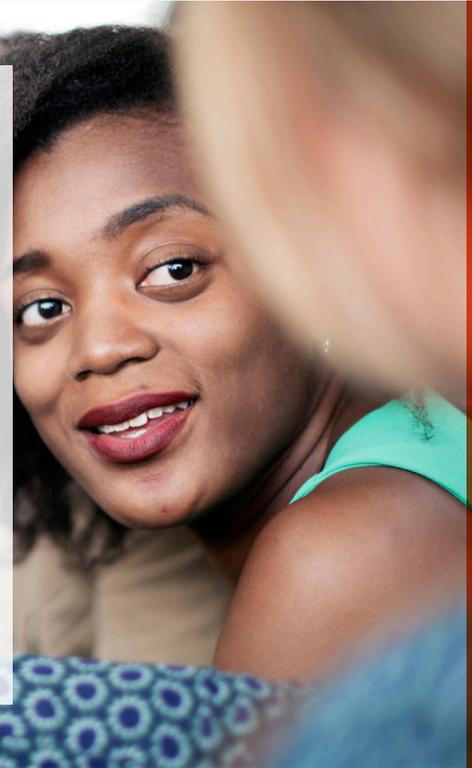




## Key Ideas for the Research-Practitioner Partnership

At the heart of the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation model are partnerships between researchers, police officers, staff at community organizations, and other neighborhood leaders working in high-crime neighborhoods. While straightforward in theory, these partnerships are in no way simple in practice.

Current and past BCJI researchers have given insights and recommendations on how to build a strong and effective researcher-practitioner partnership. These ideas are suggestions, not requirements, but they may be useful as a site chooses a research partner, as researchers and other partners establish their working relationship, and throughout planning and implementation.



### Choosing a Research Partner

Consider engaging a research team with different strengths: qualitative and quantitative research experience, for example, or a range of disciplines such as criminal justice, business/economics, social work, or geography. A background in action-based research is helpful, as well.



### More Than Planning in the Planning Phase

The planning phase for BCJI can be used to build strong communication avenues, establish responsibilities, and outline accountability. One research partner framed the time as a "convening process," where researchers focused on building relationships and engaging with the community in addition to measuring outcomes.



### Setting Clear Roles and Responsibilities

Assign responsibility in a collaborative way among the BCJI partners for tasks such as data collection, information distribution, and conflict management. We suggest writing an objective, role-based summation of responsibilities that moves the focus from individuals to organizations. This can be particularly beneficial when there is staff turnover at the many different agencies involved, as often happens over time. MOU's can help articulate clarity.



### Fostering an Expansive Community Relationship

Trust between the research partners and community partners is important. Aim to be clear about the expertise and knowledge the researchers can provide, but avoid the expectation that the research partner



*continued on reverse*

## The BCJI Approach

These powerful themes run through all BCJI projects.

#### DATA-DRIVEN

BCJI targets crime hot spots – often streets, properties or public spaces in communities that have struggled with crime for years. Researchers are engaged in the day-to-day work, helping partners examine problems, assess evidence-based solutions, and monitor progress.



#### COMMUNITY-ORIENTED:

BCJI champions active roles for residents in identifying problems, selecting strategies and creating safe and healthy environments.



#### SPURS REVITALIZATION:

BCJI tackles problem properties, unsafe streets and parks, unemployment, transit barriers and service gaps related to crime.



#### BUILDS PARTNERSHIPS:

BCJI taps the resources of public, nonprofit and community leaders to bring more resources and different approaches to bear on longstanding crime challenges for lasting change.



## Key Ideas for the Research-Practitioner Partnership, *continued*

should “call the shots.” When that’s the case, the researchers can feel as though the overall success of the project is on their shoulders, and community members can feel that there is a disconnect between their needs and the project’s goals.

### Planning for Clear Communications

It can be difficult to attract residents to community gatherings that are solely dedicated to sharing data or other research. Consider piggybacking onto regularly scheduled, well-attended community events. When presenting, avoid research-focused jargon. It can be confusing to community partners, and in some cases it has been perceived as demeaning.



### Remaining Flexible

Both community and research partners emphasize the need for flexibility throughout the BCJI planning and implementation phases. Roles and responsibilities often organically emerge at the start, falling into place more because of an individual’s knowledge, skill, or proximity than because of title. In many cases, the type of research changes over time from a quantitative outcome evaluation to almost entirely qualitative process evaluation, and so researchers either must rely on those who have these skills or learn them.



### Connect the Researcher with a Wider Support

For research partners in academic institutions, aim to establish a beneficial relationship between the university and BCJI. Possibilities include a unique opportunity for graduate and undergraduate students to participate and/or new relationships with the target community partners.



*Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is the national technical assistance provider for BCJI, working in cooperation with the Bureau of Justice Assistance. This paper was supported by Grant No. 2012-AJ-BX-K046 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance to LISC. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.*

## Resources

There are a number of great resources that discuss the research-practitioner relationship in depth. Here are a few options to learn more.

George Mason University’s Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP) eConsortium <http://gmuconsortium.org/>

Crime and Justice Research Alliance Expert Directory  
<http://crimeandjusticeresearchalliance.org/experts/>

Project Safe Neighborhoods: Working with a Research Partner FAQ  
<http://www.psnmsu.com/documents/ResearchPartnerQ&A.pdf>

BJA’s Center for Research Partnerships and Program Evaluation (CRPPE)  
<https://www.bja.gov/programs/crppe/index.html>