5.1. From Dream to Emerging Reality: Uplifting the Scenes of Crime Unit at the Belize NFSS
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Learning Objectives:
By the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the role and functions of the Scenes of Crime Unit and its staff distribution countrywide.
2. Summarize the trainings received by Crime Scene Technicians locally and internationally.
3. Describe the improvements in infrastructure and processes that will impact the welfare and work of the staff of the Scenes of Crime Unit.

Abstract:
The Scenes of Crime Unit was established in 2004 under the command of the Belize Police Department. Its purpose was to assist the judicial process by providing impartial evidence to the Courts in Belize through crime scene processing and evidence recovery. However, in previous years its functionality was minimal due to limited staffing and the relative progress of forensic science in the country. In the earlier years following its establishment, the Unit’s best asset was fingerprinting and the production of black and white photographs which sufficed the demand at that time. Nevertheless, the Crime Scene Technicians received continuous training throughout the years, and in 2013 the Unit was amalgamated with the National Forensic Science Service where emphasis was then placed on the need to uplift the standards of crime scene processing. Assessments of the Unit gave rise to participation in specialized training for Crime Scene Technicians and conducting competency testing. The office space in Belize City, which is the only Scenes of Crime Office countrywide that is staffed on a 24 hour basis, has recently seen a drastic improvement that has resulted in that office now meeting requirements for health and safety and for preserving the security and integrity of evidence, both of which have positively impacted the extent and quality of work performed by Crime Scene Technicians on a daily basis. Efforts are also underway to update the Unit’s internal training program and standard operating procedures, as well as to upgrade other Scenes of Crime office spaces across the country.