



Ohio Sunset Review Committee
Agency Questionnaire

Agency Name Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission (OOCIC)

Point of Contact Rocky W. Nelson, Executive Director

Agency's primary purpose and its various goals and objectives

The Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission (OOCIC) was created by the General Assembly in 1986 under Ohio Revised Code Section 177. The purpose of OOCIC is to provide a mechanism by which local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies can combine to effectively investigate and prosecute organized criminal enterprises impacting multiple jurisdictions. ORC 177 grants the authority for subpoena power, expanded jurisdiction for local law enforcement agencies participating in the task force, and confidentiality (177.02 (F)) required to ensure the integrity of the investigation.

The goals and objectives are to provide administrative, technical, and prosecutorial support to the task forces.

Administrative support includes funding for the purchase of contraband, information, travel, training, equipment, office space, phones, and clerical support.

Technical support is provided by furnishing equipment which includes computers, vehicles, audio/video surveillance equipment, recording devices, etc. OOCIC also provides the services of a Forensic Audio/Video Laboratory and Intelligence Analyst services.

Along with the County Prosecutor's Office and/or the U.S. Attorney's Office, OOCIC will provide experienced legal support for the task forces. OOCIC is only able to assist in the prosecution of a case upon a request by the local county prosecutor's office and/or the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Agency's past and anticipated workload, number of staff required to complete workload, and total number of staff

Task Forces:

The first OOCIC task force was formed on August 11, 1988. The Commission has authorized 192 task forces since the Commission's creation, including the 62 new task forces in the last five years.

These task forces have included operations that have investigated Illegal Gambling, Home Invasion/Homicides, Mortgage Fraud, Organized Retail Theft, Counterfeit Checks, Narcotics, Vehicle Theft, Burglary/Fencing, Package Interdiction, Bulk Cash Smuggling, and Human Trafficking. Over 299 law enforcement agencies have participated in OOCIC task forces (this does not include the number of cooperating agencies).

Task Force Statistics for 2019-2023	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Indictments/Counts	607/2,509	379/1,489	500/1,872	553/2,066	519/2,430
Arrests	772	669	975	1063	1095
Convictions	354	325	243	316	542
Search Warrants	650	927	1,266	1,333	1,281
Consent Searches	540	727	696	866	768
HT* Victims Rescued	37	103	102	151	180
HT* Victims Referred	249	216	615	747	475
HT* Tips Received	395	439	609	705	901
U.S. Currency Seized	\$6.2**	\$33.7**	\$8.4**	\$7.9**	\$6.5**
Street Value of Drugs Seized	\$45.9**	\$57.7**	\$71.9**	\$68.9**	\$65.8**

*(Human Trafficking)

** (Currency & Street Value listed as millions)

Forensic A/V Lab:

The OOCIC Forensic Audio/Video Analysts Lab has been in operation since January 2001. Cases submitted have involved high profile cases of homicide, armed robbery, sexual abuse, hit skip, and burglary. The analysts work resulted in the identification of numerous suspects through enhancements of license plates, vehicles, clothing, and/or facial identification that was not previously possible, given the quality of the original surveillance video or photos.

Statistics for 2019-2023	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
# of Cases Submitted	176	148	151	122	111
Cases from # of Counties	43	39	41	37	37
Cases from # of Agencies	82	68	70	64	62

Agency's past and anticipated workload, number of staff required to complete workload, and total number of staff (continued)

Organized Crime Intelligence Analyst Activity:

The Organized Crime Intelligence Analyst assists task forces as well as federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies with compiling reports of raid books, phone toll databases, entity searches, association/link charts, time-lines/flow charts, etc. This service is in high demand as it provides the task forces intelligence necessary to further their investigations, a service most agencies do not have the manpower to perform.

Analyst Activity for 2019-2023	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Phone Tolls (subscribers)	34,293	44,417	5,931	21,876	27,511
Phone Calls entered	1,807,031	2,607,578	503,602	482,296	1,403,502
Searches/Databases/Charts	2,654	1,067	946	3,240	5,440

OOCIC Staffing:

In 2015, OOCIC had 15 staff members including the Executive Director. Budget restraints over the past few years have resulted in combining staff responsibilities and now we currently have 12 positions. We have become more efficient, even with our increased workload. As more agencies discover the value of OOCIC, more staff may be necessary.

OOCIC's current staff is 9 (includes Executive Director) plus 3 vacancies:

- Executive Director
- Deputy Director
- Chief Legal Counsel
- Operations Coordinator
- Commission Investigator (one position currently vacant)
- 3 Forensic Audio/Video Analyst (one position currently vacant)
- 2 Organized Crime Intelligence Analysts (one position currently vacant)
- OOCIC/Task Force Equipment Specialist
- Task Force Support Specialist

Agency's past and anticipated budgets and its sources of funding

OOCIC was not directly funded by the legislature between the years FY 2015 – FY 2019. Funding for the operation of the Commission and support staff was included in the budge of the Ohio Attorney General (Fund 4190 under the State Special Revenue Fund). GFR was not a funding source for OOCIC between FY 2015 – FY 2019.

