DELIVERFUND

POSITION PAPER | PUBLIC EDITION

BEYOND THE EVENT

Human Trafficking and Large-Scale Events

DeliverFund's stance, methodology, and assessment criteria

For law enforcement, financial institution, host committee, and nonprofit partners
Informed by DeliverFund's 2026 major-event operations and published research

OCTOBER 2026
DELIVERFUND.ORG

Executive Summary

Every major event draws two predictable responses: warnings that trafficking will surge, and a short burst of enforcement that fades when the crowds leave. DeliverFund's position is that both responses miss the point. Trafficking is a year-round crime. Large events do not create it, but they concentrate people, money, and online commercial sex activity in a few places over a few weeks. That concentration is a window in which networks that already exist become easier to see, and an intelligence-led response can reach victims and offenders who might otherwise stay out of sight.

> **Our stance in one sentence:** Large-scale events do not cause human trafficking, but they exacerbate it. The right response is sustained, intelligence-led preparation that begins months before an event and continues long after it, measured by verified results rather than alarming predictions.

Five Principles

Principle	What it means in practice
1. Trafficking is year-round	We treat each event as one surge period inside continuous, nationwide coverage, never as a stand-alone campaign.
2. Evidence over alarm	We do not forecast victim counts or repeat surge figures that research does not support. Advertisement data is a signal, not proof of victimization.
3. Prepare before the crowds	Training, baselines, and partner coordination begin months ahead, so agencies are not starting cold when an event arrives.
4. Intelligence that supports action	We give investigators intelligence tied to specific potential victims, traffickers, or venues. We act at the request of law enforcement and do not conduct enforcement ourselves.
5. Victim-centered and honest measurement	We report outputs and verified outcomes separately, and we count referrals to victim services as a core result.

In 2026, DeliverFund applied this approach across the Super Bowl, the NFL Draft, and the FIFA World Cup. That included a free four-part training series for more than 200 law enforcement officers and financial fraud analysts[1], and 2,177 intelligence reports submitted to law enforcement during the World Cup, the largest single operation in our history.[2] This paper sets out our stance, the methodology we use, and the criteria we will use to assess our own work at future events.

DeliverFund's Position

Where the research is clear, we follow it. Where it is limited, we say so. Our position has six parts.

1. Events reveal existing networks

Most trafficking involves recruitment through existing relationships and coercion that builds over time, often long before an event begins.[3] The people being advertised around a stadium were, in most cases, being exploited before the event and will be after it. As Polaris Project has put it, victims "are likely facing exploitation before and beyond Super Bowl weekend."[4] Each event is a chance to identify and reach them.

2. Sustained coverage, not surge coverage

DeliverFund monitors illicit online commercial sex activity nationwide all year, so agencies in host jurisdictions are not starting from a cold baseline when an event approaches.[2] A temporary task force that disbands after the final whistle leaves victims where it found them.

3. Preparation determines results

Agencies that build skills, data access, and partner relationships months in advance are positioned to act when activity concentrates. This matches federal guidance: the DHS Blue Campaign began World Cup training in host cities in September 2025 because trained people are better prepared to recognize indicators when visitors arrive.[5]

4. Intelligence in support of law enforcement

DeliverFund provides intelligence, technology, and training at the request of law enforcement. We do not conduct investigations or enforcement of our own.[2] Our role is to save investigators analytic hours and hand them leads specific enough to act on.

5. Financial intelligence is part of the picture

Trafficking runs on money. FinCEN issued a dedicated notice for the 2026 World Cup urging financial institutions to watch for red flags such as unusual late-night travel and lodging spending in host cities, rapid peer-to-peer transfers with vague memos, and account phone numbers that appear in online commercial sex ads.[6] Connecting online indicators with financial reporting gives investigators a fuller view of a network than either source alone.[7]

6. Honest communication protects victims and credibility

Inflated numbers can push resources toward short-term, high-visibility enforcement at the expense of sustained services, and can lead to victims who do not fit a stereotype being overlooked or criminalized.[3] DeliverFund will not publish predicted victim counts, will describe advertisement data as an indicator, and will report verified outcomes separately from activity totals.

The 2026 Major-Event Season

The figures below are DeliverFund outputs that have already been made public. They measure work delivered to partners. They are not counts of victims identified or cases filed, which are law enforcement outcomes.

200+	1,000+	2,177	39
Officers and financial fraud analysts trained before the World Cup[1]	Intelligence reports provided during Super Bowl LX[1]	Intelligence reports submitted during the FIFA World Cup[2]	Consecutive days of World Cup coverage, June 10 to July 19, 2026[2]

Pre-event training

Before the World Cup, DeliverFund delivered a free four-part training series built on a single framework: **Detect** (spotting the first digital indicators), **Deny** (removing opportunity before harm escalates), **Degrade** (applying analytical pressure to weaken networks), and **Disrupt** (turning intelligence into operational plans).[1]

NFL Draft, April 2026

DeliverFund provided intelligence support to the Pennsylvania Attorney General's human trafficking operation during the NFL Draft in Pittsburgh. Investigators identified more than 130 commercial sex advertisements with trafficking indicators, reached seven potential victims, documented four trafficking disclosures, and made six referrals to victim services.[1] These results show the measure we value most: people connected to help.

FIFA World Cup, June and July 2026

DeliverFund analysts submitted 2,177 intelligence reports to law enforcement over 39 consecutive days, an average of about 56 per day. This was the highest reporting volume and the longest operation in DeliverFund's history.[2] Coverage was organized by region so analysts could shift effort to where activity concentrated, including around match days and fan festival areas in host cities.

National context

Across the tournament, DHS reported that Homeland Security Investigations and its federal, state, and local partners arrested 905 suspects and rescued 180 victims, 150 adults and 30 juveniles.[8] These are federal figures and are not attributed to DeliverFund. They show the scale of the coordinated response that intelligence organizations support.

Methodology: The Event Lifecycle

DeliverFund treats every large-scale event as a five-phase cycle that runs from months before the event to months after it. Methods are described here at a general level. Specific collection techniques and indicators are withheld so they cannot be used to evade detection.

Phase	Timing	Objectives	Key activities
1. Prepare	6 to 12 months out	Agencies start from a working baseline, not from zero.	Partner coordination; free training for officers and analysts; host-city and match schedule mapping; baseline measurement of online activity.
2. Detect	Weeks before through the event	Identify early indicators as activity begins to build.	Continuous monitoring of online commercial sex markets for trafficking indicators; regional coverage that shifts to where activity concentrates.
3. Deny and Degrade	Before and during	Reduce the infrastructure traffickers depend on.	Mapping the people, phone numbers, venues, and transactions behind ads; sharing patterns that let platforms and financial institutions act.
4. Disrupt	During the event	Put actionable intelligence in investigators' hands fast enough to use.	Intelligence reports tied to a specific potential victim, trafficker, or venue; real-time analytic support to field operations on request.
5. Sustain and Review	After the event	Carry what was learned into year-round work.	Event data folded into ongoing analysis; follow-up support to open investigations; structured review against the criteria in the next section.

Standards applied to every intelligence report

- **Specific:** tied to an identifiable potential victim, trafficker, or venue, not a general trend.[2]
- **Corroborated:** built from more than one indicator, because no single indicator proves trafficking, an approach FinCEN also applies to financial red flags.[6]
- **Timely:** delivered quickly enough to be useful during an operation, not after it.[2]
- **Protective:** written so that potential victims are treated as people in need of help, with referral to services as the goal.
- **Lawful:** provided to authorized law enforcement partners for lawful investigative decisions.

Human trafficking is often found within other investigations. DeliverFund's law enforcement partners report that trafficking cases frequently involve drugs, domestic violence, assault, gang activity, child exploitation, weapons offenses, fraud, homicide, and theft.[9] Event intelligence is designed to help investigators recognize those connections.

Assessment Framework and Scoring Criteria

DeliverFund will assess each major-event operation against eight criteria. They are designed to reward preparation, quality, and verified impact over raw volume, and to stop any single number from standing in for success.

Rating scale

Rating	Label	Definition
4	Strong	Objective fully met, supported by documented evidence and partner confirmation.
3	Effective	Objective substantially met; minor gaps identified with a clear fix.
2	Developing	Objective partly met; material gaps that require changes before the next event.
1	Not met	Objective not met, or not enough evidence to assess it.

Assessment criteria

Criterion	Question it answers	Evidence used	Weight
A. Preparation lead time	Did partners have training, baselines, and agreed processes before activity built?	Training records; partner agreements; baseline data	15%
B. Coverage	Did monitoring cover the host jurisdictions and peak periods that mattered?	Coverage logs by region and date	10%
C. Intelligence quality	Were reports specific, corroborated, and usable?	Report quality review; partner feedback	20%
D. Timeliness	Did intelligence arrive in time to support action?	Time from detection to delivery	10%
E. Partner uptake	Did investigators use the intelligence, and would they request it again?	Partner survey and debriefs	10%
F. Victim-centered results	Were potential victims reached and referred to services?	Partner-confirmed contacts and referrals	20%
G. Sustained impact	Did the work continue into investigations and year-round coverage?	Follow-up support; open-case assistance	10%
H. Communication integrity	Were public claims accurate, sourced, and free of sensitive information?	Pre-release review of all public materials	5%

Each criterion is rated 1 to 4 and weighted to produce an overall score from 1.0 to 4.0. Criteria C and F carry the most weight because report quality and help for victims matter more than volume. A high report count with low uptake or no referrals cannot score well.

> **Outputs versus outcomes.** Report counts, ads reviewed, and hours worked are outputs DeliverFund controls. Victims identified, referrals, arrests, and prosecutions are outcomes that belong to our law enforcement and service partners. We report them only when partners confirm them, and we never present an output as an outcome.

