

# Racial Equity Framework for Community Violence Intervention Solicitations

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## Recommendations are as follows:

### Recommendation #1:

Define Equity in Community Violence Intervention as both a Process and Outcome

### Recommendation #2:

Define the Community Violence Intervention Strategies that Comprise an Integrated and Coordinated Violence Reduction Ecosystem

### Recommendation #3:

To Maximize Impact, Prioritize High-Need Jurisdictions

### Recommendation #4:

Prioritize Training and Technical Assistance Providers Led/Staffed By Those Directly Impacted By Community Violence

### Recommendation #5:

Partner with Intermediary Organizations to Help CVI Sites and Community-based Organizations Compete for Federal Funds

### Recommendation #6:

Examine and Ease Burdensome Compliance and Reporting Requirement for Federal Grantees

### Recommendation #7:

Recognize Partnership Challenges and Power Disparities Between CVI Programs and Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice Agencies

### Recommendation #8:

Maintain Active Engagement with CVI Sites Throughout the Lifecycle of Grant

### Recommendation #9:

Create an Agenda for Actionable Research Priorities That Focus on Implementation Science, Process, and Outcome Measures Across the CVI Ecosystem

## Executive Summary

“Community violence” is defined by the World Health Organization as the intentional use of physical force, threatened or actual, to cause injury, harm, or death to an acquaintance or stranger.<sup>1</sup> This includes firearm shootings, homicide, stabbings, physical assault, and unnecessary use of force by authorities. Importantly, there is **a very small number of individuals** who drive or influence a substantial portion of violent activity in any given city (often less than 1% of a given city’s population accounts for over 50% of violent crime).<sup>2</sup> It is essential to understand that communities that disproportionately experience violence have been fundamentally failed and neglected by systems and often are bearing the load of transgenerational harm. The individuals at the highest risk are often falling through the cracks of many systems and are hard to reach unless there are **explicit, intentional strategies** to specifically find them and provide tailored support.

A powerful group of directly impacted practitioners,<sup>3</sup> national CVI organizations, advocates, researchers, and philanthropy have come together to develop a racial equity framework for CVI solicitations that appropriately address the barriers and burdens that have historically made federal funding **fractured, burdensome, ineffective, and/or unattainable** for CVI organizations in jurisdictions with the highest rates of violence.

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. (2020). Definition and typology of violence. <https://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en>.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g. Thomas P. Abt (2017) Towards a framework for preventing community violence among youth, *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13548506.2016.1257815>; Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, “A Case Study in Hope: Lessons from Oakland’s Remarkable Reduction in Gun Violence,” April 23, 2019, <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/report/a-case-study-in-hope-lessons-from-oaklands-remarkable-reduction-in-gun-violence> (“Oakland’s problem analysis...showed that only 400 individuals—just 0.1% of Oakland’s total population—were at the highest risk for engaging in serious violence at any given time.”).

<sup>3</sup> Here, “directly impacted” refers to individuals who have been formerly incarcerated and/or survived community violence. Their lived experience and credibility is essential to building relationships with those at very high risk and their input is critical for the success of any policies related to CVI.

## INTRODUCTION

In the United States, community violence is a public health epidemic that annually claims nearly 20,000 lives and leaves tens of thousands more injured. This violence disproportionately impacts communities of color. **Homicide is the leading cause of death among Black males aged 15-34**, and it is the second leading cause of death for Latinx men aged 15–34.<sup>4</sup> Approximately 75% of all homicides in the United States are committed with a gun. Moreover, a 2014 study calculated that the rate of non-fatal shootings for young black Americans is 50 times higher than for white Americans.<sup>5</sup>

Cycles of community violence are also inexorably linked to levels of police-community trust.<sup>6</sup> While our justice system arrests, convicts, and incarcerates people of color for minor offenses at an alarming rate, the killers of Black and Brown people are far less likely to be brought to justice.

Across 52 of the nation’s largest cities, ***nearly three-quarters of all unsolved murders*** involved a victim who was Black.

