non-statisticians).

Cultural and Attitudinal Challenges

Close to all interviewees described early defensiveness and a sense that CTRP3's reporting was a "gotcha" exercise designed to expose and punish the police rather than a data-driven collaborative strategy for organizational improvement. A police chief recalled that the initial relationship with the CTRP3 (the Advisory Board) was "contentious at best," and another chief recalled that early public releases or reports created a "defensive posture" because departments were expected to explain identified racial disparities in their traffic stop data without context. Chiefs explained that patrol officers felt that CTRP3 was merely an intervention imposed by external actors that added to the workload and job-related pressures without any objective evidence that they were "racial profiling." Essentially, they deemed the project a "'gotcha' moment." One chief described the rise of a "silent protest" within patrol units in which officers reduced their traffic enforcement activities. Specifically, this chief explained that the attitude among officers was that "you're questioning my integrity, so guess what? I'm not going to do anything." Another chief linked the pullbacks in proactivity to fear of reputational risk, noting that officers' tacit response to the intervention and the heightened public and media scrutiny of police work was that "I don't wanna be the next officer in some viral video… so I'm just gonna let it go."

Advisory Board members noted that "to say the [phrase] racial profiling [which is included in the name of the project]… really throws them in a tizzy… police become really defensive," and that some officers would "immediately discount that there are any problems at all." Several participants from both groups linked these reactions to union influence, reputational risk at the organizational and officer levels, and a professional environment that is historically skeptical of outside input and oversight, stressing that "no one wants to be accused of wrongdoing or called a racist."

Even though early tensions eased over time, uncertainty persisted about how CTRP3's data analysis results would be used. What began as widespread fear of punitive discipline evolved into more subtle, ongoing concerns about data integrity and public perception. As the project evolved, a strategic shift to pre-release meetings with departments before public reporting emerged as a way to address these concerns, providing opportunities for agencies to "supply context" identified patterns of disparities. One Advisory Board member summarized the change as moving from “they just released it, and then everyone be up in arms… And so, we changed that system… We’ll meet with you.” Chiefs similarly credited this shift with removing the “gotcha” pressure and creating an “improvement moment.”

Advisory Board members also described their own evolution from “two groups on opposite sides of the table” to “very, very heavy” but productive debates where members would "poke holes" in each other's arguments to test their validity and land "at a safe place." Results reported in the quantitative evaluation are consistent with this trajectory, showing that while CTRP3's efforts led to overall reductions in disparities among treated departments, the degree of success in any given agency was not automatic. The variations between departments mirrored differences in buy-in and reflected agencies' cultural readiness for reform and the strength of leadership from chiefs and their command staff (i.e., the ability to be proactive in addressing problems, open to external feedback, grounded in evidence-based decision-making, and effective at gaining departmental buy-in for change). These factors typically required considerable time and trust-building to move from defensiveness to meaningful collaboration (Parker et al., 2025).

A distinct challenge arose from the state police data scandal. Summed up by one Advisory Board member as "many, many… completely fictional entries," a characterization several others shared, and called by another Board member a "real blemish" on the agency's reputation and a threat to the integrity of the data (the basic accuracy and honesty of the numbers) the project relies on to address disparities. As interviewees recounted, to address this issue, CTRP3/IMRP staff first conducted a "very conservative analysis" to "screen out anything that might just be an error," then brought in independent auditors and explained the results publicly; even so, "thousands of erroneous records" remained.

As one Board member explained, the outcome of the investigation "hurt the agency's reputation." Most participants across both groups framed the scandal as individual misconduct, with one Board member noting that it was the action of "a few bad apples, a few people who [went] rogue" rather than a "systemic breakdown [of] the whole [data collection and reporting] system." The same participant further remarked that "there could be corruption in any process…and it takes auditing to catch the corruption." Participants from both groups most often cited padding productivity as the primary motive, driving some state troopers to falsify records to secure overtime, desirable assignments, or new vehicles. As one Advisory Board member explained, officers were seeking "perks like overtime or… new patrol cars," while a police chief similarly noted that some troopers acted "deliberately, just to maximize overtime." The quantitative evaluation likewise concluded that the primary motivation was to appear more productive (Parker et al., 2025).

One Advisory Board member believed some state officials initially tried to "cover it up," which, in their view, made a transparent, independent process essential. Participants added that

the falsification appeared confined to the state police, not municipal departments. Overall, participants concluded that the data scandal does not warrant abandoning CTRP3. Instead, they conveyed that it reinforced its core mission. The episode highlighted the critical need for routine data validation, independent review to catch what one Board member called "corruption", and transparent public reporting. This process was ultimately, as another Board member put it, "beneficial in showing...the public that" the project's oversight mechanisms were working.

Structural and Capacity Barriers

Half of the participants, including police chiefs and Advisory Board members, highlighted deeper structural challenges that were significantly more difficult to address. Cost issues and unfunded mandates were at the forefront of their concerns. Chiefs described technology transitions such as e-ticketing and standardized data entry as expensive and time-consuming, especially for small agencies. As one chief put it, the change “cost a ton of money for us, for e-tickets,” and the recurring frustration was, “you’re saying this is so important, but you won’t provide us with any funding.” Participants also pointed to vendor fragmentation stemming from Connecticut’s governance model. Departments across the state’s 169 towns began on “twenty-something” incompatible systems. As one Advisory Board member put it, “Our police in Connecticut, we’ve got 169 towns, and they all feel like they’re their own little fiefdoms.” Even agencies using the same vendor sometimes ran different versions, which complicated uniform updates. At the outset, teams encountered “boxes of paper forms,” text files, and aggregate spreadsheets with “no uniform way to collect or analyze it.”

