



The Goal: Integration

LISC Safety builds formal, long-term partnerships between police departments, community economic development corporations and other key stakeholders in troubled neighborhoods to reduce persistent crime, disorder and fear and to revitalize the neighborhood. The partners work together closely to strategically select, coordinate and implement their development initiatives and crime-control efforts in order to produce tangible, synergistic results - crime reduction that promotes development and development that promotes crime reduction. By the unconventional linking of innovative policing with strategic economic development, police and developers aim to attract the kinds of social and financial investments that make communities safer and more vibrant.

Merging two historically unfamiliar and sometimes hostile organizations takes a lot of strategy, patience and time. However, each partner is vital to the neighborhood's long-term quality of life and each has certain skill sets that are imperative to success (public safety makes for better community development and vice versa). The key is to find ways for each partner to learn the language of the other; utilizing the others' expertise while also furthering their own agenda.

Local stakeholders in neighborhoods most often served by CDCs and LISC Safety have understandable reasons to question the potential role of their police departments as partners in the rebuilding and revitalization of their communities. Claiming personal histories of under-service, neglect, or even abuse, many residents have had neither chance nor forum to productively engage law enforcement representatives. Rare opportunities for potentially helpful dialogue (such as community policing meetings) are frequently derailed by skepticism and anger. The result is a familiar scene in which residents call attention to a list of individual complaints regarding the Department's behavior while officers, forced into a defensive stance, consent to a new detail of attention that is rarely sustainable or even likely.

Rather than continue this often unproductive style of engagement, the LISC Safety pushes partners to realize extensive integration of their personal agendas. True collaboration occurs when a mutually supported strategy calls for synergistic targeting of resources towards the same problems at the same time. Ideally, funding allocation, staffing decisions, and even methods of evaluation are altered to enhance the work of the team. Priorities are shared, and comprehensive response plans are crafted that assign responsibilities to participants based on real capacity rather than on their traditional functions.

The Central Player: Program Coordinator

Just as an organizer can help underserved community members develop and present a unified agenda to their city officials or other powerful decision-making entities, he or she can lead an empowered population in a constructive discussion with the police. The organizer can serve as a catalyst to improved community-police partnership and enhanced quality of life by acting as an intermediary between local stakeholders, community developers, and the police department. His or her impact can be furthered by taking an active role in managing the development and implementation of a comprehensive public safety work plan that recognizes and intentionally incorporates the often uncoordinated capacities of these uniquely endowed partners. By learning to translate priorities and concerns into mutually beneficial actions and projects, the organizer is in a powerful position to reframe typical conversations between the residents and police. Moreover, as staff of a CDC, the organizer has the added advantage of understanding how an improved physical environment makes a community resistant to crime, a perspective central to a successful LISC Safety partnership.

The Strategy

Important Note: The following steps are presented in a specific order that makes the most practical sense in the abstract, especially for a newly emerging partnership. However, it may make most sense for a coordinator to be simultaneously pursuing different elements of this strategy, and it is almost certain that the coordinator will need to revisit early stage work (relationship building and education) throughout the partnership's evolution in response to staff transitions and changing priorities. Therefore, it is critical that the coordinator familiarize him or herself with all components of the following approach and apply the different aspects in a manner that is the most timely considering the circumstances of his or her partnership.

While the personalities and needs of a LISC Safety partnership make each coordinator's job unique, there is fundamental overlap about the appropriate steps towards achieving integration of agendas. The following list sketches some of the universal components of a coordinator's strategy.

1. Engaging the Police: Gaining Trust & Understanding

While the police are wary of new partnerships and slow to adapt to any relationship that requires organizational change, they do recognize their responsibility, as a public agency, to address community needs. Like many institutions, the police are most likely to invest time and energy in partnerships that:

- Help them achieve individual and organizational goals
- Bring them better public perception
- Are productive and sensitively managed

In the current era of nationwide cutbacks in community policing, reductions in uniformed officers, and budget shortfalls, these guiding principles for choosing partnerships are particularly true. Organizers can help distinguish LISC Safety -type community-police partnerships from a variety of more well-known, but often ineffective collaborative approaches, thereby attracting the needed time and resource investment from the police. Outreach efforts should earn you the standing needed to hold open and honest conversations about police capacity. Emphasize that the point of the partnership is to double the productivity of patrol officers not by adding staff, but by partnering with the community and its resources.

