



Attn: President's Task Force on Policing in the 21st Century
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice
145 N Street, N.E. 11th Floor, Washington, DC 20530

Re: Public Comments on Building Trust & Legitimacy

Submitted by: The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments in advance of the first listening session of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) supports this effort to identify best practices for policing that help reduce crime while building public trust. We offer these comments based on our 20+ year history of fostering collaborative, results-oriented relationships between local law enforcement and low-income and minority communities around the country.

If you have any questions about our public comments, please contact Julia Ryan, Community Safety Initiative Director, at (212) 455-1618 or jryan@lisc.org.

ABOUT LISC

Established in 1979, LISC is one of the nation's largest non-profit community development support organizations, dedicated to helping community residents transform distressed neighborhoods into healthy places of choice and opportunity. With local offices in 30 cities and partners throughout Rural America, LISC mobilizes corporate, government and philanthropic support to provide local community development organizations with loans, grants and equity investments; local, statewide and national policy support; and technical and management assistance.

LISC's leadership in rebuilding neighborhoods challenged by crime and poverty has been well recognized by the White House. We have been particularly proud to contribute to the White House Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative in our role as the national technical assistance provider for the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program since 2012.ⁱ

In that work and over our 35 year history, we have championed the power that community developers wield to reduce crime – by rehabilitating problem properties, by building collective efficacy among residents, and by creating economic opportunity in places where hope is in short supply. Our strategy for deploying those resources to complement progressive, evidence-informed law enforcement strategies has yielded sustained improvements in safety in cities as diverse as Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Boston, Jackson, Minneapolis, Milwaukee and Providence.

COMMENTS

We offer the following observations based upon two decades of experience working with police and community partners to improve safety and create both social and economic opportunity in distressed neighborhoods.

- **Building the capacity of trusted community groups in high crime neighborhoods is imperative to the success of community-oriented policing.**

Communities with persistently high crime and violence are also often characterized by low social cohesion and collective efficacy.ⁱⁱ In LISC's experience, this is highly relevant to the mission of the Task Force. It is extraordinarily difficult for police to effectively and efficiently build collaborative relationships in neighborhoods that lack strong, locally credible organizations that mobilize and represent residents in dialogue with police. Building the capacity of trusted community groups in these neighborhoods is therefore imperative to make community-oriented policing work.

- **Adequately resourcing coordination of cross-sector partnerships is instrumental to bridging divides that may arise in challenged communities.**

Building cross-sector partnerships between police and community organizations, as well as between police and other municipal agencies and non-profit service providers, is a worthwhile but resource-intensive endeavor. Good collaboration requires strong project management and political stewardship. Against a backdrop of distrust and disinvestment in communities, the stakes are high to ensure that cross-sector partnerships yield visible results. Providing adequate resources for the coordination of such partnerships is important. Over the last 20 years, LISC has invested in "safety coordinators" to address this need. Typically, these individuals are staff at non-profit organizations who are tasked with convening partners, developing workplans to address crime problems and facilitating mutual accountability. When tensions are high between residents and police, these coordinators have been instrumental to bridging divides to move concrete projects and programs forward. In the aftermath of crises, the relationships they have forged on both sides provide a solid foundation from which to pursue mutual assessment of challenges and pathways to reconciliation.

- **Investment in comprehensive efforts to address the interconnected challenges of high crime, high poverty neighborhoods is critical to strengthening communities and overcoming cynicism.**

Concerns about police legitimacy in high crime, high poverty neighborhoods are related to community challenges that drive crime. Problems such as clustered vacant properties and blight, failing schools and unemployment are therefore also relevant to the Task Force's commitment to promote crime reduction while building public trust. Investment in comprehensive efforts that address the interconnected challenges of high crime, high poverty neighborhoods is important. In particular, programs such as Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation and others under the White House Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative are a critical step forward to strengthening communities holistically, creating an environment more conducive to collaborative community-police problem-solving and trust-building.

- **Support for data-driven and evidence-informed decision-making by law enforcement leaders and policymakers should champion efforts to meaningfully engage residents in program development, design and assessment.**

The Obama Administration's commitment to supporting data-driven and evidence-informed programs in policing and criminal justice is important and should continue. In LISC's experience with BCJI and our Community Safety Initiative, we have observed that local leaders seeking to develop and implement responses to crime problems using data as well as input from residents often find that the two sources of information are inconsistent; residents' perceptions differ from what the data shows about where hot spots lie and what is driving crime. Navigating that disconnect poorly can fuel distrust between communities and police. Initiatives that recognize this complexity and provide time, funding and guidance to help local leaders manage it should be supported. The BCJI model offers one example for how local researchers and national technical assistance providers are aiding this work, by explicitly translating data for residents, developing their leadership skills and understanding of evidence-based practices, and involving them as key stakeholders in decision-making teams.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Expand federal support for comprehensive, neighborhood-based efforts to reduce crime and interconnected challenges of poverty and disinvestment in ways that champion collaborative problem-solving among community, law enforcement and local government leaders.** The Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program is an example of such an initiative for reasons cited above.
- **Expand opportunities for local law enforcement, particularly mid-level commanders and executives, to access training on how to build and sustain partnerships across sectors and with community leaders.** Investment by BJA in the "Developer + Police = Results" materials developed by LISC, by COPS in the *Building Our Way Out of Crime: The Transformative Power of Police – Community Developer Partnerships* book authored by Bill Geller and Lisa Belsky, and a forthcoming COPS/LISC curriculum on developer-police partnerships are examples.
- **Encourage accountability of local law enforcement to employ collaborative problem-solving methods, and to reward those officers who successfully build alliances or pursue non-traditional responses to crime problems in partnership with community groups.** Experiments with community-based Compstat and recognition by DOJ, IACP and Major Cities Chiefs of effective models are ways to support continued innovation in this area. In addition, the philanthropic leaders committed to My Brother's Keeper and related priorities could be encouraged to use their resources to celebrate best-practices and innovators, such as the way MetLife Foundation has honored and funded police leaders through its prestigious Community-Police Partnership Awards program for the last 14 years.ⁱⁱⁱ

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comment. LISC looks forward to continuing to contribute to the Task Force's important mission.

ⁱ The Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program (BCJI) is administered by the Bureau of Justice Assistance as part of the White House Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative. For more about BCJI and LISC's role, see www.lisc.org/bcji.

ⁱⁱ See work by Robert Sampson, including discussion in *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* published in 2012 by University of Chicago Press.

ⁱⁱⁱ Through the MetLife Foundation Community-Police Partnership Awards Program, LISC and MetLife Foundation have honored more than 100 partnerships between community groups and police which have yielded sustained crime reduction, increased trust and greater economic vitality in low-income and minority neighborhoods. For more information, see www.lisc.org/metlife.