Participants acknowledged that strategic changes, such as rigorous external peer review and deliberate changes to formatting and release processes, refined the statistical methodology, built credibility, and made reports easier to understand and less adversarial. However, police chiefs in particular still voiced persistent frustrations with the accessibility and timeliness of the data. Echoing conversations and shared experience across the police command staff community, one police chief advocated for “a better tool for non-statisticians” so supervisors without data training can make practical use of the data. Another chief highlighted the management challenge posed by long delays, wishing for data visibility “within a couple of months… not a year and a half after it happened,” which would allow leadership to identify and “catch issues before they become public controversies” instead of reacting to outdated reports. Chiefs also made clear that because departments began on different software versions, even minor database format changes or system updates sometimes required custom fixes or individual solutions, which slowed implementing fixes across departments.

In addition to these technical and resource constraints, interviewees conveyed that state laws and police union contracts sometimes made it harder to collect the right data and to hold problem officers accountable. Participants cited limits on collecting certain fields and decertification processes “bound by union agreements,” which can slow accountability for “bad apples.” These capacity problems were especially acute for small departments that lacked IT staff. One chief noted that in a small agency “it’s often just me, my secretary, or my captain” handling changes. The quantitative evaluation results showed a consistent decline in disparities across agencies that engaged with CTRP3, meaning the technical limitations did not prevent measurable change, even though the smaller departments were generally more volatile in the

measures of disparity because they had less developed infrastructure and staffing capability (Parker et al., 2025)

Community Engagement Challenges

Half of the interviewees described low turnout and weak feedback loops. Weekday meetings at the legislative building were "not designed for engagement," and even well-located library sessions sometimes lacked signage and advance notice. Chiefs reported forums with "a dozen" attendees and "four actual residents" after counting staff and police. Younger drivers were rarely present, while attendees "typically…[were] older, Black and brown folks," often "50-plus." Early forums focused heavily on two-hour data presentations that left people "bored," which undercut listening. Several dynamics could derail constructive dialogue. An Advisory Board member described a session that turned into a "gripe session as opposed to a solution-based session," recommending that some conversations be taken offline because "if there's no audience, you don't get the performance." Apathy and skepticism were recurrent obstacles. People "think that when they make a complaint that nothing's going to happen," and some victims avoid speaking out because "nothing's gonna come of it." A chief added that "when it comes to doing the work… showing up… that might take some extra effort."

Even with these difficulties, participants saw engagement as essential for legitimacy and as a counter-narrative during high-profile incidents. At the same time, some chiefs were unsure whether forum input directly shaped recommendations, and some advocacy groups continued to perceive widespread profiling. The quantitative evaluation helps explain this tension. Disparities fell most in discretionary categories such as equipment violations, which means individual experiences may not align with aggregate trends in the short term (Parker et al., 2025). Interviewees suggested several practical adjustments. These include shorter visuals followed by structured listening, evening events at high schools and universities, online listening sessions, and a simple "feedback ledger" that shows which suggestions are adopted, which are not, and why.

Sustainability Barriers

Participants repeatedly flagged reliance on a small number of key individuals and the associated burnout and succession risks. Chiefs praised singular facilitation and the trust it built, then asked what would happen if a central facilitator steps back. Recruiting new Advisory Board members is difficult because the Board draws from "people in really high-level positions… with very busy and crazy schedules," which limits preparation, outreach, and peer review. Some members worried the Board had slipped into "cruise control" and needed to "roll up their sleeves." Funding constraints compound these personnel limitations. One Advisory Board member summarized the core need as "continued funding… so that the good work can continue," while a chief put the implementation grind plainly, "Money is always an issue… Who's gonna provide the training… the backfill?" Some participants also flagged shifting national politics, including efforts to roll back DEI and fluctuations in public sentiment after high-profile incidents, as headwinds for sustaining attention, funding, and momentum.

Political headwinds and institutional fragmentation further complicate sustainability. Home rule traditions can trigger defensive reactions to perceived state direction, and union contracts can slow decertification or discipline. Leaders across roles agreed that local leadership is decisive. Willing chiefs can make progress in lean contexts by normalizing data review and setting expectations, while resistant chiefs stall engagement even with resources. Complacency also surfaced. Early reports "blew up things," but later reports "lost their luster." "People are pretty complacent. They feel like, 'Oh, we did that thing. We're good.' When clearly, we're not good." To reduce dependency on individuals and renew urgency, interviewees recommended a standing cross-agency implementation group on a fixed cadence to review stop mixes, share fixes, and onboard new leaders, as well as funded staff roles that preserve relational capital and institutional memory. The quantitative analysis underscores the stakes. Most of the observed reductions came from changes in discretionary enforcement. Maintaining those improvements will require institutionalizing reforms through ongoing oversight, training, and user-friendly analytics that allow supervisors to track local patterns in real time, rather than simply waiting for the publication of annual reports (Parker et al., 2025).

Summary

Participants identified a clear set of challenges (defensiveness, technical complexity, uneven engagement) and a set of barriers (small agency capacity, vendor fragmentation, legal and union constraints, reliance on a few key individuals, and long-term funding limits). Strategic adjustments, such as pre-release dialogue with agencies, external peer review, simpler reporting, and clearer communication about data integrity and auditing, helped mitigate several challenges. Structural limits remain, especially for smaller departments and in succession planning. The quantitative evaluation found that reducing discretionary and pretextual stops did not increase crashes or reduce violent crime clearance rates (Parker et al., 2025), even though a perception gap persists among some stakeholders. The state police data scandal underscores how crucial it is to have regular validation, external reviews, and a commitment to transparency. To maintain and continue building on the successes of CTRP3, there must be stable funding, clear plans for leadership succession and burnout prevention, along with practical improvements, including a non-statistician-friendly analytics dashboard with near real-time visibility and more robust and inclusive feedback loops.