Learning About Police Work: Practical Steps

If available, enroll in the Community Police Academy to gain insight into the Department's structure. When spending time with local officers, ask them to brief you on department organization, chain of command, shifts, etc. Go on a ride along or sit in with a 911 operator to "experience" that world. Get trained on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), Scan Analyze Respond Assess (SARA), and Problem Oriented Policing (POP) with a police partner. Life goes on before 9am and after 5pm. Find out who the first and third watch officers are in the neighborhood. Alternate meetings between day and night to facilitate wider police participation. You'll soon gain respect for trying hard to learn their world.

The language and culture of police officers differs from those of the non-profit world, but like most non-profit organizations, Departments are typically under funded and overworked. Departments are also heavy with rules, regulations, structure, and traditions that determine individual and organizational behavior. If an organizer is going to effectively act as a go-between with the police, he or she must understand the unique nature of police work and the organizational environment that often drives individual decision-making. The more that is learned, the more effective she will be in her role. For example, acknowledging that frequent staff turnover is normal in police departments will both enable an organizer to explain that such changes are not intentionally undermining long-term community engagement and to prepare the partnership to move ahead during periods of transition.

In order to create an effective partnership, the police must also understand the community development industry. While immersing herself in the police world, the coordinator should invite officers to meetings, events, and trainings that will illustrate the objectives, processes, and impacts of CDCs. A thorough introduction will not

only give the police a better understanding of their key partner, but will also allow them to see the community through CDC lenses and offer solutions with broader impact.

2. Preparing the Community

Just as special attention must be placed on engaging the police and understanding their world, so too must the organizer carefully assess the community stakeholders that will soon be involved in this new partnership. This is particularly important if the organizer is unfamiliar with the new neighborhood or working with a group that is historically difficult to organize.

Meet the Community on their Terms. Organizers will find themselves at two distinct stages in preparing the community. The first is the more informal, introductory stage in which the organizer must “enter” the world of the community with care and humility and learn members’ perspectives on the current condition of the neighborhood. The organizer must not push a public safety agenda too early at this point, for stakeholders will most often not trust the motives of a person they have just met. And while this stage is different for each organizer and neighborhood, it is critical if one is to garner momentum and trust for a new partnership.

Organize Concerns. The second stage of this process seeks to provide a forum to air (and eventually move beyond) unfocused concerns about safety and the history of police engagement in their community. At this point, the organizer has done enough introductory work to convince community members of the importance of a public safety oriented forum. Too often, the police are used to hearing complaints and demands from constituents in an unorganized or conflicting manner, without acknowledgement of Department resource limitations. Using new knowledge gained about the partnering Department, the coordinator can help stakeholders anticipate police reaction. Ideally, the community will emerge from this stage with a message whose tone invites goal-oriented police engagement.

3. Creating a Forum for Communication

Once the key stakeholders have been recruited and conversations begun, it is essential that a regular meeting schedule be established. These meetings should allow for updates, assessment, and revisions on current projects and the selection of new ones. Occasional meetings should also be held to allow for larger community input. Because of the varied membership of this partnership, these meetings represent a unique environment where traditionally separated players and strategies can be simultaneously applied to the resolution of jointly identified problems.

