

**Tier 2 Pilot Grant Application: Establishing Proof-of-Concept
Winter 2025 Cover Sheet**

Project Title	How does the 'Stay Out of Drug Areas/Stay Out of Areas of Prostitution' policy affect policing and the policed?
Budget Request from Initiative	\$65,000
Budget Match (if applicable)	\$17,500
Total Project Budget	\$82.500 (\$83,500 with CSDE Match)

Applicant Information

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Abstract

Seattle City Council recently passed laws (Stay Out of Drug Areas/Stay Out of Areas of Prostitution, or SODA/SOAP) to block people who use drugs from any of 6 specified “SODA zones” and block people who engage in sex work from one “SOAP zone”. We propose to interview people affected by the law, not only people whose access to parts of the city might be barred, but also first responders experienced with responding to overdoses who will enforce the law and merchants whose customers might prefer more orderly streets. We will complement these interviews by studying change in where first responders were dispatched in response to outdoor overdoses before and after SODA/SOAP.

Tier 2 Research Plan

Project Aims

The City of Seattle recently passed legislation (Stay Out of Drug Areas/Stay Out of Areas of Prostitution, or SODA/SOAP) that allows judges to grant orders that bar people who use drugs from entering any of 6 specified “SODA zones” and bar people who engage in sex work from one “SOAP zone” (Figure 1). These zones were selected owing to their associations with drug use and sex work but also include social services offering supporting people engaged in these activities. For example, the S.H.E. clinic that offers essential health services to people who do sex work, is co-housed within the Aurora Commons in the SOAP zone.

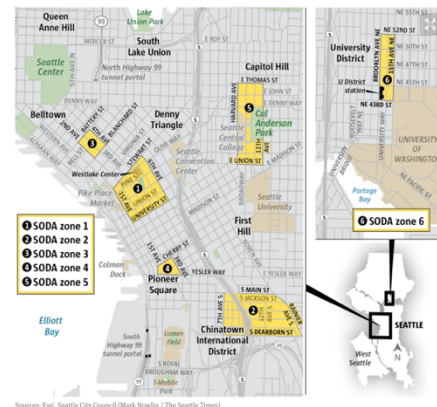


Figure 1: Map showing SODA zones

Credit: The Seattle Times

Our team, drawing from the Departments of Epidemiology and Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences proposes to not only qualitatively study community perceptions of the law and but also quantify change in where overdoses occurred before and after SODA/SOAP. We will build connections with community partners serving people affected by SODA/SOAP and gather preliminary data for future research proposals. Specifically, we will:

- Aim 1: Use **semi-structured interviews** to assess perceived impacts of the SODA/SOAP policy from affected community members, including police, EMS responders, business owners, people who use drugs, and people who engage in sex work [and people in the City Attorney’s office]. We hypothesize that community member perceptions will focus on trust and fear for loss of access to needed resources, whereas the business community and first responders will focus on frustrations about persistence of outdoor drug use and sex work.
- Aim 2: Leverage **administrative data** from Seattle Police Department and Seattle Fire Department/Medic One to assess the geography of emergency dispatch calls for overdose before and after SODA/SOAP. We hypothesize that outdoor overdose calls will be most prevalent in the SODA/SOAP zones and will shift modestly from SODA/SOAP zones to other parts of the city after enforcement began.

Background & Significance/Problem to be Addressed

The enactment of SODA/SOAP was controversial. Critics raised concerns that people who use drugs and people who do sex work would be denied access to essential services that are located within the SODA/SOAP zones. Meanwhile, supporters indicated that presence of outdoor sex work and outdoor drug use is a public safety hazard that has not been satisfactorily addressed by more conventional policing. Preliminary conversations suggest nobody is happy with SODA/SOAP -- business leaders do not like SODA/SOAP but demand some novel solution, and social service providers suggest SODA/SOAP will bring aggressive policing that may undo norms surrounding harm reduction. In this context, it is vital to gather evidence not only of what affected individuals would prefer, but also how the policy is working to prevent or move overdose.

Plan/Design/Methods

Aim 1: Qualitative Interviews.

Data collection: Research team members will conduct approximately 40-45 semi-structured interviews lasting 30-45 minutes with community members identified by purposive sampling. Specifically, we will recruit people who use drugs and people who engage in sex work from Aurora commons, members of the Pioneer Square and Capitol Hill business communities identified through consultation with Lisa Howard from the Alliance for Pioneer Square, and Gabriel Newmann from GBSA [and members of the City Attorney's office, pending CSDE matching funds], members of the Seattle Police Department and Seattle Fire Department/Medic One (see attached letters of support). We will recruit new interviewees from each group until coded interviews reach thematic saturation, anticipating we will achieve 10-12 interviews for each group. Interviewees will receive \$TBD incentives. Following a suggestion from Lorie Ann Larson at Aurora Commons, we will offer a higher incentive (\$TBD) for interviews conducted with people who do sex work owing to the traumatic aspects of reliving their on-the-street experiences.

Data analysis: All interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed and de-identified by GoTranscript, a third-party transcription service, and uploaded into NVivo12 qualitative analysis software. Once data has been transcribed, Dr. Owens and the GSRA will lead the qualitative analysis. A start-list iterative coding process will be conducted, based on interview inquiry items. This analysis may confirm policy impacts previously identified (deductive) and/or determine additional impacts and potential indicators to be incorporated (inductive, based on grounded theory), as well as provide social context to better understand SODA/SOAP. The analytic team will employ transcript memoing to identify emergent themes, develop a draft coding scheme, test the initial coding scheme on an identical set of transcripts, assess inter-coder reliability, and then discuss and develop consensus on a final coding scheme to be used by coders in real-time until thematic saturation is reached. This process, though iterative and time-intensive, ensures that we follow qualitative best practices and provides consistency in coding.

Aim 2: Spatial analysis of overdose impacts

Data collection: Our spatial analysis will use administrative data on emergency response activations the Seattle Fire Department's EMS database and the Seattle Police Department's officer dispatch database from 2021-2025. We select 4 years to account for seasonal variation and pre-intervention trends.

Data analysis: Each dispatch in both databases has an incident latitude and longitude and a code indicating its purpose. We will work with teams at Seattle & King County Medic One and at SPD (see attached letters) to identify all probable overdose calls (e.g. for unresponsive person, calls for which naloxone was dispensed, etc.). We will then develop a shapefile describing the SODA/SOAP zone boundaries and conduct spatial merge using the R 'sf' package to classify each incident as inside a SODA/SOAP zone, just outside (within 100m of) a SODA/SOAP zone, and in the rest of the city. Depending on observed trends, we will consider alternative definitions for just outside.

We will analyze these data to explore changes in overdose geography across the city after implementation. Specifically, we will consider overdose incidence within and outside SODA/SOAP zones for each of three time periods: before SODA/SOAP passed, between the time it passed and enforcement, and after enforcement. Our primary analysis will use a difference-in-differences model to estimate overdoses prevented within the SODA/SOAP zone,

If time allows, we will explore applying an spatial augmented synthetic control analysis. We have proposed this analytic plan in our Arnold Ventures letter of intent (see below), and a future funding application for Arnold Ventures funding be stronger if we have evidence of its success.

Tier 2 Evaluation Plan

Measures of success

We anticipate three research products resulting from this work:

- 1) A 2-page (front and back of one sheet) informational brief describing our primary findings, which we will share with all community collaborators. We will also send this to Seattle City Council members and make it publicly available for any community members broadly interested in our project
- 2) An academic manuscript describing our qualitative assessment of perceptions of the SODA/SOAP policy by affected community members
- 3) An academic manuscript describing the changes in overdose incidence and geography before and after SODA/SOAP. This manuscript will have a more causal lens if we feel the control data are strong enough to support it (see note on exploratory augmented synthetic control analysis)

We will consider our project successful if we develop these research products and enough connections with SODA/SOAP stakeholders within the city that the city views our team as the academic experts to consult during ongoing evaluation and consideration of SODA/SOAP.

Subsequent funding

When we have collected preliminary data through this project, we anticipate developing three grant proposals to different funders:

- 1) Arnold Ventures hosts a rolling submission call for causal research on community safety in the criminal justice system (<https://assets.arnoldventures.org/uploads/Causal-Research-on-Community-Safety-in-Criminal-Justice-System.pdf>). In Fall 2024, we submitted a letter of intent to this call and Arnold responded asking for a full proposal. We chose to defer the full proposal until we have more preliminary data on SODA/SOAP, but we anticipate developing one in Fall 2025/Winter 2026 leveraging our preliminary work here.
- 2) Before removing all funding priorities from their website in January 2025, the National Institute of Justice's 2025 funding opportunities included *Research and Evaluation of Policing Practices*. Assuming such a funding opportunity becomes available again, we anticipate proposing using the insights we have gained from Aim 1 about community policing perceptions to extend the analytic approach from Aim 2 beyond overdose to policing-related outcomes, including dispatch for drug-related crimes, assaults, and officer use of force.
- 3) We will also draw on our Aim 1 findings and experiences working with first responders and community groups to consider interventions that can help marginalized community members affected by SODA/SOAP better navigate a system in which they need to access services housed within SODA/SOAP zones. We anticipate submitting an NIH R34 Planning Grant to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) in Summer 2026

Finally, through our connections with the city, we have been told the City Auditor anticipates evaluating SODA/SOAP in 2026 and are expected to look for academic partners. Co-PI Mandy Owen is already collaborating with the City of Seattle to help evaluate a related policy regarding policing outdoor drug use. We anticipate proposing to be the (funded) academic partner for the SODA/SOAP evaluation.

Project Timeline

June - July	IRB, prepare interview guide, plan interview dates, contact EMS data team
August-September	Launch interviews, extract EMS and police data
November-January	Complete interviews, data cleaning
February-April	Interview coding, data analysis
May-June	Public-facing result sheet, draft academic manuscripts

Biographies

Please include a brief biography for each investigator listed on the cover sheet of this application that highlights relevant experience in terms of the work proposed. Please use the biographies to illustrate how each investigator's experience will contribute to the overall collaborative effort. Limit of 250 words per investigator.

Tier 2 Project Budget (add additional pages if funding is matched by more than three entities)

	Requested from Initiative	Funding Match by: <i>Epidemiology</i>	Funding Match by: <i>Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences</i>	Funding Match by: <i>School of Public Health</i>
Salaries				
Faculty				
Staff				
Student				
Benefits Fringe Benefits Based on Payroll Load Rate In Effect				
Supplies and Materials Supplies, Equipment Under \$2,000, etc.				
Equipment Equipment Over \$2,000				
Travel Per Diem Lodging/Meals/Expenses, Air Fare, Mileage, Car Rental				
Tuition For graduate students				
Other				
Total Direct Costs	\$65,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$7,500

Budget Justification

Budget justification is TBD, but for CSDE review purposes we've expecting about \$250/interview: \$50 incentive, \$50 for transcription, 2-3 hours of research staff time. Accordingly, 4 interviews with City Attorney's office = \$1000

Main budget drivers:

Steve FTE

Mandy FTE

25% FTE RA for 3 quarters

Incentives for interviews

Transcription costs

Data access for SFD/Medic One (SPD data is free)

Some \$ for open access publication?