IX. Discussion

The Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project (CTRP3) highlights the promises as well as the challenges of reforming police practices by leveraging data, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and oversight strategies that build transparency and accountability. Drawing on semi-structured interviews conducted with the project's Advisory Board members and police chiefs from treated departments, the findings shed light on how legitimacy was established, what progress was made, and persistent challenges and barriers. This section of the report interprets those discoveries through the lens of procedural justice (PJ) and implementation science (IS) frameworks, specifically the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) and the Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainment (EPIS) model, while also situating them within the broader scholarly discourse surrounding police reform. Alongside the

independent quantitative assessment of CTRP3, which reported a 19 to 24% drop in traffic stops involving Black and Latino motorists, with well over three-quarters (85%) of this decline linked to fewer pretextual stops and nearly 30% reductions in traffic stops ending in arrests and warnings (Parker et al., 2025), this qualitative evaluation helps paint a more comprehensive picture of how these reductions were achieved, experienced, and sometimes contested.

Legitimacy Through Process

Participants stressed that CTRP3's legitimacy was based much less on measurable results and more on the processes that generated them. Police chiefs and Advisory Board members made repeated references to trust-building, transparency, and inclusivity as key advantages. This emphasis represents PJ, which argues that institutions gain legitimacy because people perceive their decisions are fair, transparent, and respectful, all of which are components embedded in the CTRP3's practices (Tyler, 2006). CTRP3 put these values into practice by creating inclusive processes, making reports available to the public, and framing disparities as opportunities for collaboration rather than evidence of deliberate race-based policing that supports accusations of racial profiling, prompting police to read the project as a "gotcha" strategy. Police chiefs increasingly perceived Board meetings as bona fide conversations, while Advisory Board members (tasked with representing community voice) saw the Board's visible commitment to transparency as central. In this way, the quantitative data on reduced disparities and qualitative data on legitimacy-building processes were complementary. The numbers showed improvement and the interviews explained how that legitimacy was established.

Seen through the lens of IS, these dynamics showed that legitimacy does not simply happen. It is fostered through processes or systems that encourage stakeholder input, consistent neutral decisions, respectful treatment of people, and demonstrate trustworthiness by being truthful and following through on commitments. Within CFIR’s Process domain, this reflects stakeholder engagement and regularly gathering feedback to ensure expectations are met. In EPIS terms, it aligns with the Implementation phase, where consensus-building strategies are used to sustain meaningful and long-term stakeholder buy-in. CTRP3 demonstrated that legitimacy is multi-dimensional, reducing disparities matters, but so does how those reductions are achieved.

The Paradox of Success

Progress within CTRP3 in some cases generated new forms of resistance, reflecting what might be called a success paradox. Police chiefs described shifting the focus of traffic enforcement from equipment violations to hazardous moving violations, incorporating new training practices, and developing transparency strategies within the initiative. Yet these successes frequently triggered defensiveness. When departments were “flagged" for having disparities in their traffic stop data, unions and officers tended to view it as accusatory and punitive. One Advisory Board member recalled that instead of recognizing the broader pattern, some officers wondered, “what are you saying about me?”—highlighting how some officers interpreted identified evidence of racial disparities in the data as personal accusations of racism rather than systemic patterns.

IS provides useful frameworks for making sense of the variation in responses. Within CFIR's Inner Setting domain, departmental culture and readiness for reform notably differed among departments. Some police chiefs recontextualized CTRP3 analytical results as opportunities to enhance public safety by redirecting traffic enforcement toward dangerous moving violations at crash hotspots to reduce accidents and build community trust. On the other hand, some chiefs encountered notable defensiveness, with officers viewing reporting requirements and training as threats to their professional legitimacy. Interpreted through an EPIS lens, this dynamic points to tensions that commonly arise during the Implementation phase, wherein pressures from externally imposed accountability measures conflict with characteristic features of police organizations, including resistance to external oversight and commitment to crime-control policing. The contrast between quantitative results showing reduced disparities and qualitative evidence of persistent resistance highlights how technical change typically outpaces cultural shift. This success paradox speaks to the complexity of police reform.

Structural Inequity in Implementation

Different departmental contexts created uneven reform experiences, with resource disparities shaping how CTRP3's equity goals were realized in practice. Participants frequently highlighted inequities in implementation capacity across agencies that engaged with the project. While CTRP3 established a statewide data infrastructure, larger agencies with IT staff adapted more rapidly. In contrast, smaller departments faced obstacles due to outdated systems, limited budgets, and vendor incompatibility. These structural pressures were compounded by personnel shortages and new documentation requirements, which some line officers not only felt were excessive but also posed a threat to roadside safety because such requirements extend the duration of traffic stops. These implementation barriers created a structural disadvantage, wherein departments already operating with limited resources faced additional burdens in adapting to reform requirements.

From the viewpoint of IS, these inequities reflect Outer Setting factors in the CFIR framework and EPIS model, which highlights that funding streams, vendor systems, and policy mandates determine local capacity for implementing and sustaining reforms. When those resources at the local level are not distributed equally, the evidence-based practices proposed as reforms are just as likely to perpetuate the very inequities they aim to alleviate. This pattern reflects what has been called the "inverse equity hypothesis" in the implementation literature. It implies that while interventions may, at first, help agencies with greater resource capacity for reform, it may eventually widen the gaps between departments that have the necessary resources to implement and sustain reform and those that are resource-constrained but still expected to adopt the same intervention (Baumann & Delong, 2021; Victoria et al., 2018).

In the context of CTRP3, this implies that the challenge of maintaining structural supports across local police departments with notably different capacities to meaningfully engage with the initiative and institutionalize its suggested policy and operational changes poses a threat to its long-term sustainability. When smaller departments fall behind in the reform process due to resource constraints, it creates a two-tiered system that undermines CTRP3's overarching goal of statewide equity-centered traffic enforcement. Quantitative evidence of

statewide reductions in disparities may mask this instability, as we observed that smaller agencies' struggles with reporting aggregate data can obscure meaningful differences in implementation. The technical infrastructure that has contributed to CTRP3's achievements simultaneously exposes organizational vulnerabilities that varied dramatically by agency size and municipal resources.

The power of Framing

Qualitative insights from both Advisory Board members and police chiefs indicate that language and public discourse surrounding CTRP3 arguably shaped how and the degree to which departments engaged with the intervention as much as the quantitative data. Police command staff (and union representatives, as noted by participants) often reacted defensively to terms like racial profiling, interpreting them as accusations. Even the initiative's title, the Racial Profiling Prohibition Project, was sometimes seen as implying guilt before evidence. In contrast, when CTRP3/IMRP staff presented disparities in neutral or solution-oriented language, chiefs were more likely to agree to interact with the data and adjust. This strategic change in communication engendered a productive tension: while the solution-oriented framing of identified disparities in the data fostered departmental engagement, it also downplayed the lived experiences of community members who had been subjected to discriminatory police practices on the roadways. This underscores the delicate balance of acknowledging the real harm community members have experienced with the sensitivity of police while creating space for collaborative problem-solving to address racial disparities created by police traffic enforcement decisions.

The lesson here for CTRP3 is not to marginalize inequities in language or communication but to delicately present them in ways that make community members feel heard while not making police feel they are being accused of deliberately engaging in racial profiling. By framing disparities as opportunities for improvement rather than accusations of misconduct, the initiative created space for dialogue and cooperative problem-solving. However, this strategic framing required careful navigation to ensure that strategic communication did not inadvertently minimize the real impacts of racial disparities on affected communities. In combination with quantitative findings that disparities declined overall, particularly in discretionary categories, this suggests that how results are communicated is as critical as the results themselves.

Community Engagement as Imperative and Challenge

A prominent theme that emerged in the qualitative data is the important role of community engagement in helping CTRP3 gain legitimacy. However, Advisory Board members and police chiefs also recognized insufficient community engagement as one of the project's most persistent challenges. While public forums were designed to be open to everyone, attendance often fell short and generally did not reflect the diversity of motorists most directly impacted by traffic stop disparities. Participants often pointed to the lack of young people, justice-impacted individuals, and non-English speakers, raising concerns that forum accessibility alone was not enough to ensure the comprehensive and meaningful inclusion of these populations' voices.

Young people's absence from CTRP3 community forums is a notable limitation since they are one of the sectors of the driver population that are disproportionately stopped on the roadway. Specifically, national data indicate that motorists in their 20s are most likely to be pulled over, while those in older age categories are significantly less likely to be stopped (Pierson et al., 2020). Furthermore, studies like Epp et al. (2014) show that, compared to their counterparts, young males of color more often face aggressive enforcement, reflected in higher rates of searches and citations. Connecticut's statewide CTRP3 analysis (Barone et al., 2019) also finds that Black and Hispanic motorists are searched at higher rates and that officers conducting these searches of these groups are less likely to discover contraband than searches of white drivers, indicating more aggressive enforcement thresholds for motorists of color, even though the public reports do not yet isolate these patterns specifically for younger drivers. Their absence from these public discussions means that the project has not meaningfully captured and incorporated the valuable views of those most affected by traffic stop practices.

Procedural justice research underscores that legitimacy grows when residents feel heard and when their input shapes decisions (Goldsmith, 2005). Several participants, including Board members and police chiefs, noted that even though CTRP3 created opportunities for dialogue, the "feedback loop" was weak, which limited the incorporation and impact of community insights on policy.

Even with limited engagement, trust was sustained. Chiefs reported that being able to point to a record of public dialogue helped counter narratives of inaction after high-profile incidents. This resulted in what might be called "performative legitimacy," where the existence of engagement opportunities provided symbolic value even when substantive influence remained limited (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012). Although this helped CTRP3 weather public criticism, it also highlighted the gap between procedural access and meaningful participation that could undermine long-term credibility if left unaddressed. Moving forward, participants stressed the importance of using targeted strategies to foster substantive legitimacy.

Recommendations offered included partnering with schools and universities to engage younger motorists, using digital platforms like "TikTok" to expand CTRP3's reach, as well as organizing community forums in local venues. As one participant put it, "you have to go where the people are... and hear more and speak less." From an IS perspective, and specifically within CFIR, these gaps reflect Outer Setting factors (i.e., community needs and resources) and Process domain (i.e., feedback mechanisms). From an EPIS lens, these shortcomings indicate that strategies to connect community members with police personnel, CTRP3/IMRP staff, and other important stakeholders remain underdeveloped.

Sustainability Beyond Champions

The heavy reliance on individual champions emerged as a major challenge within CTRP3 trajectory. While virtually all participants credited key leaders like Ken Barone with facilitating the multi-stakeholder collaborative relationships essential to advancing the project, this dependency marks a critical vulnerability in the project. As one participant stated, "If [Ken] burns out, who's going to keep that trust-building effort going?" This dilemma reflects a fundamental challenge highlighted in research on police reform, and the IS literature. This body

of work notes that while affable and charismatic leaders can mobilize reform, sustaining change requires institutionalization through embedded practices, distributed leadership, and stable resources (Chanin, 2015; Damschroder et al., 2009; Walker, 2012).