Interpersonal shootings are disproportionately concentrated in neighborhoods harmed by past and present racial discrimination, including segregation, redlining, disinvestment, mass incarceration, and concentrated poverty, and this violence’s toll falls overwhelmingly on people of color, especially young Black and brown men, boys, and their loved ones. As a result of structural inequities, communities of color often face higher rates of unemployment, lower socioeconomic status, and increased exposure to violence, leaving them at greater risk for violence at some point in their lives.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> CDC. (2021). Leading Causes of Death – Males - United States, 1999-2019. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/lcod/men/2017/index.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur R. Kamm, “African-American Gun Violence Victimization in the United States, Response to the Periodic Report of the United States to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,” Violence Policy Center and Amnesty International, June 30, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> “The places in which violence is most prevalent too often are the very places in which police-community relations are the most strained.” Tracey L. Meares and Dan M. Kahan, “Law and (Norms of) Order in the Inner City,” *Law and Society Review* 32 (1998): 805–838, [https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1481&context=fss\\_papers](https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1481&context=fss_papers).

<sup>7</sup> Thomas et al. (2020). Community violence and African American male health outcomes: An integrative review of literature. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 28, 6.

“Community violence” is defined by the World Health Organization as the intentional use of physical force, threatened or actual, to cause injury, harm, or death to an acquaintance or stranger.<sup>8</sup> This includes firearm shootings, homicide, stabbings, physical assault, and unnecessary use of force by authorities. Importantly, there is **a very small number of individuals** who drive or influence a substantial portion of violent activity in any given city (often less than 1% of a given city’s population accounts for over 50% of violent crime).<sup>9</sup> Moreover, roughly 30–40% of individuals who are victims of community violence will be harmed again within 5 years.<sup>10</sup> Social network researchers indicate that these high risk individuals are often concentrated in the same social networks. If an individual is exposed to social networks that engage in community violence, it increases the likelihood that he/she may become either a victim and/or a perpetrator of community violence, making this a cyclical phenomenon that can behave like a contagion.<sup>11</sup> Community violence is deeply detrimental to well-being, as it contributes to decreased physical health and high levels of psychological distress and trauma for both individuals and neighborhoods.<sup>12</sup>

It is essential to understand that communities disproportionately impacted by violence have been **fundamentally failed and neglected by systems** and often are bearing the load of transgenerational harm. The individuals at the highest risk have fallen through the cracks of

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<sup>8</sup> World Health Organization. (2020). Definition and typology of violence. <https://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en>.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g. Thomas P. Abt (2017) Towards a framework for preventing community violence among youth, *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13548506.2016.1257815>; Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, “A Case Study in Hope: Lessons from Oakland’s Remarkable Reduction in Gun Violence,” April 23, 2019, <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/report/a-case-study-in-hope-lessons-from-oaklands-remarkable-reduction-in-gun-violence> (“Oakland’s problem analysis...showed that only 400 individuals—just 0.1% of Oakland’s total population—were at the highest risk for engaging in serious violence at any given time.”).

<sup>10</sup> Green (2015)

<sup>11</sup> Papachristos, A., Braga, A., & Hureau, D. (2012). Social Networks and the Risk of Gunshot Injury. *Journal of Urban Health*, 89(6). DOI: [10.1007/s11524-012-9703-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-012-9703-9); Gorman-Smith, Deborah & Henry, David & Tolan, Patrick. (2004). Exposure to Community Violence and Violence Perpetration: The Protective Effects of Family Functioning. *Journal of clinical child and adolescent psychology : the official journal for the Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, American Psychological Association, Division 53. 33. 439-49. [10.1207/s15374424jccp3303\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15374424jccp3303_2).

<sup>12</sup> Janusek, L. W., Tell, D., Gaylord-Harden, N., & Mathews, H. L. (2017). Relationship of childhood adversity and neighborhood violence to a proinflammatory phenotype in emerging adult African American men: An epigenetic Link. *Brain, Behavior, Immunity*

many systems and are hard to reach unless there are **explicit, intentional strategies** to identify them and provide tailored support. **Community Violence Intervention (CVI)** refers to a localized ecosystem of interrelated strategies, programs, people, and shared data systems that work together to address these challenges by:

- 1) Leveraging data to interrupt violence that is likely to occur in the near term (present day–24 months) by focusing on the small number of individuals who are at highest risk of engaging in or becoming a victim of community violence;
- 2) Deploying credible messengers to engage in evidence-informed, relationship-based strategies that address the underlying risk factors and root causes of violence associated with social and economic inequities, through tailored wraparound services and other approaches;
- 3) Maximizing coverage of this hard-to-reach population and optimizing intervention dosage through intensive coordination and communication across these targeted strategies;
- 4) Minimizing harm among those who have already experienced or been exposed to violence by providing trauma-responsive care and addressing collateral consequences of violence and the criminal justice system; and
- 5) Averting any contributions to mass incarceration, over-surveillance, or harm from the criminal justice system.