Recommendations for Partners

Law enforcement agencies

- Start preparing at least six months out. Super Bowl LXI is on February 14, 2027, and the Los Angeles Olympics run from July 14 to July 30, 2028.[2]
- Plan operations around victim identification and referral to services, not arrest totals.
- Look for trafficking indicators inside other investigations, including drug, fraud, and violent crime cases.[9]

Financial institutions

- Apply FinCEN's event and general human trafficking red flags, file suspicious activity reports with the designated key terms, and train customer-facing staff on behavioral indicators.[6, 7]
- Pair transaction monitoring with intelligence on online commercial sex activity to give investigators a fuller picture of a network.

Host committees and event organizers

- Treat labor exploitation in construction, hospitality, and supply chains as a core risk alongside sex trafficking.[10]
- Fund identification and referral systems that outlast the event, and involve survivor-led and victim service organizations from the start.[3]

Media, nonprofits, and the public

- Avoid repeating unsourced surge statistics. Describe advertisement increases as indicators, not confirmed trafficking.[11]
- If you suspect trafficking, do not intervene directly. Contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or text 233733, or call 911 in an emergency.[5]

Limitations

This paper reflects DeliverFund's published 2026 results and the research cited. Advertisement-based indicators cannot confirm trafficking in any individual case. DeliverFund cannot attribute arrests, recoveries, or prosecutions to its intelligence unless the agency responsible confirms the connection. Operational details, partner identities, and case information have been withheld to protect victims, investigations, and methods.

About DeliverFund

DeliverFund is a nonprofit intelligence organization that combats human trafficking by equipping, training, and advising law enforcement. It supports more than 8,000 officers across 1,200 agencies with intelligence reporting, technology, and training, provided free to law enforcement.[1, 12] Learn more at deliverfund.org.

Sources

Numbered references correspond to the superscript markers in the text.

1. DeliverFund, "From Research to Response: DeliverFund Trains Law Enforcement to Combat Human Trafficking Ahead of the 2026 World Cup," May 28, 2026. https://www.einpresswire.com/article/915771688/from-research-to-response-deliverfund-trains-law-enforcement-to-combat-human-trafficking-ahead-of-the-2026-world-cup

2. DeliverFund, "DeliverFund Launches Long-Term Counter-Trafficking Support for Super Bowl LXI and 2028 Los Angeles Olympics," Sept. 2, 2026. https://www.commercialappeal.com/press-release/story/151810/deliverfund-launches-long-term-counter-trafficking-support-for-super-bowl-lxi-and-2028-los-angeles-olympics

3. K. Preble and J. O'Brien, University of Texas at Arlington, "WC '26: Separating trafficking facts from fears," June 1, 2026. https://www.uta.edu/news/news-releases/2026/06/01/separating-trafficking-facts-from-fears

4. Polaris Project, "The Super Bowl Myth," Feb. 5, 2016. https://polarisproject.org/blog/2016/02/the-super-bowl-myth/

5. WLRN, "How law enforcement is fighting human trafficking during the FIFA World Cup tournament," June 25, 2026. https://www.wlrn.org/law-justice/2026-06-25/how-law-enforcement-is-fighting-human-trafficking-during-the-fifa-world-cup

6. FinCEN, "Notice on the Threat of Human Trafficking During the 2026 FIFA World Cup," FIN-2026-NTC1, May 11, 2026. https://www.fincen.gov/system/files/2026-05/FinCEN-WCHT-Notice.pdf

7. FinCEN, "Supplemental Advisory on Identifying and Reporting Human Trafficking and Related Activity," FIN-2020-A008, Oct. 15, 2020. https://www.fincen.gov/system/files/advisory/2020-10-15/Advisory%20Human%20Trafficking%20508%20FINAL_0.pdf

8. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "DHS Highlights Successful Arrests and Rescues in Crackdown on Human Trafficking During FIFA World Cup," July 29, 2026. https://www.dhs.gov/news/2026/07/29/dhs-highlights-successful-arrests-and-rescues-crackdown-human-trafficking-during

9. DeliverFund, "DeliverFund Expands Human Trafficking Intelligence Distribution Through Data-Company Partnerships," Sept. 30, 2026. https://www.kitsapsun.com/press-release/story/805463/deliverfund-expands-human-trafficking-intelligence-distribution-through-data-company-partnerships/

10. Loyola Law School Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative, "Preventing and Addressing Human Trafficking Related to Major Sporting Events". https://www.lls.edu/media/loyolalawschool/academics/clinicsexperientiallearning/sji/publicationsandreports/procurement/majorsportingevents/Preventing%20and%20Addressing%20Human%20Trafficking%20Related%20to%20Major%20Sporting%20Events.pdf

11. University of Texas at Austin, "Research Debunks Myth of Super Bowl Sex Trafficking, Improves Media Narrative," Oct. 30, 2019. https://news.utexas.edu/2019/10/30/research-debunks-myth-of-super-bowl-sex-trafficking-improves-media-narrative

12. DeliverFund, "During National Police Week, DeliverFund Bridges the Intelligence Gap for Officers Fighting Human Trafficking," May 14, 2026. https://natlawreview.com/press-releases/during-national-police-week-deliverfund-bridges-intelligence-gap-officers