From an EPIS perspective, CTRP3 is now operating within the Sustainment stage, where the focus is transitioning from short-term outcomes to sustainability through organizational routines rather than solely individual effort (Aarons et al., 2011). However, the qualitative data shows that CTRP3's progress toward institutionalization has been uneven. Several departments have implemented practices intended to outlast leadership changes. These include the integration of electronic data collection into their computer-aided dispatch (CAD) and records management systems (RMS), ensuring that officers must input all necessary information before they can close out a stop. Other sustainable practices included performing internal audits on traffic stops and requiring new officers to review the department's racial profiling report. These reforms can be institutionalized through mechanisms like the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) and accreditation processes, creating a "backdoor way" of making them mandatory and enforceable, as explained by one Advisory Board member. Further, policy change away from pre-textual enforcement has been more stable, supported by a legislative ban on certain consent searches.

Yet despite these promising examples of institutionalization, serious gaps remained that threaten CTRP3's long-term sustainability. Insights from interviewees indicated that there is not a formal succession planning, and inconsistent onboarding plan for new Board members, with one participant noting "they had not been told explicitly what [their] role was" after joining. No participants identified routine planning for making sure lessons learned are written down and passed on or preparing the next wave of leaders. This is consistent with research that says reform efforts do not often move from being champion-dependent to system-dependent (Fixsen et al., 2005; Damschroder et al., 2009).

The long-term sustainability of CTRP3 is further challenged by resource instability, which one chief has described as an "unfunded mandate," particularly regarding the costs of technology transitions and training. This concern reflects long-standing tensions dating back to the early years of the Penn Act, which was an unfunded mandate that the responsible commission lacked the backing to execute. This ad hoc funding infrastructure, which is, in part, reliant on grants that are sensitive to political issues, poses an additional threat to the initiative's long-term sustainability. Consequently, the significant gains made (19-24% reduction in minority stops) are vulnerable. This vulnerability becomes more concerning in light of the heavy reliance on a few key project leaders whose departure could seriously endanger all the accomplishments that have been achieved.

Implementation Science Insights

CTRP3's evolution closely aligns with the stages outlined in the EPIS model, demonstrating how the CFIR framework influenced progress along the way. The move from Exploration to Preparation (2011–2012) was influenced by a series of pivotal events: the East Haven racial profiling scandal, the DOJ investigation that followed, and the election of Governor Malloy. As one Advisory Board member explained, "This was East Haven. That was really the

impetus for this reform." Together, these events created the momentum to move beyond the decade-long stagnation of the original Penn Act.

The Implementation stage (2013–2015) was marked by new technical systems for data collection and management and the release of the first annual report. Yet, early reports were experienced by police personnel as a "gotcha" moment, showing how language, combined with outside pressures such as media scrutiny and defensive leadership styles, produced resistance rather than collaboration.

The move toward Sustainment has been gradual, but important adaptations have helped. The move toward Sustainment has been gradual, but important adaptations have helped. These changes include external reviews of CTRP3's reports and pre-release discussions with agencies before reports go public. Together, these practices have fostered trust and demonstrated how the initiative can balance accountability with partnership. This adaptability stands in stark contrast to the Penn Act period (1999–2011), which was essentially a "false start." Although the law called for data collection, the absence of funding, expert staff, and collaboration led to reports that often concluded with "there's nothing to see here." This experience emphasizes a crucial lesson in implementation science, which shows that legal mandates without the necessary infrastructure to support them result in mere symbolic actions rather than meaningful change. Now in the sustainment stage, CTRP3 faces the familiar challenge of moving from reliance on a few champions to a system that can carry the work forward on its own through embedding practices in the routine operations of departments. The 19–24% reduction in minority stops demonstrates that implementation can be successful. The next test is whether those gains can be fully institutionalized across all departments regardless of size.

Even though the overall trajectory of CTRP3 is promising, the initiative’s design includes structural weaknesses that complicate consistent implementation and pose risks to long-term sustainability. As it stands, the project operates well as a statewide management and accountability mechanism. It is effective at uncovering disparities, facilitating collaboration between key high-level stakeholders, and generating policy and operational changes. Nonetheless, it is not as well developed in engaging frontline officers and residents from communities directly impacted by traffic enforcement practices that contribute to disparities. As such, the project is limited in its cultural influence within police agencies and limits its legitimacy among the civilians whose trust the initiative seeks to enhance. These shortcomings render CTRP3 a technically sound reform that, however, depends on a few key actors, is vulnerable to changes in leadership, and is unevenly implemented across jurisdictions. Tackling these design-level constraints is essential for ensuring that CTRP3’s documented progress becomes durable and broadly recognized within affected communities.

Limitations

Although this evaluation offers practical, valuable insights into the mechanisms shaping CTRP3’s overall success and sustainability, it is not free of limitations, as is the case with all studies. In this section, we highlight these limitations, which should be understood as methodological constraints and critiques of the design-level conditions surrounding the initiative, rather than as shortcomings of the individuals in charge of guiding the project or the police

officials who have taken on the duty of promoting the project within their organizations and to their peers more broadly.