OOCIC's budget funds the Executive Director and support staff's salaries, OOCIC facility and operational costs, task force officers' worker's compensation, OOCIC's Forensic Audio/Video lab equipment, office/computer equipment, and task force operational costs. Task force operational costs includes the funding for the purchase of contraband, information, travel, training, surveillance and investigative equipment, office space, vehicles, utilities, phones, supplies, etc.

OOCIC's annual expenditures for OOCIC operations have varied, according to the number of active task forces, type of task forces, and open staff vacancies. A breakdown of OOCIC's expenditures for fiscal years 2019 – 2023 are listed below:

Fund 4190

Year	FY Expenditures	Notes
2019	\$1,849,456.00	Budget constraints in place
2020	\$1,921,282.00	
2021	\$1,616,413.00	
2022	\$1,812,055.00	
2023	\$1,810,326.00	

The Commission did not provide any funding for law enforcement agency payroll costs, but the Commission did cover worker's compensation for law enforcement officers assigned to the task forces as required by statute under ORC 177.

Fund GRF (General Revenue Fund) Established in HB166 (Operating Budget)General Assembly 133 Attorney General's Budget AGOCD3 Narcotic Task Forces (Section 221.20) Earmarks up to \$500,0000 in each fiscal year from GR appropriation item 055321, Operating Expenses, to be used by the Attorney General to support narcotics task forces to be funded by the Attorney General.

Year	FY Expenditures	Notes
2019	\$ 48,727.00	\$50,000 received funding for Law Enforcement Initiative
2020	\$499,818.00	GRF Funding \$500,000 each year to support narcotic task forces
2021	\$410,282.00	GRF Funding \$ 500,000 each year to support narcotic task forces
2022	\$499,996.00	GRF Funding \$ 500,000 each year to support narcotic task forces
2023	\$499,400.00	GRF Funding \$ 500,000 each year to support narcotic task forces

Agency's past and anticipated budgets and its sources of funding (Continued)

**Recovery Ohio Funds through Department of Public Safety
 DPSCD25 Recovery Ohio Law Enforcement (Section 373.20) Established in HB 166 (Operating Budget)
 By General Assembly 133**

Permits up to \$3,400,000 of GRF appropriation item 761403, Recovery Ohio Law Enforcement, in each fiscal year which may be used by the Office of Criminal Justice Services to provide funding to local law enforcement agencies to create the narcotics task forces that focus on cartel trafficking interdictions. These interdiction task forces are to be designated Ohio Organized Crime task forces subject to approval and supervision of the Commission.

HB 33 135th General Assembly continued the funding under the GRF ALI 761403, Recovery Ohio Law Enforcement for FY 2024 and FY 2025. This line item supports the operating expenses of the State of Ohio Law Enforcement Virtual Exchange (SOLVE), which is a statewide data-sharing platform for Ohio's drug task forces and law enforcement agencies. The appropriation is earmarked in each fiscal year for three specified purposes' narcotics task forces, law enforcement partnerships, and records management/data intelligence system. Funds are earmarked for Narcotics Task Forces in the Annual "Up To" amount of \$3,400,000.

This funding has been used to support Ohio Organized Crime Major Drug Interdiction Task forces that focus on cartel trafficking interdictions. The funds are distributed through the Office of Criminal Justice for task forces approved and supervised by OOCIC. This funding is used to reimburse the salaries and PERS to local law enforcement agencies who have personnel on these task forces, OOCIC's operational expenses of these task forces and equipment. The amounts listed below reflect the funding allocations for each year:

Year	Total Allocation	Amount designated to reimburse local law enforcement for salaries & PERS	Amount designated for OOCIC task force operations
2019	\$2,100,000 **	\$1,281,766.84 supports 9 law enforcement agencies	\$824,199.67
2020	\$2,675,000 **	\$1,741,082.35 supports 13 law enforcement agencies	\$933,917.65
2021	\$3,230,000 ***	\$2,243,443.15 supports 16 law enforcement agencies	\$986,556.85
2022	\$3,315,000***	\$2,397,978.06 supports 16 law enforcement agencies	\$917,021.94
2023	\$3,315,000***	\$2,463,558.65 supports 18 law enforcement agencies	\$841,441,35

** Amount reduced due to OBM budgetary cuts during COVID-19 pandemic

*** Amount allocated after OCJS Administration costs subtracted

**Federal Grant Funding through Department of Justice
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Anti-Heroin Task Force Program**

OOCIC applied for federal grant funding for five of OOCIC's drug interdiction task forces and was awarded \$1,500,000 on October 2019 for a two-year period. This funding was for task force officer's overtime and equipment for drug task forces investigating illicit activities related to the distribution of heroin, fentanyl, carfentanil, or unlawful distribution of prescription opioids. A grant extension was approved, and this grant funding ended as of September 30, 2022.

