A firearm is recovered by law enforcement

ATF receives recovery information in e-Trace

Trace reveals origin of firearm manufacturer or importer

The first purchaser is identified and the investigative process is initiated **

FFL manually looks through firearm transaction records to find the first purchaser **

Trace leads to the original Federal Firearms Licensee (FFL) *

408,000+ trace requests in FY17

* Not all traces may lead to original FFL; sales sometimes lead beyond that to a subsequent FFL.
** First purchaser is not always identified, sometimes traces lead to a more recent purchaser or an unlicensed purchaser.