A powerful group of directly impacted practitioners,<sup>13</sup> national CVI organizations, advocates, researchers, and philanthropy have come together to develop a racial equity framework for CVI solicitations that appropriately address the barriers and burdens that have historically made federal funding **fractured, burdensome, ineffective, and/or unattainable** for CVI organizations in jurisdictions with the highest rates of violence.

President Biden’s commitment to support CVI strategies through a \$5 billion investment in the Build Back Better Act poses a remarkable opportunity to clarify our values, address inequities in access to federal funding, and champion the scaling of comprehensive violence reduction strategies that leverage coordinated, evidence-based **violence prevention/intervention**

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<sup>13</sup> Here, “directly impacted” refers to individuals who have been formerly incarcerated and/or survived community violence. Their lived experience and credibility is essential to building relationships with those at very high risk and their input is critical for the success of any policies related to CVI.

**approaches** that not only interrupt cycles of violence, but also address the **trauma** that lies at the root of violence.<sup>14</sup>

## Recommendation #1: Define Racial Equity in Community Violence Intervention as both a Process and Outcome

Communities across the nation experience enormous disparities in safety that are driven by historic and present-day inequitable social and structural determinants.

When federal agencies apply a racial equity framework, they can intentionally shift power relationships such that the voices of those with lived experience and/or those who have historically been excluded can be centered in program development, policy, and research. We applaud Biden Administration’s Executive Order, “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government,” issued on January 20, 2021,<sup>15</sup> as a clear guide for federal agency engagement.

For the purpose of this memo, **racial equity** is:

a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color.<sup>16</sup>

As a process, we recommend that federal agencies measure the barriers and burdens that make it difficult for communities of color to have access to funding to transform violence in their communities, and be held accountable for transforming those outcomes. To achieve racial equity, federal agencies must clarify the racial equity principles and practices needed in their processes and structures, and the people most impacted by racism and violence must be involved in decision-making and prioritized in the distribution of resources.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Smith, J. R., & Patton, D. U. (2016). Posttraumatic stress symptoms in context: Examining trauma responses to violent exposures and homicide death among Black males in urban neighborhoods. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 86(2).

<sup>15</sup> Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government>.

<sup>16</sup> See [Color Of Change](#)

<sup>17</sup> See American Public Health Association for a glossary of racial equity concepts. <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>



Ultimately, to address historical injustices, advancing racial equity ensures that who you are, where and to whom you were born, where you live, and the color of your skin does not determine your access, opportunities, and outcomes in life.<sup>18</sup> For federal CVI funding to be effective, solicitations must be grounded in a racial equity framework.

## Recommendation #2: Define the Community Violence Intervention Strategies that Comprise an Integrated and Coordinated Violence Reduction Ecosystem

As discussed in Recommendation #1, CVI strategies seek to maximize coverage and dosage of intervention for those at the highest risk of violence in the near term (present day–24 months). To develop an effective CVI grant solicitation, DOJ and HHS will need to explicitly identify the non-negotiable elements of CVI strategies in consultation with the field. To begin, we offer this working list of key elements that are essential for a successful, localized violence reduction ecosystem:

1. **Focus on Violence in the Near Term.** Address violence that is likely to occur in the near term (present day–24 months);
2. **Evidence-Informed Strategies.** Use equitable, culturally-responsive, evidence-informed and evidence-generating strategies that have demonstrated promise at reducing community violence and interrupting without contributing to mass incarceration. Examples of CVI strategies include outreach programs, violence interrupters, cognitive behavioral programs, peace fellowships, therapeutic services, targeted victim services, community-based public safety initiatives, and hospital-based violence intervention programs.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See also RTI: [Relentlessly Searching for Opportunities to Make an Impact](#)

<sup>19</sup> Here, “demonstrated promise” refers to strategies that focus on high risk individuals can draw on other evaluated work as a basis for project development and implementation. For a description of key strategies, see Effective Community-Driven Violence Reduction Strategies (2021). National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform: <https://nicjr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Effective-Community-Based-Violence-Reduction-Strategies.pdf>  
See, e.g. Thomas P. Abt (2017) Towards a framework for preventing community violence among youth, Psychology, Health & Medicine, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13548506.2016.1257815>  
See Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, “A Case Study in Hope: Lessons from Oakland’s Remarkable Reduction in Gun Violence,” April 23, 2019, <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/report/a-case-study-in-hope-lessons-from-oaklands-remarkable-reduction-in-gun-violence>.

3. **Hire Credible Messengers.** Hire credible messengers to engage in active, long-term case management and/or mediation for the target population. Individual case loads should not exceed 25 high-intensity clients.
4. **Leverage Data.** Leverage data, including “street intelligence,” to identify and support those who are the highest risk;
5. **Trauma-Responsive.** Utilize trauma-responsive strategies in the deployment of any engagement with high-risk individuals, including actively supporting the mental health and wellbeing of CVI frontline staff;
6. **Expand Opportunity.** Address the underlying risk factors and root causes of violence associated with social and economic inequities by expanding economic opportunity through jobs, stipends, housing, educational opportunities, and/or training programs specifically tailored to high-risk individuals with an explicit, trauma-responsive foundation;
7. **Ecosystem of Partnership, Coordination, and Integration.** Establish daily or weekly partnership coordination and engagement meetings among CVI stakeholders to review data and share relevant information to *maximize coverage* of high risk individuals and *optimize intervention dosage* in a given jurisdiction;
8. **Capacity-Building and Equitable Compensation.** Build the capacities of organizations and staff to successfully support individuals at high risk of violence involvement including providing equitable salaries, benefits, and professional development opportunities for violence prevention professionals commensurate with the responsibilities and challenges associated with their work; and
9. **Do No Harm.** Avoid any contributions to mass incarceration, over-surveillance, or harm from the criminal justice system.

### *Eligible Entities*

The CVI ecosystem consists of a number of stakeholders that address high-risk client populations through a range of services and access points.

**Eligible applicants** include:

- State, city, or local governments
- Native American Tribal Governments and Organizations
- Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Nonprofits with or without 501 (c)(3) status with the IRS

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- Hospitals
- Community Partnerships
- Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) Providers
- Community- or faith-based intermediary organizations

**Subgrantees:** The lead grant applicant may propose to use the grant to subgrant or contract to make subawards to:

- State governments
- County Governments
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Credible Messengers, programs, and interventions
- Institutions of higher education
- Public schools and school districts

Furthermore, should hospitals or academic institutions operate as the lead applicant, no more than 10% of grants shall be used for indirect costs.<sup>20</sup> In other words, 90% of any award should support program costs related directly to CVI implementation and management.

### *Considerations for Eligible Entities*

**Targeted Strategies vs. Broad Social Programs.** CVI strategies explicitly focus on those systematically and disproportionately vulnerable to victimization or engagement in violence. Although there are many programs that broadly impact communities affected by violence, such as programs that improve child literacy or food insecurity, **we assert that these programs must be designed to explicitly focus on those at highest risk for violence in the near term to have a direct impact on core outcomes of reducing violence.** While it is essential for many social programs to be funded and supported, CVI is focused on both identifying and reaching those most vulnerable to violence, and leveraging tailored social resources to address underlying structural antecedents to violence. This requires optimizing collaboration and coordination between those staff that are adept at building relationships with high risk

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<sup>20</sup> Historically, these institutions change 50-70% in indirect costs. By offering clear guidelines about the limitations of the use of funding, agencies can be assured that direct service providers will receive the resources they need to implement and manage their CVI strategies.

individuals (the “getters”) and those that can provide long-term support for these individuals (the “givers”).<sup>21</sup>

**The Use of Violence Prevention Professionals.** Community violence intervention relies on individuals with deep roots in the community, who are willing to accept the role of peacemaker and work tirelessly to reduce and prevent violence by engaging those at highest risk of being injured and/or producing violence. In communities that experience high rates of violence, most lethal injuries are caused by gun violence. For as long as there has been community violence, there have been homegrown peacemakers. Concerned parents, faith-based leaders, civil rights activists, formerly incarcerated individuals, directly impacted families and survivors of violence have risked their lives to save others. A localized community approach allows communities to tailor programs and services to address the specific needs and enhance the unique assets of individual communities.

**Engaging Community-Based Organizations.** For the purposes of this solicitation, the term “community-based organization” (CBO) refers to a private, nonprofit organization, with or without 501(c)(3) status (which may include a faith-based organization, hospital, or tribal community), that is representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and that has demonstrated expertise in engaging vulnerable communities as well as offering high-quality services in their community.

Defining community credibility can pose a challenge. As federal agencies design CVI-focused solicitations, preference should be given to CBOs that are led by individuals who have proven ties to the community, as demonstrated by factors such as:

- Currently living, or have lived in the specified community with high rates of violence;
- Participation and membership in local organizations, associations, and commissions;
- Have loved ones who continue to reside in the specified community;
- Have a demonstrated track record in administering the specified programming or service that addresses the needs of high-risk individuals;
- Have demonstrated experience working with individuals at high risk of violence involvement;
- Have leadership that reflects the racial diversity of the community where the organization operates; and/or

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<sup>21</sup> Muhammad, D. (2021). Personal Communication

- Have a leader who identifies as and/or employs directly impacted persons.<sup>22</sup>

From an equity perspective, federal agencies must recognize that requiring applicants to demonstrate experience with federal funding as a marker of capacity is often a barrier for new CBOs, creates undue burden, and hinders access. On the other hand, organizations with past experience securing federal funding may be selected, but have less community-level credibility. To address these challenges, Recommendations #4 and #5 address building capacity of CVI programs and strategies.

While it may seem helpful to limit the annual budget of applicants to ensure that smaller CBO's can be engaged, it is important to note that many CVI programs may be nested in larger organizations, hospitals, academic institutions and the like with very large annual budgets. Inquiring about these relationships is critical.

**Pay Equity.** CVI stakeholders boast a tremendous diversity of experience, skill, and academic background among staff who implement and manage CVI programs. However, through a racial equity lens, it is clear that tremendous inequity can exist in compensation for similar work. As such, the federal government should promote pay equity and fair compensation, particularly among frontline violence prevention professionals.

**Demonstration of Community Connection Among Public Sector Applicants:** State and local units of government that apply for grants should demonstrate strong support from the community and from directly impacted individuals and families, in particular. Letters of support from community leaders and/or organizations, as well as directly impacted families, should be required for the grant application. Additionally, grant applicants should be evaluated by criteria which evaluate their history of community engagement and participation, accessibility provided to community members, and number of years of robust community engagement, including hiring members of the community, as a way to demonstrate the applicant's legitimacy, credibility, and track record of success in this area. Special consideration should be given to public sector applicants that include community advisory committees that include directly impacted persons and other community stakeholders.

**Separation of Solicitation Applicants.** In order to ensure an equitable process, grant applicants should compete with similar applicants across the country in high-need jurisdictions. To

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achieve this, federal agencies should separate solicitations. A proposed list of separated applicants may include:

- Community-based organizations (CBOs)
- States/Cities/Jurisdictions
- Hospital-based programs
- TTA Providers

Furthermore, for jurisdictions that are new to implementing CVI strategies, planning grants that include technical assistance can be offered within each category.

**Match Requirements.** No match should be required of grantees or needs to be accompanied with this solicitation or applications submitted. Our collective experience is that match requirements exacerbate inequity by favoring applicants with greater access to resources.

**Engagement with Law Enforcement.** As discussed above, CVI strategies are most effective when implemented by and for communities impacted by violence. While some CVI strategies collaborate with law enforcement, many do not (see Recommendation #8: Recognize Partnership Challenges and Power Disparities Between CVI Programs and Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice Agencies). CVI strategies are complementary to law enforcement strategies. In fact, many of these strategies focus initially on clients whose current activity has not reached the threshold of breaking the law. However, many clients have a history of violent behavior and without the proper prevention or intervention, this behavior will likely continue and ultimately require law enforcement engagement. Given the historic and present-day challenges of community/police relations in communities of color, no applicant should be *required* to collaborate with law enforcement as a condition of eligibility, although applicants should have the discretion and support to partner with law enforcement should they choose to do so. Furthermore, given the considerable federal funding available for law enforcement agencies, we recommend that law enforcement agencies be disallowed from receiving CVI-designated funding, and instead marshal other federal resources to support their participation in CVI efforts.

