



## Concept Intro: Community Engagement

*Engage residents. Involve the community in decision-making.*

In neighborhoods where fear and distrust too often shape daily life, sites funded by the Innovations in Community Based Crime Reduction (CBCR) program have documented improvements—more people coming out to participate in neighborhood events, new cadres of local leaders devoting time and energy to making their communities safer, and residents reporting greater confidence in public safety strategies. The key is having intentional goals and strategies in place to increase resident involvement.

Experts in the field say that place-based public safety and neighborhood revitalization strategies should be comprehensive: supporting what makes a neighborhood thrive, from affordable housing to safe streets. To focus this increasingly holistic role, practitioners should incorporate an intentional strategy to ensure the people who live, work, and play in the community have a seat at the table when decisions that will create a lasting impact on their community are being made.

When thinking about incorporating the community into efforts to improve public safety, there can be confusion about outreach efforts versus engagement efforts. Outreach includes activities such as posting fliers and holding public meetings where people can approach the microphone and share their thoughts. This can create a situation, however, where two sides talk to each other without follow-up or accountability. Engagement involves more give-and-take, where everyone at the table are treated as equals and talk with each other to collectively reach agreed upon goals.

Imagine resident engagement as a process. At the start, you let residents know the purpose and goals of the initiative and then identify diverse ways they can contribute to public safety and revitalization efforts. These opportunities should naturally provide residents an ability to take on greater leadership roles, where at the other end of the process, the community can take the reins to guide strategic decisions affecting their neighborhood.

### Key Terms

**Recruitment**—the act of connecting with neighborhood residents, local businesses and other community stakeholders to inform and educate them about the CBCR program with the goal of encouraging participation.

**Engagement**—creating meaningful roles and opportunities for community members to make significant contributions to the CBCR planning and implementation process.

**Capacity Building**—ensuring residents and other key stakeholders have opportunities to learn the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective public safety partners.

## The CBCR Approach

These powerful themes run through all CBCR projects.

### DATA-DRIVEN

CBCR 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:

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



### SPURS REVITALIZATION:

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



### BUILDS PARTNERSHIPS:

CBCR 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.



## Concept Intro: Community Engagement, *continued*

### Helpful Tips

#### Start Making Connections



To seek out participants to support the CBCR efforts, visit places where residents go, such as schools, parks, community centers, places of worship, businesses, and transportation hubs. Ask folks if they can refer you to community leaders, neighbors concerned about safety issues, or neighborhood organizations interested in supporting efforts to revitalize the neighborhood. Better yet, ask them if they would be willing to go with you to introduce you yourselves!

#### Create Diverse Opportunities for Resident Participation



Individuals have different motivations and capacity to participate so opportunities should provide residents multiple entry points to get involved and stay engaged. These programs can connect your team with new people and identify leadership opportunities for residents.

#### Community Asset Mapping



Talk with key community stakeholders/influencers to learn about current initiatives already underway in the community and their goals to see if there are opportunities to collaborate. Identifying common goals will lead to stronger community partnerships.

#### Plan Training Sessions



Training programs can help break communication barriers, so community members have an equal understanding of key concepts, data, and information that is used to make decisions that impact their neighborhood. Topics might include Crime Data and Mapping 101, local zoning and code enforcement regulations, area transportation plans, and potential housing and business development opportunities and barriers. Use these trainings to craft a shared language, values, and vision for change.

#### Incorporate Residents into the Data Collection Process



Residents are the experts of their community. By using their expertise to support the data collection and analysis process, your team can cultivate and strengthen bonds of trust. Programs can include participatory action research, systematic social observations, focus groups and creating survey tools as vehicles for resident inclusion. These type of efforts ensure that traditional data sources are balanced with local knowledge so a more holistic experience is included in all decision-making processes.

#### Resources

The LISC Institute for Comprehensive Community Development is an excellent resource for thinking about how to engage residents in revitalization efforts. [www.instituteccd.org/resources/5218](http://www.instituteccd.org/resources/5218)

For a deeper exploration of the building blocks of a resident-centered community building strategy, read through these guiding principles from a collaboration by The Aspen Institute and Jacobs Center. <https://tinyurl.com/y8gfykjk>

For more information on lessons learned from sites receiving revitalization funding through the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program, read through several links provided by The Center for the Study of Social Policy. <https://tinyurl.com/y7ugyfp5>

*The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is the national technical assistance provider for CBCR, working in cooperation with the Bureau of Justice Assistance. LISC appreciates Katherine Greider for her partnership to produce this paper.*

*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.*