BEYOND MODELS: EXPLORING KEY CITY CAPACITIES FOR SUSTAINABLY REDUCING COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

By Vaughn Crandall, Marina Gonzalez and Reygan Cunningham

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community violence prevention is an emerging field of public safety work focused on reducing and preventing lethal and sublethal violence.[1] Yet, despite growing awareness of evidence-informed approaches, historic levels of investment and political support from the federal government, few cities have been able to sustainably reduce community violence at the city level through purposeful strategies. With support from The Pew Charitable Trusts, the California Partnership for Safe Communities (CPSC) worked with a diverse range of field experts to identify key capacities that may play essential roles in reducing community violence at the city level and over time.

The project team began by combining findings from research across a range of disciplines and interviews with leading subject matter experts to identify key capacities that were likely to play important roles in the ability of cities to sustainably reduce community violence. The six identified capacities were:

1. Political governance and public sector leadership,
2. Data-informed problem analysis,
3. Cross-sector collaboration on a shared strategy,
4. Effective operational management,
5. Robust violence reduction infrastructure, and
6. Sustainability planning and institutionalization.

To test and refine these capacities, CPSC project leads explored the role of each capacity in seven cities with long-term violence challenges as well as significant experience with violence prevention efforts: Baltimore; Boston; Cincinnati; Los Angeles; New Orleans; Oakland; and Philadelphia. This second stage of the study surfaced the following **city findings**:

- Cities with more key capacities present appeared to be more successful. These cities were able to assemble violence reduction strategies that formal evaluations found to be effective in reducing violence over multi-year time horizons.[2]

- Higher levels of effective political governance corresponded with more robust operational management, which appeared to play a crucial role in cities' ability to reduce violence;

- Sustained funding, a clear theory of change, a strategic focus on a highest-risk of violence population and organizational support were associated with effective CVI ecosystems. These ecosystems appeared to help cities sustain longer-term reductions.

- Problem-oriented, data-driven, collaborative policing appears to play an important role, operationally and politically;

- The challenge of scaling programs and strategies in larger cities is significant, but can drive creative adaptation when supported by robust management structures; and

- Sustainability and institutionalization of violence reduction strategies appear to depend heavily on stable political governance and effective management.

These findings have significant implications for violence prevention policy. In order to achieve city-level reductions, cities may need to pay greater attention to building these local capacities relative to adopting any specific violence prevention model.

Effective political governance at the city level may be essential to successful violence prevention and intervention efforts in cities. No theme had stronger support from experts at the local and national level. Our analysis found that political governance was indeed critical to authorize, implement, and sustain violence prevention and intervention efforts in our sample of major U.S. cities. A complex combination of factors - community advocacy, public crisis, a ripening of political will - appeared to move cities to action on community violence, but city leaders responded to these windows of opportunity in different ways.

Even with a champion mayor or city manager, many cities fail to generate or sustain reductions in violence at the city level. Outcomes within and across various violence prevention models vary widely, often as a result of implementation challenges. At the end of the day, who should be accountable to implement a city's strategy and how do they work?

Our analysis and experience suggest that cities that succeed develop a senior management team and a management process specific to their violence-reduction strategy. Cities that succeed also develop cross-sector collaboration within and among government, law enforcement, community-based violence prevention and intervention organizations and individual community actors.

In summary, these findings suggest that rather than viewing community violence prevention as a program that cities can buy or fund and "plug in", community violence is a durable problem that local government prioritizes, develops specific infrastructure for, and actively manages in partnership with community stakeholders. Through this lens, by building these six capacities, major cities could more reliably succeed in reducing community violence in the near term and sustaining reductions into the long term.

Why some cities succeed in sustainably reducing community violence while others fail remains a pressing question for our society. This research opens up new possibilities for how policymakers, researchers, and funders can better support cities in this difficult work.

INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

Violence prevention and intervention is an growing field of public safety work focused on reducing and preventing gun violence in cities across America. Its early roots can be traced to street outreach efforts in cities like Chicago and Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the emerging field of community policing developed in the 1980s. In the late 20th century, many of these efforts evolved to focus on addressing retaliatory gang violence in urban settings (Pugliese et al, 2022). Since the 1990s these efforts have coalesced into a distinct new field of practice. Today, there are a wide variety of violence intervention and prevention models operating at different scales and with varying focus. A common theory of change is that interventions focused on those who are most

likely to be victims or perpetrators of gun violence can effectively reduce their risk of harm (Ervin et al., 2022).

Yet, despite growing awareness of evidence-informed approaches to violence prevention and historic levels of public and private investment, few cities with historic violence problems have been able to sustainably reduce community violence at the city level through purposeful strategies. Across jurisdictions and over time, the outcomes of leading program models vary widely in terms of impact on neighborhood and city levels of violence (Pugliese et al., 2022.) Why some cities succeed in sustainably reducing community violence while others fail is a pressing question.

With support from The Pew Charitable Trusts, senior staff from the California Partnership for Safe Communities (CPSC) worked with a diverse range of field experts to identify key capacities that may play essential roles in reducing community violence at the city level and over time.[3] To carry out this interdisciplinary study, CPSC project leaders combined findings from available research across a variety of disciplines with the knowledge of leading subject matter experts to identify a set of key capacities to examine. They then assessed the role of those capacities in violence reduction efforts in seven major cities over 15 years and explored the influence of state governments in supporting those cities' violence prevention efforts.

This report documents their investigation, presents their findings and concludes with a discussion of potential implications for public policy.

IDENTIFYING THE KEY CAPACITIES

To identify hypothetical key capacities, CPSC project leads performed an exploratory literature review of research on criminal justice, public health and violence prevention, as well as of relevant research from non-criminal justice fields such as organizational management, political science, and public administration. They also identified and interviewed a diverse panel of subject matter experts (SMEs) from across the nation, seeking their insights into potential key capacities. The project team then synthesized this information to identify an initial set of six key capacities. Key themes that emerged from each of these preliminary steps are highlighted below.

Literature review summary

To ground the identification of the hypothesized key capacities in existing research literature, the project team gathered and synthesized research findings on the ability of cities to sustainably reduce community violence at the city level and in the near term. Project team members searched and reviewed relevant literature across a range of disciplines, including criminology, sociology, public health, public administration, organizational management, and political science. This approach allowed evaluation evidence to inform the initial list of hypothesized key capacities to the extent possible, while also identifying gaps in existing scholarship.

A central goal during this phase of the project was to bridge the gap between traditional areas of research on community violence, such as criminology and public health, and other potentially useful disciplines, such as political science, management, and public administration, that examine how cities are managed and governed and how they take on complex public problems. For example, political will and political governance are central themes of inquiry in public administration and public policy, while our review found them occasionally mentioned in criminology and violence prevention literature but not as a central theme of theory or practice. For complex reasons, political governance appears to not be a central frame of the violence prevention field.

The full literature review associated with this project (California Partnership for Safe Communities, 2023) is available on CPSC's website (thecapartnership.org).

National Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)

The CPSC project team complemented their literature review by interviewing recognized subject matter experts (SMEs) in the field of violence prevention and intervention including intervention practitioners, technical assistance providers, policymakers, public officials, and researchers.[4] CPSC leads asked these SMEs, about important violence reduction capacities, scholarly literature relevant to the CPSC literature review, possible cities to include in the analysis, and the role of states in supporting violence reduction efforts. The project team recorded, transcribed, and coded the interviews.

Hypothesized Key Capacities

The CPSC research team then synthesized the findings from the literature review and SME interviews to identify an initial set of six hypothesized capacities that, based on the available evidence, were likely to play important roles in reducing community violence at the city level and over time. These capacities are defined below, along with an explanation of how researchers determined if each was present in a city, guided and informed the study's subsequent analysis of seven cities' violence reduction efforts.

(1) POLITICAL GOVERNANCE. This capacity is present when city executives such as mayors and city managers - moved to action by a combination of advocacy, political will and public crisis - identify community violence as a top priority, make a public commitment to an evidence-informed city-level strategy, and hold agency leaders and external partners accountable for violence reduction results through political governance.

(2) DATA-INFORMED PROBLEM ANALYSIS. This is present when a city uses data to identify people and networks involved in recent violence and at the highest risk of future violence, the context and motives behind those incidents, and the micro-places where violence is most likely to occur. Academic researchers and technical assistance organizations are instrumental partners in developing these data-informed analyses.

(3) CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION ON A SHARED STRATEGY. This is present when government agencies and community organizations collectively focus their expertise and resources on addressing community violence through a joint strategy. To achieve effective collaboration, a local convener or/and coordinating body is usually necessary. Ultimately, various sub-strategies must link together in a coherent umbrella strategy guided by a shared theory of change.

(4) EFFECTIVE OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT. This is present when a city establishes a formal management structure to drive its strategy. This includes a full-time director position(s) and management team that are accountable to political champions and powerful enough to move a citywide strategy. This team utilizes a performance management process to implement the city's chosen strategy(s) and reports performance metrics/indicators to city executives and public stakeholders.

(5) EFFECTIVE VIOLENCE REDUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE. This capacity can be divided into two pieces of municipal infrastructure most relevant to reducing near-term violence:

> (a) An effective CVI ecosystem. A CVI ecosystem needs to be able to engage a city's highest risk of violence population effectively and at scale. Such an ecosystem includes a coherent theory of change, sufficient and sustained funding and staffing, an organizational and leadership development strategy, and management and data measurement capacity. Effective approaches are intensive, relationship-based and harm-reduction focused. This requires ongoing investment and capacity building.

> (b) A police department committed to reducing gun violence and building legitimacy (effective policing for violence prevention). This is present when the local police department uses data to identify the places and people where risk of violence is hyper-concentrated, engages in problem-oriented policing approaches, builds functional working relationships with community intervention partners also working to reduce violence, mobilizes focused enforcement operations when necessary, and systematically works to improve homicide and shooting clearance rates. This also often requires organizational capacity building.

(6) SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION of effective violence reduction strategies. These are present when cities:
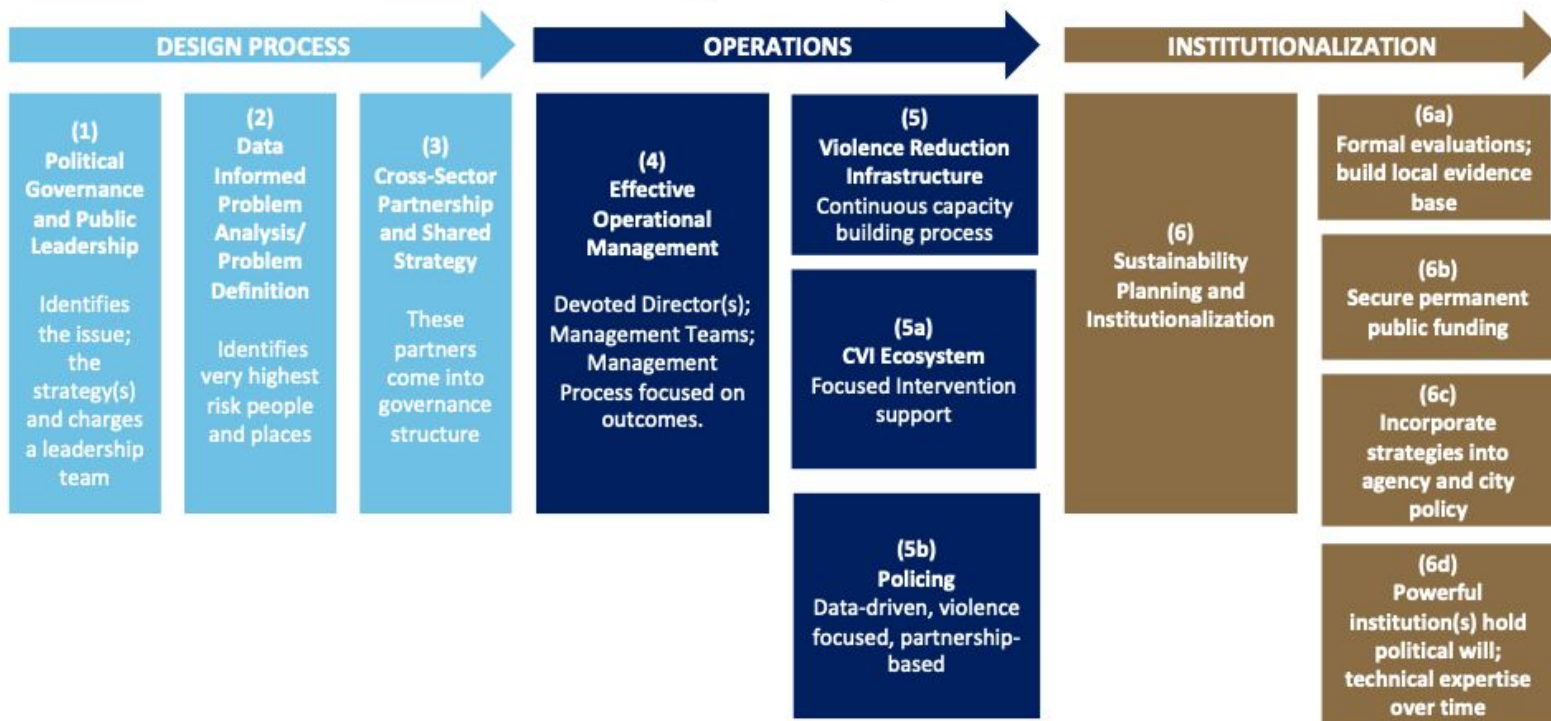
- Conduct formal evaluations to build local evidence of effectiveness;

- Secure devoted, permanent public funding to sustain strategy infrastructure;

- Incorporate violence reduction strategies into agency and city policy; and

- Develop shared governance through a powerful non-governmental institution or collaborative that is able to hold political will and technical expertise over time, and across political administrations, specific to reducing community violence.

Figure X, below, groups the hypothesized key capacities according to their function across the life of a violence reduction initiative.

The category labeled "Design Process" refers to capacities that are especially relevant in planning an initiative. "Operations" characterizes capacities at play especially during the implementation of an initiative. "Institutionalization" applies to key capacities influencing violence prevention programs' long-term sustainability.

For simplicity this is represented as a linear development process. Many SMEs noted that it is also cyclical; with promising efforts developing and eroding as political administrations shift over time.

Key Capacities Visual Overview: Strategy Development

DESIGN PROCESS			OPERATIONS		INSTITUTIONALIZATION	
(1) Political Governance and Public Leadership Identifies the issue; the strategy(s) and charges a leadership team	**(2) Data Informed Problem Analysis/ Problem Definition** Identifies very highest risk people and places	**(3) Cross-Sector Partnership and Shared Strategy** These partners come into governance structure	**(4) Effective Operational Management** Devoted Director(s); Management Teams; Management Process focused on outcomes.	**(5) Violence Reduction Infrastructure** Continuous capacity building process **(5a) CVI Ecosystem** Focused Intervention support **(5b) Policing** Data-driven, violence focused, partnership-based	**(6) Sustainability Planning and Institutionalization**	**(6a) Formal evaluations; build local evidence base** **(6b) Secure permanent public funding** **(6c) Incorporate strategies into agency and city policy** **(6d) Powerful institution(s) hold political will; technical expertise over time**

METHODOLOGY & FINDINGS

CPSC project leads explored the relevance of this key capacity framework in local violence reduction efforts by examining the presence and influence of each capacity in seven U.S. cities. To be included in the study, these cities had to have a significant level of gun violence (homicide rates above 10.0 per 100,000 population). They also had to have implemented identifiable violence reduction strategies between 2005 and 2020 and conducted formal evaluations of these strategies. Based on these criteria, SME input and extensive deliberations with The Pew Charitable Trusts, the following cities were selected to test the six capacities: Baltimore; Boston; Cincinnati; Los Angeles; New Orleans; Oakland and Philadelphia.[5]

For each of the cities in this sample, the research team determined if a capacity was present, partially present or absent by systematically analyzing and integrating information and data gathered from across four resource categories.[6]

- **Impact evaluations** – The CPSC team gathered and analyzed extant program evaluations and research literature from each city over this 15-year period.[7]

- **Public Record Review** – CPSC researchers collected public documentation of violence reduction efforts in each of the seven sample cities. Sources included media coverage, mayors' violence prevention plans, community intervention strategies, police department strategy documents and reports, etc.

- **Qualitative interviews and analysis** – The project team interviewed four to six local leaders who worked directly on violence reduction efforts in each city during this time period.[8] These interviews were coded and analyzed to identify key themes related to the effectiveness of each initiative and the presence or absence of key capacities as well as obstacles.

- **Review of Violence Trends** – The CPSC project team also reviewed city level homicide and aggravated assault trends in each of the seven cities during the study window.[9]

This color-coded chart indicates whether the key capacities were determined to be present (green), partially present (yellow) or absent (red) in each of the seven cities during the first full year of strategy implementation. Sustainability was assessed based on a combination of local stakeholder perspectives, evaluation results and review of city level violence trends over time.. The final row of the chart summarizes formal evaluation outcomes for each city.

FIGURE Y – KEY CAPACITIES ANALYSIS IN SEVEN U.S. CITIES

Key Capacities	Boston 2007	Oakland 2012	Los Angeles 2011	Cincinnati 2007	Philadelphia 2013	Baltimore 2007	New Orleans 2012
1.Political Governance	PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PRESENT
2.Data-Informed Problem Analysis	PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PRESENT
3.Cross-Sector Collaboration / Shared Strategy	PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT
4.Effective Operational Management	PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT
5a.Effective CVI Ecosystem	PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT
5b.Effective Policing for Violence Prevention	PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT LEANING ABSENT
6.Sustainability Planning / Institutionalization	PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT	PARTIALLY PRESENT LEANING ABSENT
Impact Evaluations →	Ceasefire- related reductions in gang-related shootings. (Braga, Hureau & Papachristos, 2014) Hot spots policing: reductions in violent crimes at hot spot level. (Braga, Hureau & Papachristos, 2011) Boston Reentry Initiative: individual reductions for violent rearrest. (Braga, Piehl & Hureau, 2009)	Ceasefire-related reductions in homicides and gang shootings at the city level; program related reductions at census block and group level. (Braga et al., 2019).	Mixed evidence of GRYD -related reductions in violence in GRYD zones. (Cahill, et al., 2015) GRYD Incident Response Program (Leap, et al., 2020b) and the Community Safety Partnership (Leap et al., 2020a) found notable effects on retaliation shootings and violence at treatment sites.	CIRV related reductions in gang- involved homicides and shootings at the city level; sustained 24- and 42-months post-interventio n. (Engel, Tillyer & Corsaro, 2013)	Focused Deterrence: Mixed with evidence of neighborhood impact (Roman et al., 2018). CPTED (Moyer et al., 2019) and Cure Violence (Roman, Klein & Wolff, 2018): reductions in shootings at treated neighborhood sites. Hot Spots Policing: mixed results from two programs. (Groff, et al., 2015; Sorg et al,. 2013)	Safe Streets: Mixed results across sites, tending toward failure. (Buggs, Webster & Crifasi, 2022) Hot Spots Policing: no associated reductions in homicide at hot spot level. (Webster, Buggs & Crifasi, 2018) Focused Deterrence: no program related reduction in homicide. (Buggs, 2018)	Program-related reductions in overall homicides and group- involved homicides (Corsaro & Engel, 2015); with diminishing effects after 24 months. (Corsaro et al., 2018)

KEY FINDINGS

This grid presented in Figure Y reveals several important findings.[10] Across cities, we observed the following:

Cities with more key capacities fully present during strategy implementation appeared to be more successful in reducing violence. These cities were able to assemble violence reduction strategies that formal evaluations found to be effective in reducing violence, over multi-year time horizons.[11]

Cities with more effective political governance appeared to have more effective and durable operational management. These cities also appeared to be more successful at reducing violence. Conversely, cities with weaker or shorter-term political governance tended to have weaker operational management and tended to be less successful in sustaining reductions.

As stressed by interviewed SMEs, **an effective CVI Ecosystem requires a combination of sustained funding, a clear theory of change, organizational support and a strategic focus on the highest-risk population.** Cities appeared to be less effective in sustaining long-term reductions when they did not make sustainable funding commitments, were unclear about their programmatic goals, or did not exercise effective management of intervention efforts.

Effective Policing for Violence Prevention appears to play an important role, operationally and politically. Research emphasizes the effectiveness of focused violence reduction approaches that partner police agencies with community organizations (Braga et al., 2018). Local leaders interviewed from cities with high-capacity police agencies stressed the importance of law enforcement as partners; while local leaders interviewed from cities with low-capacity police agencies emphasized their challenges. Police agencies that were not well organized to reduce violence and/or were seen as adversarial or illegitimate appeared to present a serious challenge to effectiveness and sustainability.

Scale poses particular challenges for big cities but can also drive creative adaptation. Rather than a single umbrella approach, Los Angeles and Philadelphia used various sub-strategies across specific places and contexts. Yet both appeared to achieve a critical mass of effective work over a multi-year period, driven by strong political governance and management and accountability structures. Los Angeles, for example, created a sophisticated and durable city-based infrastructure (The Mayor's Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development, GRYD) - in partnership with a robust network of local CVI organizations - to develop, support, and evaluate community violence intervention and prevention efforts over the long term.

Sustainability is a central challenge, which is often threatened by political transitions. Sustainability and institutionalization appears to depend heavily on stable political governance - supported by sustained community advocacy - that maintains essential management capacity and infrastructure over time. This continuity allowed a subset of cities to pursue formal evaluations, long-term public funding, local policy change, and development of shared governance with community stakeholders. These cities tended to sustain their strategies over time and across mayoral administrations.

DISCUSSION & POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Based on their own experience and extensive consultation with field leaders, scholars, and practitioners over the course of this project, CPSC project leads identified the following policy implications of these findings.

A shift from focusing on models to building city capacities: The violence prevention field benefits from a large and growing knowledge and practice base. Hundreds of program evaluations and decades of practical experience in communities have helped to shape an emerging alignment around a relatively narrow set of interventions capable of reducing community violence in the near-term (Ervin et al., 2022). At the same time, both national and local policy conversations continue to focus largely on "brand name" models (i.e., is a given city doing street outreach, focused deterrence, hospital response, hot spot policing, adapting CBT/CBI approaches and/or crime prevention through environmental design?).

While these various models have contributed greatly to the development of the field, in every case their outcomes vary widely from city to city depending on a variety of factors.

Historical competition across models for resources, attention, and credit has also obscured their common principles, deep (potential) complementarity, and shared challenges with effective implementation (Ervin et al., 2022). Taken together, too little attention has been paid to the deeper issue *of what it takes for cities to sustainably reduce violence in the near-term and at the city-level.*

City and community leaders need to understand how to manage, coordinate, and govern on the city level to reduce serious violence sustainably. Assembling, implementing, and sustaining an effective city-level strategy is a complex and difficult task that requires a combination of political leadership; strategy design; partnership brokering; management drive; technical skill; research support and community legitimacy.[12]

In this context, a key capacity lens pushes us to consider the *city and community ecosystem itself* as one primary focus of efforts to reduce community violence. Building the capacities that cities – including community organizations - need to effectively mount and adapt any combination of evidence-informed models may be the essential task at hand for the violence prevention field. Relevant knowledge and experience for how to build such capacities exists in the violence prevention field, but it is not consistently synthesized or deployed for this particular purpose.
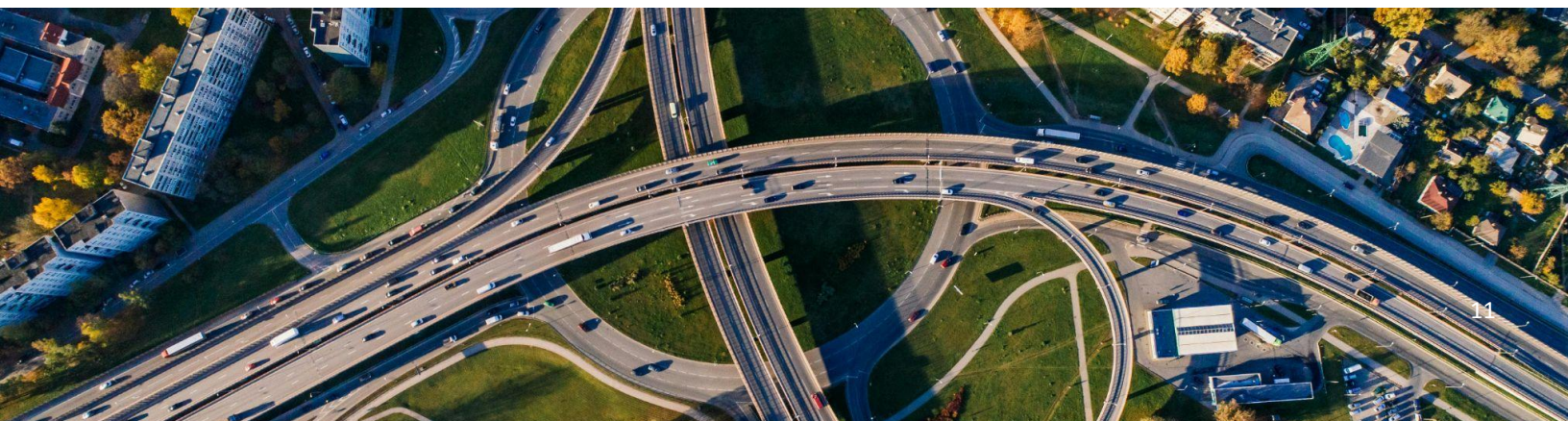
Research, Evaluation, and Technical Assistance: The "value proposition" of a key capacity approach is that by focusing on building these six capacities, major cities could more reliably succeed in reducing community violence in the near term and sustaining reductions into the long term. To fully test this proposition, the field needs to take three important steps.

1. Develop baseline measures of these six capacities in major cities, grounded in objective administrative data to the extent possible. A "capacity assessment tool" is necessary to understand where any given city is on the six capacities at a particular moment in time and measure growth or erosion of capacities over time.

2. Deploy focused technical assistance and support to help cities strengthen their weakest capacities. While more work is needed to synthesize and codify the tools, templates, and approaches to do this capacity-strengthening, this knowledge exists now in the violence prevention and intervention field.

3. Embed these capacity assessments and measures in rigorous impact evaluations — alongside more standard program implementation measures — to measure the extent to which strengthening capacities (both individually and as a set) improves violence reduction outcomes in the near and longer term. The findings of these evaluations could have profound implications for public policy, funding investment and further research.

The importance of effective political governance: While we conclude that all six capacities likely play important roles in the ability of cities to successfully reduce community violence, no theme had stronger support from experts at the local and national level than the need for effective political governance. Our analysis supports political governance as critical to authorize, develop, implement, and sustain violence prevention efforts and suggests it either supports or severely limits the development of the other five key capacities.

Unfortunately, while public safety is a central political issue in most major U.S. cities, mayors and city managers rarely come into office with any expertise in community violence reduction policy and practice. What's more, the kind of political championing, cross-sector bridge building, and hands-on accountability role needed for violence reduction efforts to succeed is unusual. It is not enough to advocate to "do something" about violence or make a funding commitment. A mayor and/or city manager has to actively *drive* the strategy and hold staff and partners accountable for violence reduction outcomes.

Further compounding this challenge is that most cities that are moved to action on this issue have done so in response to a public safety and/or police legitimacy crisis and as a result of sustained and strategic community advocacy. Record levels of homicide, for example, or the killing of unarmed civilians by police officers can create immense political pressure to act. While this pressure can be leveraged to fundamentally re-orient a city's approach to violence prevention in a more effective way, it also creates incentives to act in counter-productive ways (doubling down on zero tolerance policing, for example). City executives need special support to play their critical roles as political champions and violence prevention strategy leaders more effectively.

Building public and CVI management capacity: Even with a champion mayor or city manager, many cities fail to generate or sustain progress on reducing violence. Outcomes within and across various models vary widely, often as a result of implementation challenges. At the end of the day, who is accountable for implementing a city's strategy and how do they work? Our analysis and experience suggest that cities that succeed develop a senior management team and a specific management process.

In the context of reducing violence, this requires cross-sector collaboration within and among government, law enforcement, community-based violence prevention organizations, and individual community actors (University of Pennsylvania Crime and Justice Policy Lab and California Partnership for Safe Communities, 2023). To successfully reduce retaliatory shootings, these actors must work closely together, under time pressure, with little margin for error, and in the face of a constantly evolving problem. Public managers (police executives, Offices of Violence Prevention directors, mayors' senior staff) and managers of local CVI organizations play particularly important roles in this context.

To be clear, building community capacity to engage in violence intervention and prevention work is critically important and should continue to be resourced and celebrated (Buggs, 2022). Community organizations also need their city partners to be well-organized, intentional, and have a defined strategy such that community efforts at the individual, hospital, and neighborhood levels can be well-supported, complementary, and add up to city-level violence reductions (Gripp et al., 2020).

Unfortunately, there have historically been few structured opportunities for public and community intervention managers to develop their skills and approach. At a national level, where do public and CVI managers go to learn how to lead evidence-informed violence prevention and intervention strategies in major cities? While recent initiatives by The University of Chicago Crime Lab (CVI Leadership Academy, n.d.) and others are very promising, this area needs additional support, investment, and creative thinking.

Engaging the field: In 2023, many actors are in motion on the issue of community violence. The federal government; many state governments; a large swath of major cities; a growing set of major national foundations; a growing movement of CVI advocates, technical assistance providers, and intermediary organizations; various professional associations such as The National Offices of Violence Prevention (OVP) Network, Major City Chiefs Association (MCCA), and the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and scholarly associations, such as The American Society of Criminology and The Black and Brown Researchers Collective.

Community violence intervention and policing are entire fields that deserve focused support, inquiry, and development. The violence prevention and intervention field also needs to continue to grapple with how those components fit together in the context of reducing violence at the city level. Additional attention to the challenges and opportunities identified in this report may help the field make greater sustained progress towards safety for communities most impacted by violence.

CONCLUSION

Addressing community violence effectively and sustainably is a pressing challenge for the field and for society. Failing to answer this challenge has staggering equity, social, fiscal, and economic costs.

Why some cities succeed in sustainably reducing community violence while others fail is still poorly understood. In this context, a key capacity approach has significant potential. It represents a useful synthesis of research and practice and a needed reframing—away from community violence reduction as a program that cities can buy or fund and "plug in", toward a problem that local governments and communities prioritize, develop specific infrastructure for, and actively manage in partnership.

A critical mass of mayors, cities, states, and the federal government are motivated to act on the challenge of community violence. The level of funding investment in this issue has reached historic levels over the last several years. By focusing research, technical support, and policymaker attention on building local capacities to mount, manage, and sustain these strategies, cities may make more significant and sustained progress in addressing this critical public safety issue.

FOOTNOTES

[1] The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention define community violence as "violence [that] happens between unrelated individuals who may or may not know each other, generally outside the home" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.).

[2] Although long-term evaluations of these strategies are generally absent, CPSC reviewed long-term violence trends and information from local stakeholder interviews to explore the degree to which these reductions were sustained over the study period.

[3] Community gun violence plays a dominant role in both lethal and sublethal community violence, both in terms of the share of victimizations and in public perceptions. For this reason, this project focused primarily on firearm-related community violence.

[4] List of Subject Matter Experts: Professor Anthony Braga (Crime and Justice Policy Lab, University of Pennsylvania); Aqeela Sherrills (Community Based Public Safety Collective), Professor Daniel Webster (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health), David Kennedy (National Network for Safe Communities, John Jay College of Criminal Justice), David Muhammad (National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform), Fatimah Loren Dreier (Health Alliance for Violence Intervention), Fernando Rejón (Urban Peace Institute), Jesse Jannetta (Justice Policy Center, Urban Institute), Paul Carrillo (Giffords Center for Violence Intervention) Professor Rod Brunson (University of Maryland),Professor Rodrigo Canales (Boston University), Professor Tamara Herold (University of Nevada Las Vegas), Thomas Abt (Center for the Study and Practice of Violence Reduction, University of Maryland), Professor Tracey Meares (The Justice Collaboratory).

[5] CPSC also sought out cities that represented a diverse array of population sizes; U.S. regions; socioeconomic characteristics and political dynamics.

[6] Two Excel matrices were created, combining the hypothesized key capacities, findings from local stakeholder interviews, public record review, and impact evaluations. Two members of the CPSC research team then independently coded each city by capacity, based on all available information. For capacities one through five, they coded whether each capacity was present, partially present, or absent during the first full year of strategy implementation. For capacity six (sustainability) they coded whether the city took steps to sustain violence reduction programs and whether formal evaluations showed continued impact on community violence. The preliminary analysis was then shared with at least one key informant in each of the seven cities and a selection of our national SME panel for input and feedback. Two non-conflicted reviewers, subject matter experts in the field who were not involved in the project, also reviewed and provided feedback in the overall analysis.

[7] CPSC project team identified over 30 impact evaluations of violence prevention efforts in these cities during this time period.

[8] CPSC sought representation across city government/mayor's office; the police department; community violence intervention practitioners; community advocates and a local scholar knowledgeable of these efforts (usually a lead evaluator).

[9] While the project team performed a variety of statistical tests to explore changes in city-level violence trends, this was contextual and exploratory and did not seek to establish causation or render a verdict on the effectiveness of local strategies.

[10] Like much of the pre-existing violence reduction research, the absence of experimental control groups in evaluating violence reduction strategies limits the ability to make causal interpretations. Our findings are reliant on common themes and patterns and we do not seek to draw causal inferences. Given the size of our city sample, the generalizability of our findings to other jurisdictions is inherently limited. This was an exploratory, mixed methods study that seeks to investigate the key capacities that appear to play an influential role in the success of violence reduction strategies.

[11] Although long-term evaluations of these strategies are generally absent, CPSC reviewed long-term violence trends and information from local stakeholder interviews to explore the degree to which these reductions were sustained.

[12] This section draws both from this key capacities exploration as well as the University of Pennsylvania Crime and Justice Policy Lab and California Partnership for Safe Communities white paper "Invest in Governance and Management to Make Violence Reduction Efforts Successful." See references.

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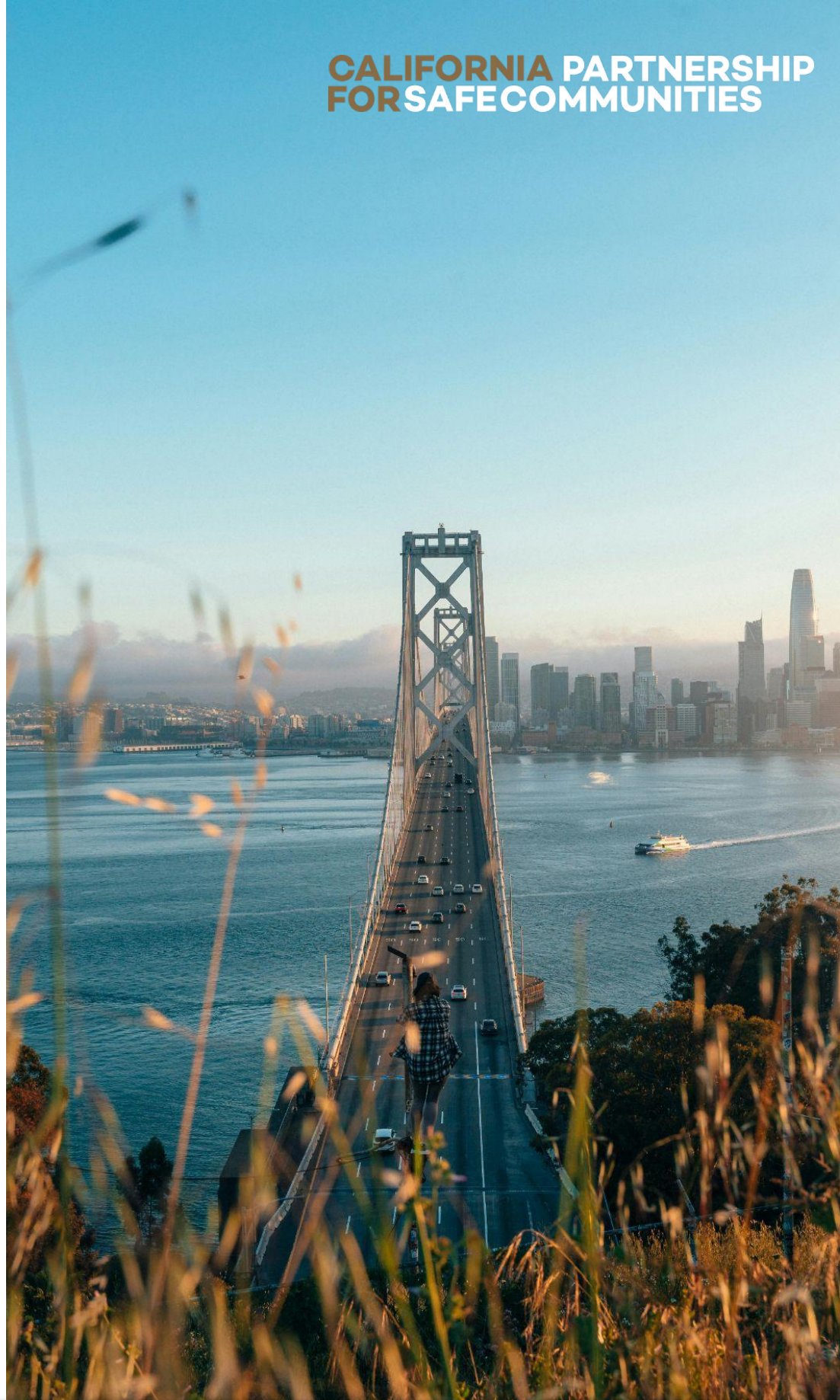
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