Narrow Sample. The most glaring limitation is that the evaluation reflects only the perspectives of individuals on CTRP3's Advisory Board and police chiefs. These two groups play leadership roles and are intimately involved in the decision-making processes that shape how the project is structured and governed. Because our sample consists of individuals directly connected to the IMRP team, the evaluation offers a clear picture of CTRP3's governance structure but much less insight into how the initiative is experienced by actors who are more distant from this core group of stakeholders. Their voices contribute to our understanding of the initiative's implementation, successes, and challenges, but their perspectives do not capture how key players like patrol officers (those responsible for carrying out these reforms) understand the initiative or experience it on the ground. Likewise, the perspectives gathered here offer little knowledge of how people who live in, work in, attend school in, or routinely use the roadways in high-contact jurisdictions, as well as how local advocacy groups perceive and experience the initiative in practice. These gaps limit our ability to assess where patrol officers feel disconnected or left out of the reform processes, how the initiative diffuses beyond those in leadership roles, and how affected individuals and broader communities with strained police relationships experience CTRP3 locally.

Qualitative Data Constraints. Even though this qualitative evaluation builds on the earlier statewide quantitative analysis of traffic stop patterns, it does not meet the criteria of a mixed methods study, as the two components were not intentionally integrated into a shared analytic framework (see Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). We draw lightly on the quantitative results to contextualize participants' commentaries, but at its core, the methodological approach used for this evaluation remains interpretive and interview-based. As such, the insights presented here describe how police chiefs and members of CTRP3's Advisory Board interpret the reported reductions in traffic stop disparities, not empirical verification of why those reductions occurred.

Police chiefs commonly pointed to positive changes in patrol officers' decision-making, improved accountability, and increased awareness of disparities in traffic enforcement, but the evaluation's design does not allow us to assess how these reported changes unfold in day-to-day practice. This limitation is not unique to this study. It is a common constraint in perception-driven evaluations: leaders articulate reform at the organizational level, but their accounts may not fully reflect the lived experiences of frontline personnel, particularly in departments facing staffing shortages, inconsistent supervisory capacity, or operational strain. Without linking the qualitative and quantitative components analytically, we cannot determine whether the mechanisms leaders described align with measurable patterns or confirm how consistently reform is enacted on the ground.

Contextual Confounds. Finally, this evaluation cannot separate CTRP3's specific influence from the broader social and operational context of the past few years. The COVID-19 pandemic, the lasting legitimacy crisis intensified by the nationwide George Floyd protests, heightened public and media scrutiny, changes in officer proactivity, and an unprecedented staffing crisis all converge to shape traffic enforcement throughout the country, including in Connecticut. Although participants attributed the observed reductions in traffic stop disparities to CTRP3's

data-driven accountability mechanisms, the qualitative design (and the lack of integrated quantitative analysis) precludes us from distinguishing the initiative's independent effect from these socio-political developments. A future evaluation intentionally designed to mix qualitative and quantitative data would be better positioned to pinpoint the mechanisms driving these observed patterns.

Future Directions for Evaluation. Taken together, these methodological and design-level limitations highlight the need for future research that includes patrol officers and community members, incorporates additional data sources, and more deliberately links qualitative insights with quantitative metrics. This approach would yield a more comprehensive understanding of how CTRP3 operates in practice, how important external stakeholders and relevant social groups within police agencies interpret reforms, and which specific factors are most directly linked to observed reductions in disparities in traffic stops.

Conclusion

The evaluation of CTRP3 demonstrates that reform is sustained not only through technical systems but also through the processes that build legitimacy, trust, and accountability. Participants credited the initiative with strengthening data infrastructure, fostering collaboration among unlikely partners, and prompting policy and practice changes that signaled progress. Yet cultural defensiveness, uneven departmental capacity, gaps in community engagement, and concerns about sustainability underscore the challenges of embedding reform long term.

Framed through implementation science, CTRP3's trajectory reflects both the stages of EPIS and the domains of CFIR. Initial skepticism gave way to structured planning and implementation, and the current challenge lies in sustainment, including leadership succession, stable resources, and deeper community involvement. Durable reform depends on inner setting factors such as leadership, culture, and resources, and on outer setting pressures such as mandates, scrutiny, and political will. A companion quantitative evaluation shows that traffic stops of Black and Latino drivers declined by 19 to 24 percent, with about 85 percent of that reduction tied to fewer pretextual stops, along with nearly 30 percent declines in arrests and warnings, and no increase in crashes or reduction in violent-crime clearance rates (Parker et al., 2025). This qualitative study explains how those outcomes were achieved, contested, and sustained, underscoring that long-term success requires not only statistical improvements but also cultural and institutional change.

Taken together, the findings suggest that CTRP3 has become a credible and consequential model for addressing racial disparities in traffic enforcement, while also showing the ongoing work needed to sustain momentum. Its experience demonstrates that reforms endure when infrastructure is robust, ownership is shared, and equity and legitimacy remain central. These are lessons not only for Connecticut, but for jurisdictions nationwide.

X. Recommendations

To strengthen CTRP3's credibility, legitimacy, equity impact, and long-term sustainability, we offer nine recommendations. These recommendations, which complement the quantitative outcomes showing substantial declines in racial disparities across the state, are rooted in our interpretations of the insights from police chiefs and Advisory Board members as well as their explicit suggestions. Overall, they emphasize the institutional and cultural efforts and support required to sustain and deepen these positive changes moving forward. Below, the recommendations are intentionally ordered by priority to reflect the structural needs of the initiative and the concerns consistently raised by Advisory Board members and police chiefs. This prioritization centers first on long-term sustainability of the project and institutional durability, followed by community engagement, agency-level capacity, and the integration of reform into everyday practice. While recommendations focused on public communication and narrative framing could be ranked higher, we ranked them lower because they build on the foundation established by departmental, community, and operational reforms. In short, the higher-ranking recommendations seek to cultivate the conditions that make every other reform possible.

1. Institutionalize reform infrastructure. Transition from relying so heavily on just a few key individuals' expertise, knowledge, and relationships to guide and sustain the initiative by developing formal succession plans that identify and train the next core group of the CTRP3 team before the current one transition out. Moreover, create a comprehensive implementation guide that details key processes, such as decision-making frameworks, conflict resolution strategies, protocols for pre-release consultations with departments, and best practices for running Advisory Board meetings. Furthermore, this manual should capture the institutional knowledge currently held by a few key staff members, making it accessible to future leaders. Establish formal onboarding protocols for new Advisory Board members that include written orientation materials, mentorship pairings with experienced members, and structured opportunities to understand diverse stakeholder perspectives before joining full Board discussions.

Additionally, create overlapping leadership terms and rotating co-chair structures so that knowledge transfer happens gradually rather than abruptly shifting when key staff members leave. Where possible, integrate CTRP3 practices into mandatory systems such as POST (Police Officer Standards and Training Council) requirements and accreditation standards to create permanent pathways for reform that outlast the tenure of any individual leaders. Together, these mechanisms will help transform CTRP3 from a model that relies on a few key staff members to one that is system-dependent.

2. Expand and diversify community engagement. Go beyond symbolic outreach by intentionally including voices currently excluded from CTRP3 processes. Partner with high schools, community colleges, and universities to engage younger drivers through classroom presentations, student forums, and partnerships with student government organizations, as young people are disproportionately stopped but rarely participate in public forums. Collaborate with community-based organizations that already have built trust and credibility with justice-involved

populations, immigrant communities, and non-English speakers to help craft engagement strategies, conduct listening sessions that are culturally sensitive, and provide interpretation services to eliminate language barriers. Work with faith-based leaders who can help convene community members in trusted settings and amplify CTRP3's message through existing networks. Where feasible, provide childcare, food, and transportation support to reduce barriers to community participation.

CTRP3 would benefit from offering remote or digital options for the public to engage, which might encourage more people to share their thoughts when their schedules allow. This could include, for example, online surveys, virtual listening sessions, and social media outreach efforts. Create a visible "You Said / We Did" accountability framework to track community feedback, clarify which suggestions were adopted, and explain why some recommendations were not feasible. This transparency mechanism not only closes the feedback loop but also shows that CTRP3 truly values community engagement.

3. Formalize patrol officer inclusion and patrol-level information gathering and sharing. For CTRP3 to reach its full potential, patrol officers must be meaningfully involved in the project's processes. Creating regular opportunities for patrol officers to engage with traffic stop data, share contextual, on-the-ground knowledge, and communicate constructive concerns would recognize this important group as an active contributor to the initiative rather than a distant recipient of reform. Formally involving patrol officers in the implementation process has several benefits. First, it can boost trust, receptivity to CTRP3, and compliance with operational changes. Second, it supports early identification of implementation challenges, allowing departments and CTRP3 to respond proactively to those issues. Third, it can speed up the institutionalization of practices aligned with CTRP3's broader goals. These forms of engagement can be implemented through brief roll-call discussions, focused dialogue following supervisory review of traffic-stop data, and structured conversations during in-service training. In addition, departments, with CTRP3 support, should consider short, anonymous internal surveys, engage patrol officers in future evaluations and research, and establish clear channels for communicating patrol-level feedback to supervisors and the Advisory Board.

4. Build departmental capacity. Provide tailored support for departments facing challenges and barriers (especially smaller agencies) through several mechanisms. Establish regional support hubs where clusters of neighboring departments (for example, five to 10 agencies within a geographic area) share a dedicated data analyst and information technology specialist who helps interpret CTRP3 reports and departments' own internal traffic stop data, while also building local capacity for independent analysis. Create state funded shared technical staff positions so that smaller departments can financially afford expert assistance. Moreover, develop peer-to-peer learning networks that pair chiefs from agencies that have successfully reduced disparities with those just beginning the reform process, creating opportunities for candid conversations about practical strategies and common obstacles. Additionally, provide practical data tools such as plain-language dashboards, step-by-step implementation guides, and quick-reference cards that translate statistical findings into actionable steps and help departments conduct their own ongoing monitoring. Together, these supports help agencies implement policy adjustments and maintain reforms while building their capacity for independent data analysis rather than relying solely on external expertise.

5. Embed reform in daily practice. Normalize the use of traffic stop data in routine policing so that equity-focused approaches are integrated into standard operating procedures. Achieving this can be done by integrating stop pattern reviews into roll calls, wherein sergeants spend five minutes each week summarizing and discussing recent trends, highlighting examples of quality stops, and addressing any patterns that warrant follow-up. For example, a supervisor might say, "last week we made 50 traffic stops during this shift and 30 of them were for public safety reasons like speeding in school zones. That's exactly the type of enforcement we want. However, 16 of these stops were for minor offenses like equipment violations. Let's talk about when those stops are appropriate and when they are not."

Another strategy is to include the results from CTRP3/IMRP's data analysis in training of new officers to ensure they understand early on how their traffic stop decisions contribute to departmental patterns and why equity-focused enforcement is crucial for building community trust and ensuring officer safety. Furthermore, monthly supervisory reviews of traffic stop data should be made a standard part of performance evaluations, wherein sergeants and lieutenants discuss individual officers' stop patterns. The intent behind this must be identifying when coaching, additional training, or assignment adjustments are necessary rather than disciplining officers.

Another promising approach is to create a platform that supports peer learning sessions where patrol officers from different shifts and various jurisdictions can exchange successful strategies for balancing their department's equity mission with their traffic enforcement obligations. This strategy may cultivate a collaborative culture where officers learn from each other rather than feeling defensive about outsider criticism and external oversight. Moreover, scenario-based training informed by CTRP3 data should be used to foster officer understanding of how seemingly neutral traffic enforcement practices can produce demographic disparities, potentially encouraging them to employ practical alternatives. By incorporating these practices into daily routines, departments can help CTRP3 progress from being an intervention that, for the most part, functions and understood as an external mandate into an internal commitment to an equity-centered policing reform effort.