OOCIC applied for additional grant funding through the COPS Anti-Heroin Task Force Program for funding for nine of OOCIC's drug interdiction task forces for a period of three years. OOCIC received a grant award in the amount of \$ 3,658,997.50. This grant is slated to expire on June 30, 2024, and OOCIC has applied for a one-year extension until June 30, 2025. This extension request was submitted on May 9, 2024, and we are waiting to hear if the grant extension has been granted. Equipment availability delays and scheduling of training has caused delays in completing the grant activities.

OOCIC's FY 2024 Budget Appropriations are from a variety of sources as illustrated below (not including holding accounts or pass-thru funds):

Attorney General Funds allocated to OOCIC (Fund 4190)	\$1,905,837
GRF Operating Expenses (explained on page 4 of this questionnaire)	\$ 500,000
STL0 Organized Crime Law Enforcement Trust Fund **	<u>\$ 100,000</u>
	\$2,505,837

** Organized Crime Law Enforcement Trust Fund was established 4/16/2017 by the 131st General Assembly by ORC 177.05. This fund was created for the purpose of receiving reimbursement of expenses OOCIC incurred in the investigation of criminal activity and forfeitures of a task force. Funds are to be used to purchase, replace, update, or maintain equipment used by task forces or local law enforcement agencies.

NOTE: The 133rd General Assembly, HB 166 eff 10/17/2019 amended ORC 177.02 to allow the Commission to reimburse a political subdivision any costs associated with salary and benefits through the Organized Crime Commission Fund (R042) in ORC 177.011. To date, no funding has been allocated since the amendment of this statute.

Number of members of its governing board or other governing entity and their compensation, if any

OOCIC is composed of seven members. The attorney general, by statute is the chair of the Commission.

The statute requires the other six members to be two county sheriffs, two county prosecutors, and two chiefs of police who are appointed by the governor and who serve for three-year terms. No more than four shall be members of the same political party.

The members of the Commission serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties.

Current Ohio Organized Crime Investigation Commission members:

		Term Expiration
Dave Yost (R)	Ohio Attorney General, Chairperson	
Victor Viglucci (D)	Portage County Prosecuting Attorney	09-03-2024
Christopher Protsman (I)	Kettering Police Chief	09-03-2024
Malcum J. Patton (R)	Union County Sheriff	09-03-2025 *
Vacant Police Chief's seat	to be appointed by the Governor	09-03-2025
Judy C. Wolford (R)	Pickaway County Prosecuting Attorney	09-03-2026 *
Vacant Sheriff's seat	to be appointed by the Governor	09-03-2026

*Seats will be vacant as of January 6, 2025, due to 2024 Primary results

The Commission appoint as Executive Director to manage OOCIC's day to day operations, support staff, and approved/established task forces.

The Executive Director and all employees of the Commission are members of the unclassified service as defined in Section 124.11 of the Ohio Revised Code.

Pending legislation affiliated with Ohio Organized Crime Investigation Commission:

There are Organized Retail Crime Bills currently being reviewed by both the House and the Senate (HB 366 and SB 223 – Fight Organized Retail Crime and Empower Law Enforcement (FORCE) Act).

These Bills, if enacted, would establish the Organized Retail Theft Task Force within the Organized Crime Investigations Commission, to investigate retail theft activity and any complaint received involving retail theft.

In addition to the Organized Retail Theft Task Force creation, the proposed Bills would also allow the Organized Crime Investigations Commission to establish additional task forces related to retail theft investigations, if needed.

The proposed Bills would also increase the fee for a sales tax vendor license from \$25 to \$50 and directs that additional money to be used by the Organized Crime Investigations Commission exclusively to support the operations of the Organized Retail Theft Task Force, minus 5% which may be used for certain expenses of the Organized Retail Theft Advisory Council.

Either of the Bills, as proposed, would appropriate \$1,500,000 in FY 2024 to the Organized Crime Commission Fund to support the operations of the Organized Retail Theft Task Force.

Additional notes:

The Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission (OOCIC) plays an important role in combating organized criminal groups that prey on Ohio citizens. OOCIC provides a mechanism for local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to collaborate as a task force to combat organized criminal activity. These task forces, led by local law enforcement, are formed when no single agency has the resources necessary to effectively investigate a criminal organization often operating in multiple jurisdictions. OOCIC, by statute, provides task forces expanded jurisdiction and subpoena power.

As criminal enterprises adopt new concepts and technologies to further their criminal activities, law enforcement will have to meet the challenge by bringing our resources together. OOCIC has the authority and resources to bring together law enforcement agencies to combat criminal operations in an efficient and effective manner.

In the past five years, the Ohio Organized Crime Investigation Commission has assisted local law enforcement agencies with numerous challenges. The Commission has approved task forces to investigate criminal activity such as human trafficking, cartel related drug trafficking, public corruption, homicides, etc. As we continue to battle corrupt activity in the State, the Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission's existence remains relevant in assisting local law enforcement. As you can see from the task force statistics on page 2, OOCIC task forces strive to make an impact on criminal activity in the State of Ohio.

For the reasons stated above, OOCIC would recommend legislative changes be considered to exempt OOCIC from the requirements of Sunset Review.

Respectfully submitted,



Rocky W. Nelson, Executive Director
Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission