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Dollars & Sense | AN EVIDENCE-INFORMED ANALYSIS OF AUSTIN CRIME AND POLICING DATA

03 MAY 2018 | Paulette Blanc, Anup Pandey, Yasmine Smith

WHAT IS 'MEASURE©'?

MEASURE© is an Austin-based, not-for-profit public education and research organization which seeks to improve community agency functionality and ability to address community needs through groundbreaking research and advocacy. Founded in 2015 by President, Jameila "Meme" Styles, we've established a data driven culture embedded with our motto "Numbers You Can Trust." Our mission is to bridge divisions through research and public education in active partnership with local communities to address complex social problems.

SUMMARY

This brief will provide an evidence-informed analysis of data relevant to the proposed increase to the police budget based on the assumption that an increase in staffing will lead to a safer Austin[1]. In providing this analysis, MEASURE will compare the City of Austin and peer cities across the U.S. to assess funding allocated by each to their individual police departments, the number of sworn police officers, and crime rates for each city.

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[1] http://www.austincrime.org/publicsafetyfirst/

DISCUSSION

On December 13, 2017 more than 250 people registered to speak on the latest proposed collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between the City of Austin (City) and the Austin Police Association (APA).[2] Though the APA and its associates urged council to approve the CBA, a multitude of community groups banded together in strong opposition. Just before midnight the City council announced the CBA would not be signed.[3] With this rejection of the contract, the council requested another contract be drafted and provided by March of 2018.[4] Within the week, the APA informed the City that they would not be returning to the negotiating table. One side of this debate asserts the CBA doesn't currently have a level of accountability that would justify the increase in budget. Another faction rejects these sentiments, arguing that in order to ensure the safety of Austin's streets an increase in the police budget is necessary[5]. *Dollars and Sense* will analyze the practicability and necessity of the proposed increase in budget articulated in the latest City/APA collective bargaining agreement in order to facilitate a fair and peaceful agreement. MEASURE bases the analysis of this issue in a comparison of Austin to other cities, their allocated monies to individual police departments, rates of crime, and number of sworn police officers. It is MEASURE's position that the peaceful, respectful, trusted and organized policing of Austin relies on a collective bargaining agreement that is both fair and practical for the parties involved and all impacted stakeholders. With MEASURE's analysis on the fiscal data behind providing accountable and

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[2] Wilson, M. (2017, December 20). Austin police union won't continue contract talks with city for now. Retrieved May 2, 2018, from https://www.mystatesman.com/news/local/austin-police-union-won-continue-contract-talks-with-city-for-now/41P7Zn8FzTt3o9bstZoyAI/

[3] Freer, E. (2018, February 27). Public safety in focus as Austin Police Department contract dispute continues. Retrieved May 1, 2018, from https://communityimpact.com/austin/editors-pick/2018/02/27/public-safety-focus-austin-police-department-contract-dispute-continues/
[4] Freer, E. (2018, January 29). One month after contract expires, Austin Police Association announces return to negotiating table. Retrieved May 1, 2018, from https://communityimpact.com/austin/central-austin/employment/2018/01/29/one-month-after-contract-expires-austin-police-association-announces-return-to-negotiating-table/
[5] http://www.austincrime.org/publicsafetyfirst/

supported policing, the parties can have more insight for creating data-driven
solutions.

DATA

I.   Comparison of cities in relation to allocation of monies from overall budget for policing and how these budgets correlate with crime respectively.
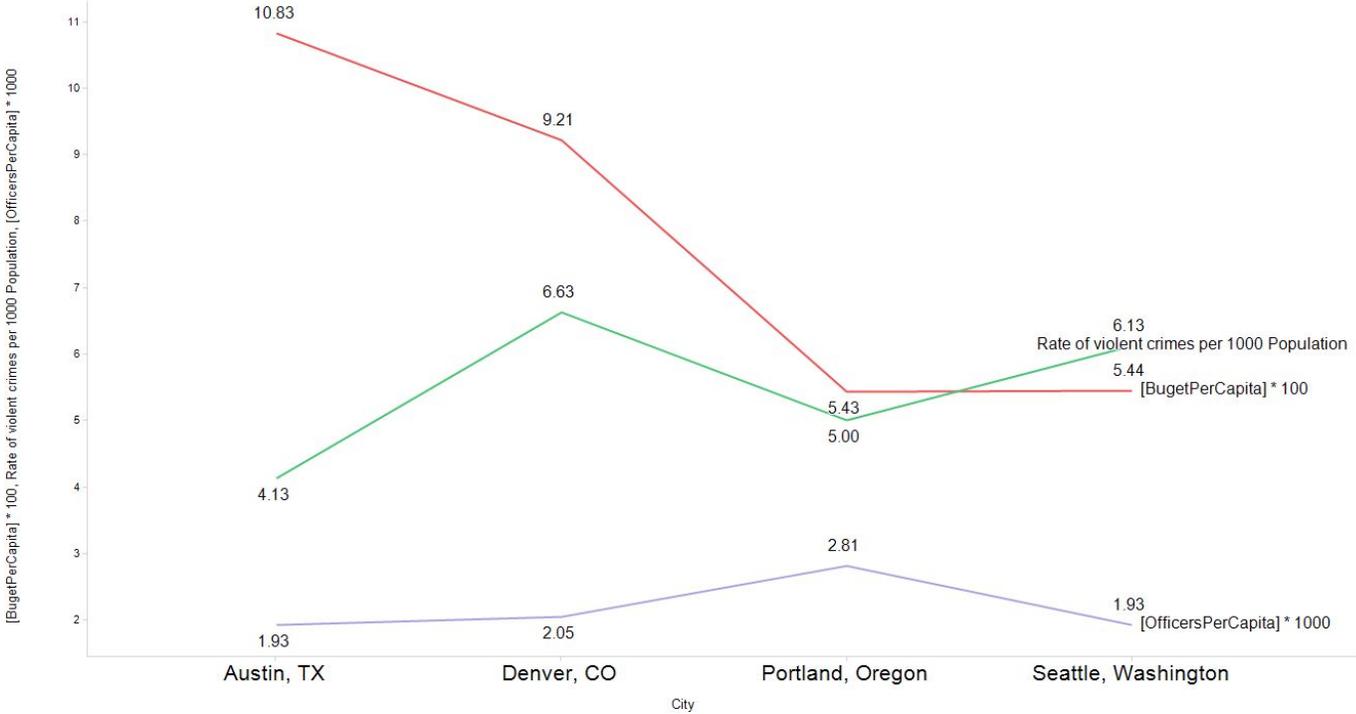

Figure 1. Comparison of Police Budget, Violent Crime Rate, and Number of
Officers per Capita by City[6] Sources: City of Austin[7], City of Denver[8], City of
Portland[9], City of Seattle[10], FBI, Uniform Crime Reports[11]

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[6] Budget per capita unit is US dollar (USD) per citizen
[7] City of Austin, Texas. (n.d.). City of Austin, TX 2017-18 Approved Budget.
Retrieved May 1, 2018, from
https://assets.austintexas.gov/budget/17-18/downloads/volume_1.pdf
[8] City of Denver, Colorado. (n.d.). Mayor's 2018 Budget. Retrieved from
https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/344/documents/Budget/2
018/BudgetBook/Document_BudgetBookVolume1_2018.pdf
[9] City of Portland, Oregon. (n.d.). City Budget Office. Retrieved May 1, 2018,
from https://www.portlandoregon.gov/cbo/60827
[10] City of Seattle, Washington. (n.d.). CITY OF Seattle, Washington 2018
Proposed Budget. Retrieved May 1, 2018, from
http://www.seattle.gov/financedepartment/18proposedbudget/documents/2018Propos
edBudgetBook.pdf
[11] Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2017, September 07). Table 4. Retrieved
May 1, 2018, from
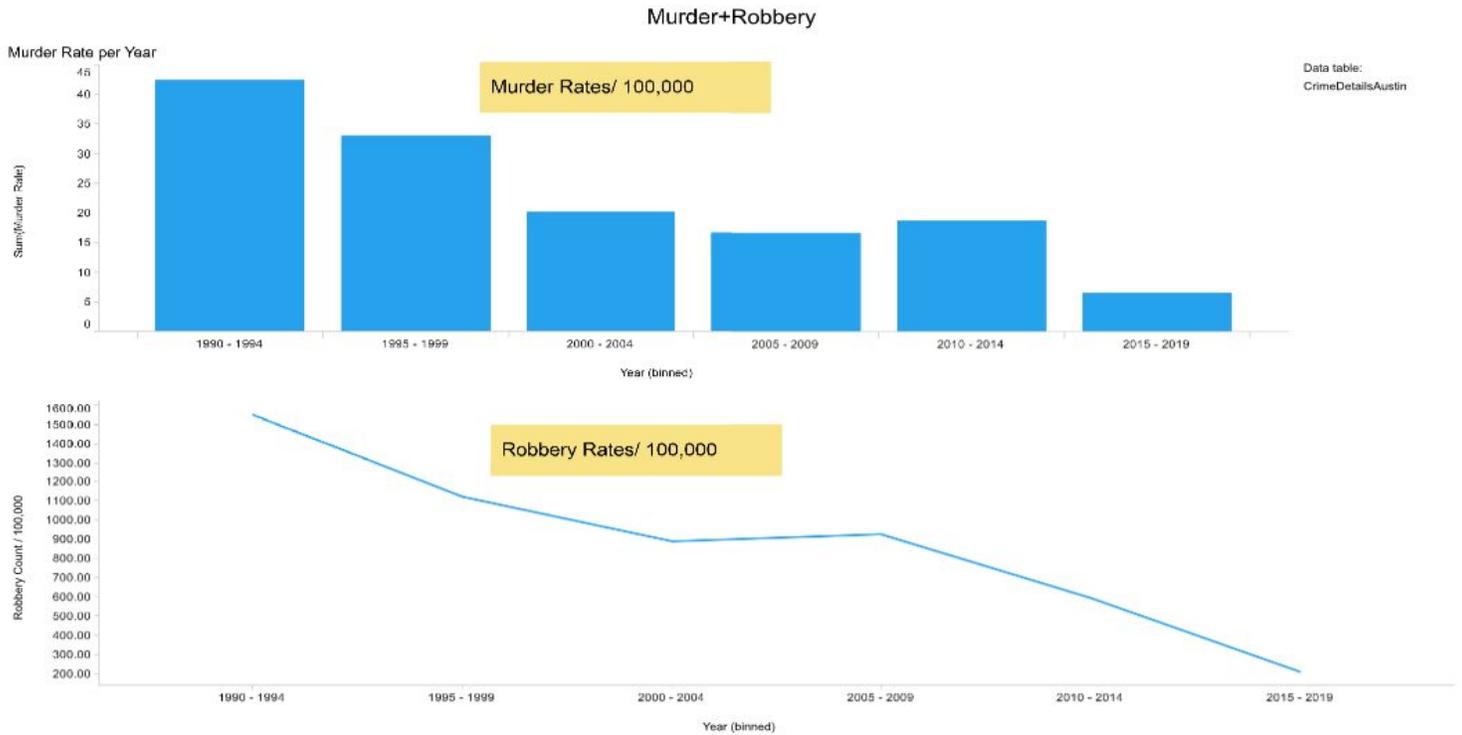
II. Crime in Austin Area

Figure 2. Austin, Texas Murder and Robbery Rates from 1990–2016

Sources: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports[12], prepared by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data & Measure Austin

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https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/topic-pages/tables/table-4

[12] Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2017, August 25). Violent Crime. Retrieved May 2, 2018, from https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/topic-pages/violent-crime

Figure 3. Austin, Texas Rape Rates from 1990-2016

Sources: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports[13], prepared by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data & Measure Austin

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[13] Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2017, August 25). Violent Crime. Retrieved May 2, 2018, from https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/topic-pages/violent-crime
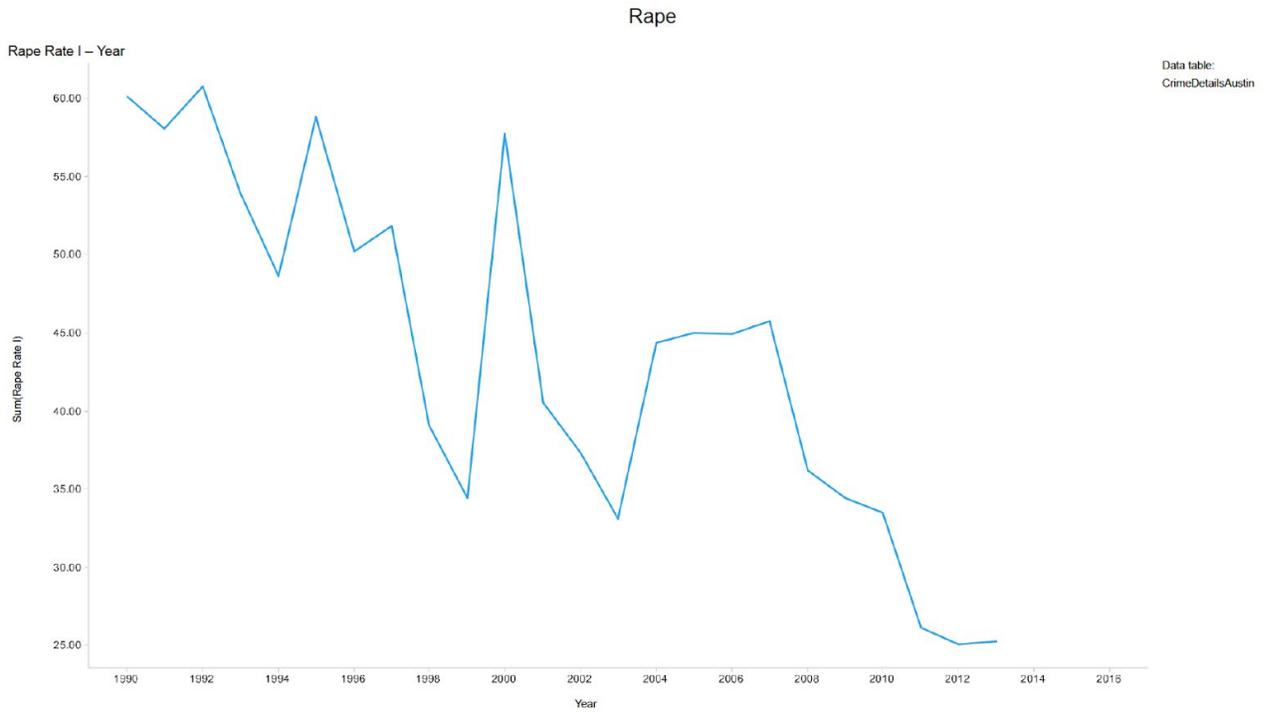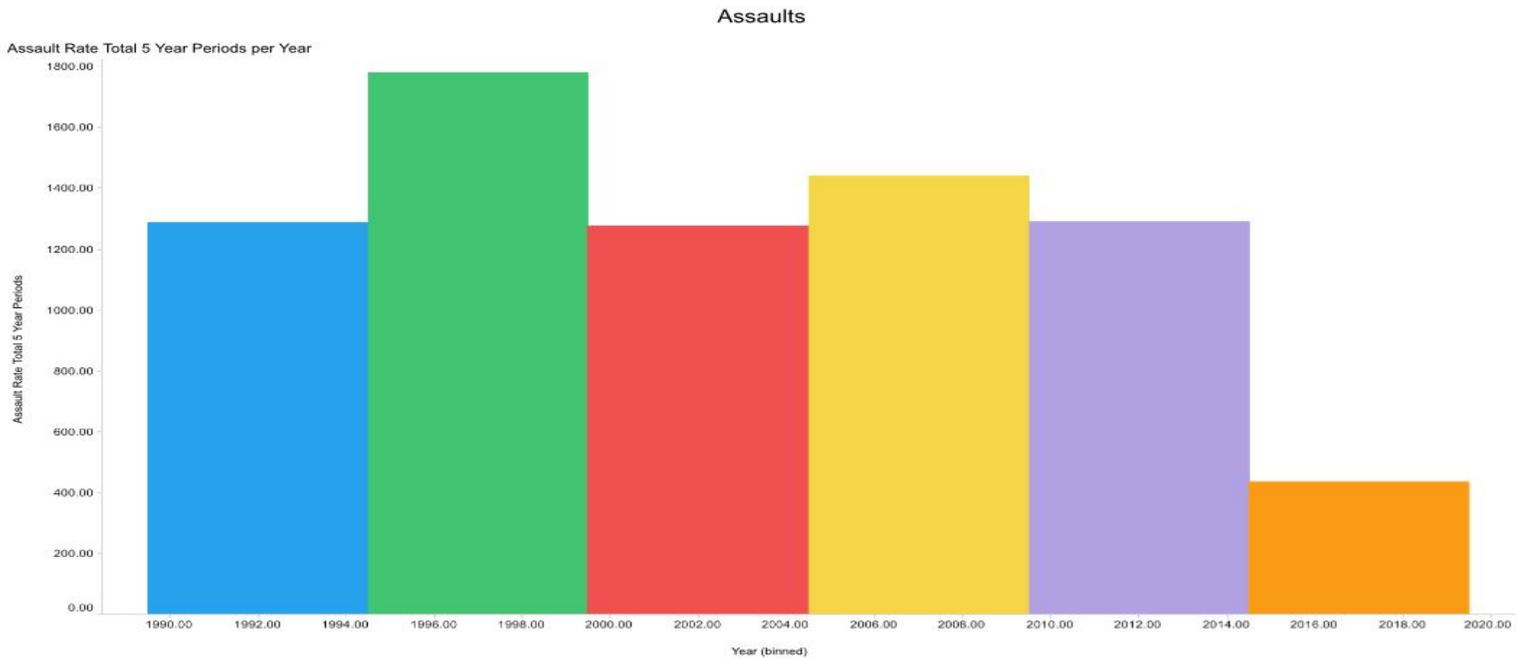
Figure 4. Austin, Texas Assault Rates from 1990-2016