6. Make data accessible. Produce layered products (i.e., outputs or tools generated from data analysis) tailored to different audiences, such as dashboards for officers, concise summaries for chiefs, and visual briefs for the public. For patrol officers, create one-page visual summaries that highlight their unit's stop patterns in comparison to department averages with simple indicators to show whether those trends are within expected ranges. For command staff, put together quarterly dashboards that help chiefs track stop types, demographic patterns, and individual officer trends in near real-time to enable early intervention before any disparities escalate. For the public, create interactive web-based tools that allow residents to explore their local department's data using visual graphics, plain-language explanations, and year-over-year comparisons. To the extent possible, speed up reporting timelines by streamlining data validation processes and providing preliminary quarterly snapshots to departments so that chiefs can identify and address issues proactively rather than waiting for and reacting to annual reports. Create plain-language interpretive guides that explain statistical methods, clarify what benchmarks mean, and provide context for understanding disparity measures without requiring

technical expertise. Prioritize data formats that are easy to navigate, transparent, and responsive to the needs of different groups of stakeholders.

7. Strengthen the Advisory Board. CTRP3 should further formalize the Board's role as a hub for ongoing mutual learning, constructive dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving, thereby making sure it preserves its identity as an active engine that drives meaningful reform with a clear mandate for action and accountability, not just a passive external oversight entity. Moreover, institute rotating "learning sessions" where different departments and community partners present case studies of successful reforms, discuss challenges they have encountered, and highlight lessons they have learned. For example, one session might feature command staff from an agency that successfully changed their enforcement priorities from equipment violations to moving violations, leading to reductions in disparities. Likewise, a representative from a community organization can be invited to a Board meeting to highlight a successful strategy for engaging young motorists or non-English speakers. These sessions should be structured in ways that encourage questions, critiques, and adaptation rather than simply reviewing achievements.

Develop a formal onboarding process for new members. This should include a written orientation guide that explains the history of the Board, its objectives and overarching goals, and governance practices. Incoming Board members should be paired with a mentor who is a seasoned member of the Board who serves on the subcommittee they are assigned to, with that mentor facilitating a review of key information and results from previous CTRP3 reports to bring them up to date. New members should also participate in listening sessions to help them gain an understanding of diverse stakeholder perspectives before fully engaging in Board discussions. Furthermore, strengthen existing subcommittees by refining their focus on key priorities (such as policy development, data accessibility, and community outreach and engagement) and ensure that they meet between full Board sessions to advance targeted initiatives. This would allow members to contribute their expertise in areas where it has the most impact.

An annual strategic planning meeting should also be established to allow IMRP staff and Board members the space to step back from their routine responsibilities to discuss progress, existing challenges and barriers specific to the Board, and set priorities for the following year. These discussions should prioritize succession planning and strategies for sustaining momentum. Additionally, the project can benefit from expanding the Board's composition to include civilians from underrepresented populations, those who have had unsatisfying encounters with police in Connecticut, youth advocates, and representatives from immigrant and non-English-speaking communities. This would ensure that the Board largely reflects the diversity of the state's driving public.

8. Develop a long-term evaluation of the initiative and learning agenda. It would benefit CTRP3 to establish a practical, structured plan for ongoing evaluation so that the initiative matures into a system-driven program rather than one that relies heavily on a few IMRP staff members and police chiefs from engaged departments. By instituting regular evaluation, the Advisory Board and engaged departments can identify opportunities for improvement, understand emerging challenges, and adjust their practices accordingly. This might involve department-level quarterly reviews of traffic stop data and scheduled qualitative interviews (or focus groups) with patrol officers and civilians from the communities they serve. This effort

should also include follow-up analyses to gauge progress and the use of annual short community surveys. Formalizing a plan that promotes continuous learning not only makes CTRP3 more responsiveness to departmental and local contexts but also contributes to the overall objective of institutionalizing equity-centered, data-informed policing decisions and practices.

9. Reframe the public narrative. Adjust the language and messaging surrounding the project to further emphasize its commitment to procedural fairness, professionalism, and mutual responsibility instead of focusing on terms like "racial profiling" that put police in a defensive mindset. These public communication efforts should lead with shared values (e.g., trust, fairness, public safety) that apply to all groups that are invested in the project. For instance, frame results by emphasizing the collaborative nature of the initiative using inclusive language, such as "we have reduced unnecessary stops by roughly 25%. This means fewer drivers are stopped without clear safety reasons. That is progress for everyone." Moreover, use "improvement" language rather than "compliance" language when discussing departmental engagement, such as describing agencies as "implementing targeted reforms that reduced disparities" rather than saying they "came off the problem list." Work with the Advisory Board to co-develop messaging that draws on the credibility of both law enforcement and community representatives. This collaborative approach can help with crafting communications that acknowledge the harm experienced by communities, commend agencies for measurable progress, and outline a clear direction moving forward. Through this shared approach, CTRP3 can reduce defensiveness among police while keeping equity-focused traffic enforcement central to all forms of communication and the initiative's mission.

These nine recommendations combine to provide a data-informed plan for building on CTRP3's progress to achieve sustainable reform. Maintaining this progress requires commitment to building departments' capacity for reform, leadership development, and community engagement. This will help ensure that equity in traffic enforcement is not a transitory objective but a standard feature of policing in departments across the state of Connecticut.

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