Run Effective Meetings. An effectively run meeting can be the turning point of many community initiatives. Although participants bring various strengths to their communities, they often lack the training and experience to run effective meetings. Emphasis on modeling and planning well-facilitated meetings will allow the

Preparing The Community: Practical Steps

Stage 1: Canvass the neighborhood and visit with local residents, business owners and social service staff. Bring CSI materials and a business card to leave with the stakeholders, but do not prepare a formal speech or presentation as of yet. The goal here is to introduce yourself, make yourself familiar on the streets and to find out, in the most unthreatening way possible, what the stakeholders feel about their neighborhood, their quality of life, and the police. If possible, schedule meetings/lunches with pre-identified neighborhood leaders or employees previously engaged in neighborhood or public safety advocacy. Do this once, and do it again. You can never do too much outreach.

Stage 2: Hold a community meeting (or a series of meetings) and allow residents to express their concerns. Consider the most comfortable meeting place, time and process. The organizer and stakeholders should spend time sharing and discussing the list of crime, development and quality of life concerns/objectives in the area, yet understand this may not take the form of a strategic, prioritized work plan immediately. The organizer should, however, be tactical in guiding the stakeholders towards sensible solutions based on identified causes, environmental factors and shared responsibility. Not only should these concerns be specific and concrete, they should also be compatible with the police agenda, as the residents will soon be brought into the discussion. Be sure to follow up with action items and schedule subsequent meetings, one-on-one or in small groups, if necessary.

Practical Tool: Focus on Problem Solving

Whether speaking with one element of your partnership or at a working group session, maintaining the group's direction is critical to its success. Simply applying additional resources in response to individual crimes appears to have little real impact. Likewise, since very few crimes are isolated but are really symptoms of underlying, reoccurring problems, a focus on problem solving techniques and the basics of scanning, analyzing, responding and assessing is critical to finding long-term solutions. Train the group and yourself in problem solving if necessary. It is important that participants feel comfortable expressing their respective concerns and sharing updates at meetings, but don't let participants ramble on about unrelated topics. As translator and intermediary, the organizer is responsible for keeping the conversation focused in this way. Sometimes groups fall into the trap of simply updating what's happening with other groups or in their neighborhoods. Do this only as it pertains to the public safety work of the group. However, you never want to underestimate the value of group brainstorming in problem solving, even if it requires the majority of the meeting time. The desire to finish a meeting quickly should not trump the necessary processes of collaboration.

representatives share the product of their earlier meetings. Determining a shared agenda in terms of common concerns and overlapping priorities will likely take several meetings. Indeed, it is unlikely that either side will completely buy into the partnership until they have achieved some type of joint success. For that reason, the coordinator must ensure that the conversation stays on target and that discussion is mindful of each party's interests.

Be Organized and Specific. The group must determine what process the group will use to prioritize identified problems (A majority vote? A unanimous vote? What is most realistic? Short term or long term completion?). Having created a prioritized list of problems, the stakeholders can then begin to discuss potential solutions, ideally considering the full range of capacities offered by the partnership. When proposing different responses, participants should think beyond the traditional activities of each member. Any proposed solution should describe the specific contributions of each partner. Later, the group may also want to decide how they will choose to drop or re-visit work plan items if they no longer fit into the current environment.

Push for Creative Responses. As the group moves into project selection and implementation, the coordinator should become equally dedicated to helping the partners consider creative if not seemingly radical methods. In the most effective LISC Safety collaboratives, individual players take actions outside their traditional range of responses. For a police department, this may mean participating in the design of new residential development or helping write a grant to support the continued involvement of a community organizer. For a merchant, it may mean a voluntary ban on the sale of certain products that attract unwanted clientele who scare away legitimate customers. For a CDC, it may mean offering the police a seat on the board. Ultimately, the once-distinct lines between partners should be blurred so that the participants operate as a coordinated, strategic unit replacing hot spots and crime trends with community assets and rising pride. Their once tangentially related agendas should merge such that partners simultaneously target pooled resources towards the same problem.

coordinator to help the neighborhood achieve its goals. The coordinator should take special steps to ensure that all meetings (and especially early ones) are productive and should consider formal training in a facilitative leadership meeting model that includes creative agendas, pre-assigned roles for participants, controlled decision making processes, celebration, and evaluation. Both local LISC field staff and the LISC Safety TA providers can help identify appropriate trainings.

Think Ahead. Ideally, this partnership will become the umbrella organization for all public safety work in the neighborhood offering a unified voice of the community, able to represent the stakeholders in broader conversations, and coordinating activity with outside entities.

4. Leading the Discussion: Turning Concerns into a Work Plan

Identify Overlapping Priorities. While the first meeting will necessarily begin with more introductory discussion, the conversation should soon turn to the work at hand. Participating public safety officials should have the opportunity to list their own priorities while the coordinator and/or community

Adding Partners: A Warning

Although the addition of community-based and municipal partners will likely mean more capacity and resources for the group, it may also lead to an expanded agenda. Therefore, the group should not only consider the added value of a new member but also the potential distractions and pitfalls of including another perspective in the design and implementation process. Every new participant will come with biases, a personal agenda, and expectations. New voices can disrupt the partnership's chemistry as well as its objectives. Furthermore, each new person will require orientation and ongoing attention that will take away from the coordinator's time.

If the group decides that the new partner is desirable, the coordinator has the responsibility of defining roles and expectations. The CSI is a collaborative project with shared concerns driving a common agenda. No one participant should be allowed to dominate, and new partners should not be allowed to use the group to reach personal goals. By having an accepted decision-making process and set of objectives in place, the group can facilitate the smooth integration of its new members.

5. Selecting Additional Partners

Public safety is the shared responsibility of many different city, county, state, and federal agencies. Law and code enforcement are often handled by separate municipal departments, regulations on alcohol sales are most likely determined on the state level, and each level of government has its own courts. Whereas the participation of each department from every level of jurisdiction is not required (or even desirable), the scope of work will likely call for representatives from more than the police department.

Once the core partners have identified problems and chosen initial projects, it may be necessary to bring in some of these other agencies in order to implement the most effective solution. Common partners include the city prosecutor, district attorney, and the entities charged with graffiti abatement and removal, truancy reduction, and code enforcement. In many cases, these groups not only bring their unique authority, but they also offer access to targeted resources that may be used to promote community-level work.

Create and Maintain Outreach Materials.

The community organizer can facilitate outreach and recruitment of these other groups by creating communication materials. Having standardized information, letters of support, and other propaganda, the community organizer can educate existing, changing, and new partners about the local collaborative goals and national LISC Safety objectives. These materials can also serve to publicize the successes of the partners, reinforce their importance to the overall goals, and attract new partners.

After creating lines of communication with a broad base of potential partners, the community organizer has more resources to draw from and should learn to use them strategically. Once partners are brought into various projects, they need to be assigned clear tasks and the community organizer can relay how each of them provides value added. Oftentimes a nontraditional resource can be one's greatest asset; capitalize on the enthusiastic partners wherever they lie while also recognizing and respecting the limitations of each partner.

6. Moving from Plan to Action & Impact

If managed correctly, the group will most likely develop an ambitious range of proposed activities. While the coordinator may allow partners to determine which one to pursue first, the successful implementation of early joint efforts is perhaps the most critical step in running an effective collaboration. Therefore, the coordinator should be proactive in guiding selection and execution, especially to the extent that partners take a chance and invest their own scarce resources.

Choose Wisely. When prioritizing a work plan, the organizer should consider whether projects

- Are solvable
- Are in the common interests of the partners
- Can benefit from existing programs
- Are likely to encourage future collaboration by proving valuable to all participating groups
- Have solutions that make progress

- Have unintended consequences
- Can be completed in the short, medium, or long run
- Will reinforce organizational decisions regarding resource deployment
- Will have an impact that reflects the makeup of the partnership by taking advantage of the unique skill set offered by its membership

Start Small. Early on, partnerships are encouraged to select relevant projects that are most likely to be accomplished in the near future, namely those that require overcoming minimal institutional barriers, are relatively non-controversial, and call for little or no additional resources. In a relationship with so many potential pitfalls, positive reinforcement is critical to establishing trust and increasing the likelihood of more tangible, long-term accomplishments. Common examples of such projects are community clean ups and youth-related activities.

Be Assertive. The coordinator cannot be afraid to take hold of the reins and be aggressive in moving projects forward. Each LISC Safety program coordinator has been different, however, experience shows that being more of a “doer” than a “delegator” has been most effective. Sometimes only a small number of the participants will be needed to carry out a project. If this is the case, the coordinator must determine what coalition of two or more partners is required to get things done. When activities are delegated, the coordinator must be clear as to who is taking on an assignment. If it isn’t specifically assigned, the coordinator should take the lead

Encourage Bigger Projects. While selecting “simpler” projects early is smart program management, the community rebuilding process is a long-term engagement, and ultimately an organizer should push the partners to consider larger-scale endeavors. The partners should also be working on projects with a more significant and permanent impact on public safety and economic vitality. Projects like replacing problem properties with attractive homes and responsible tenants, changing the business mix to attract more legitimate economic activity, or starting community prosecution programs require the patience and planning inherent to successful CDCs. The coordinator should continue to illustrate for police and other partners unfamiliar with the process and purpose of traditional CDC activity, the sustained impact of a well-considered project.

Be Flexible. Each partnership needs to have a decision-making plan in place. That plan proves particularly useful when the coordinator begins to consider terminating an unsuccessful project.

7. Managing the Partnership

Certain elements of the LISC Safety strategy are valuable during all of the above steps, and particularly important in maintaining the progress and momentum of the group beyond initial success. The coordinator should be mindful of the following tips throughout the life of the partnership.

Maintain Lines of Communication. As the intermediary, the coordinator has responsibilities to all members of the partnership. It is important that he or she maintains open, independent lines of communication with the police, not just residents. In a collaboration as complicated as this one, inevitably there will be a need to mediate conflicts. To do so effectively requires the continued confidence of the police department. The coordinator must be a trusted confidant to all participants and should hold formal and informal meetings (lunches, public meetings, and community events) with each group individually to allow for discussion of more sensitive topics.

Focus on Outcomes. The organizer is also charged with keeping the group focused on outcomes rather than process. In many cases, police and community members may consider the act of meeting to be an accomplishment in itself. For many young collaboratives, it is. However, the objective of the LISC Safety strategy is to realize tangible, measurable gains in both economic/community development and crime indicators. As needed, the partnership can develop mechanisms for surpassing bureaucratic obstacles within their respective organizations to facilitate the completion of tasks.

Recognize the Doers. In most cases, the most innovative work is accomplished by a small group of courageous visionaries who are willing to try novel approaches. Their determination and understanding can overcome great bureaucratic obstacles and propel the group towards noteworthy achievements. The coordinator must recognize, protect, support, and nurture risk takers.

Take the Initiative. When partners fail to meet their obligations, the coordinator should take the initiative to move the process along. The coordinator is also charged with proactively seeking technical assistance, as needed, from national t.a. providers as well as local LISC staff.

Keep it in the Family. As with any team, the group must protect its own members. At the first signs of betrayal or indifference, the participants' instincts may be to back out of the joint effort. Learning to overcome internal and external challenges is critical. True trust may not develop immediately, but a return to finger-pointing and public shaming will only diminish the chances for future success. These groups now have a forum to settle disputes or differences in a rational, mature, and private manner. The group must allow for inevitable disagreements but also agree to resolve them internally.

Celebrate Success. While disputes are settled quietly, the group should celebrate success loudly and broadly. Achieving systemic change in the LISC Safety context means challenging some fundamental assumptions about the way traditionally disparate groups like the police and low-income communities can work together. Because true strategic collaboration is rare, so too are the opportunities for recognizing and rewarding success. The coordinator must encourage the organizations to celebrate and take credit for each other's accomplishments and for the accomplishments of the partnership. As noted above, one of the goals is to smear the lines between groups in order to encourage creative problem solving. Local press, municipal connections, and community networks are all powerful forums through which to celebrate and thereby reinforce positive behavior.