Sources: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports[14], prepared by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data & Measure Austin

MEASURE ANALYSIS

From the data MEASURE has analyzed certain inferences may be made:

Figure 1 compares Austin with other like cities in terms of policing budget and it shows that Austin's 10.83% of city budget is much higher than others, even while its crime rate is the **lowest among these cities**. Figures 2, 3 and 4 convey an observable decline in the crime rate, including violent crimes. MEASURE believes that further research can be done to determine the specific cause(s) for the reduction in crime in Austin. As such, an increase in the police budget is not necessitated by an increase in crime rate. Increasing the police budget is not supported within the context of empirical data analyzed by *MEASURE©*.

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[14] Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2017, August 25). Violent Crime. Retrieved May 2, 2018, from https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/topic-pages/violent-crime

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Recommendation 1**: Analysis of additional variables related to improved crime statistics and increased oversight should be cross-referenced with MEASURE's analysis to provide concrete areas in which money allocated toward the policing budget can be used efficiently. In addition, MEASURE© recommends adding and incorporating additional measures to tell a more accurate and useful story of the department's performance[15,16,17,18].

   1. Percent reduction in overall Use of Force and Deadly Force;

   2. Percent and number of interactions leading to critical incidents (shooting or serious bodily injury);

   3. Percent of Officer suspensions for misconduct where suspension is not overturned or reduced upon appeal;

   4. Percent of Officers with history of misconduct (all outcomes -- suspension, written reprimand, directed to retraining, demotion, etc) -- or conversely percentage with no history of misconduct;

   5. Percent Case clearance rates by type of offense;

   6. Number of Citizen complaints;

   7. Number of 'Police brutality' / Police misconduct complaints, regardless of source (includes complaints based on statement by other officers or initiated by OPM);

   8. Resident satisfaction through consistent annual survey protocol (disaggregated by neighborhood and demographic characteristics);
      a. By Race/Ethnicity;
      b. By Gender;
      c. By Socioeconomic Status;
      d. By Nationality Status (Citizen or Undocumented);
      e. By Residence (Zip Code).

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[15] Lum, C., & Nagin, D. S. (2016). Reinventing American Policing. The University of Chicago Press. doi:129.174.021.005
[16] Scott, M. S., & Kirby, S. (2012). Implementing POP- Leading, Structuring, and Managing a Problem-Oriented Police Agency(Publication). Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, The U.S. Department of Justice.
[17] President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. 2015. Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.
[18] Brody, D. C., Demarco, C., & Lovrich, N. P. (2002). Community Policing and Job Satisfaction: Suggestive Evidence of Positive Workforce Effects from a Multijurisdictional Comparison in Washington State. Police Quarterly,5 (2), 181-205.doi:10.1177/109861102129198093

9. Police officer and staff job satisfaction through survey protocol (disaggregated).

2. **Recommendation 2:** After further analysis (see recommendation 1), the sum of money which is found to be allocated in excess should be secluded from the policing budget before the present CBA is agreed upon.
3. **Recommendation 3:** Further discussion on how funds should be most effectively used should be had with all impacted stakeholders.
4. **Recommendation 4:** Adopt technology tools that can allow the police department to significantly cut costs while improving outcomes and uncommitted time. Police departments such as Camden, New Jersey have used technology to improve response time, locate gunshots, and reduce paperwork[19].

CONCLUSION

According to the analysis, data reflects the overall downward trend in crime within the Austin area, despite population increases over the last decade.

MEASURE is fully aware of the complexities of public safety, having had the opportunity to work closely with the Austin Police Department for the last two years, including supporting their efforts to develop formal performance measures regarding Community Policing and other initiatives.

MEASURE offers its services as a research organization to meet the needs of the City, its respective agencies, and the citizens and residents that it serves as it pertains to the subject matter presented here.

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[19] Miller, J. A. (2014, April 09). How Tech Can Help Cities Reduce Crime. Retrieved May 2, 2018, from https://www.cio.com/article/2377330/mobile/how-tech-can-help-cities-reduce-crime.html

MEASURE RESEARCHERS

Paulette Blanc, MPH, CPHQ is a quality improvement consultant currently working on mental health initiatives at TMF Health Quality Institute. She has additional experience in the primary care setting, where she focused on the social determinants of health and making changes in clinical practices to help drive better patient health outcomes and lower healthcare utilization costs. She is also a volunteer club advisor for the YMCA of Austin's Youth and Government program where she helps middle school and high school students get involved in their local government.

Yasmine Smith has a B.A. in Criminal Justice from St. Edward's University and expects her J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law Spring of 2018. Yasmine has extensive experience in local policy and law having worked as a law clerk for both the Mayor and the City of Austin's legal department in addition to serving on the Mayor's Institutional Racism Task Force as a report writer. Outside of MEASURE, Yasmine is a full-time law student at the University of Texas School of Law, offers her legal services pro-bono to multiple non-profits and organizations, and mentors first-generation and/or minority high-school, college, and graduate students. Yasmine has an immense passion in serving her community as a born and raised Austinite and attributes her accomplishments to the village that has and continues to raise her consciousness, aspirations, and spirit.

Anup Pandey has been a consulting engineer for over 20 years in the field of environmental consulting and information systems design for managing environmental compliance and permitting. As an entrepreneur Anup applied his creative thinking to catapult several businesses to remarkable growth. He currently works for the VA as a Data Analyst in the Data Analytics Services division.