### Recommendation #3: To Maximize Impact, Prioritize High-Need Jurisdictions

Violence is not distributed evenly across the United States. In 2015, *half* of the nation's gun homicides occurred in just 127 cities and towns—that's less than half of one percent of the nation's nearly 20,000 incorporated localities.<sup>23</sup> A recent analysis by The Guardian showed that more than a quarter of gun homicides occurred in city neighborhoods containing just 1.5% of the US population.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, a report by the Vera Institute of Justice showed that half of the aggregate increase in US homicide counts from 2014 to 2015 resulted from homicide spikes in *just three cities*: Chicago, Baltimore, and Washington DC.<sup>25</sup>

To begin, CVI solicitation efforts should **focus on jurisdictions throughout the country, both large and small, where gun violence is highly concentrated**. It is essential that the CDC/DOJ focus not simply on communities in large cities, but also identify communities in smaller cities that have less people impacted by gun violence, but comparable and often higher rates of violence. As these smaller communities often struggle to access government funding, the CDC/DOJ should explore ways in which it can target its outreach efforts, ranging from targeted webinars to creating grant carve outs for smaller jurisdictions.

#### *Measuring High Need Jurisdictions*

In order to maximize the impact of federal CVI grants, resources must be strategically directed to high-need localities, based on metrics that include levels and rates of homicide. To accomplish this, the funding guidelines should make clear how resources will be dedicated based on need (e.g., by racial and ethnic disparities, geographic disparities, or other inequities) and the mechanism or formula that will be used to allocate them. A transparent expenditure plan that provides clear information on how funds will be used is essential. For general CVI

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas Abt, *Bleeding Out: The Devastating Consequences of Urban Violence—and a Bold New Plan for Peace in the Streets* (New York: Basic Books, 2019), 33.

<sup>24</sup> Aliza Aufrichtig, et al., "Want to fix gun violence in America? Go local," *The Guardian*, January 9, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/nginteractive/2017/jan/09/special-report-fixing-gun-violence-in-america>.

<sup>25</sup> Bruce Frederick, "Measuring Public Safety: Responsibly Interpreting Statistics on Violent Crime," Vera Evidence Brief, July 2017, [https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/for-the-record-measuring-public-safety\\_02.pdf](https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/for-the-record-measuring-public-safety_02.pdf).

solicitation purposes, an “eligible unit of local government” should be a municipality or other local government that—

(A) for not less than 2 out of the 3 calendar years preceding the date on which an application for a grant is submitted:

(i) experienced 35 or more homicides per year; or

(ii) experienced 20 or more homicides per year and had a homicide rate that was not less than double the national average; or

(B) has a compelling need to address community violence, as determined by the Secretary or Attorney General, based on high levels of homicide relative to other localities within the same State.

Eligible CBOs would then include any CBO that is providing services within an “eligible unit of local government.”

To illustrate an example of needs-based resource distribution, a small group of authors are working on a framework from which assumptions can be examined and modified. In their new framework, each city’s population size is used to estimate the number of high risk individuals within the target community, calculated as 0.01% of the population.<sup>26</sup> These numbers are then used to estimate **minimum staffing of the CVI ecosystem** (including frontline staff, managers, and city-based program officers) across various strategies.

With greater discussion, this framework can be revised to more accurately reflect the ideas and insights from the field.

#### **Recommendation #4: Prioritize Training and Technical Assistance Providers Led/Staffed by Those Directly Impacted By Community Violence**

There is a **significant problem** with the established federal training and technical assistance (TTA) offered for community violence intervention. The organizations that comprise the current federal TTA provider network are not meeting the needs of most CVI organizations

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<sup>26</sup> This figure was selected based on findings from an Oakland report highlighting that 0.01% of the population had been identified as the highest risk for violence in the near term. See Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, “A Case Study in Hope: Lessons from Oakland’s Remarkable Reduction in Gun Violence,” April 23, 2019, <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/report/a-case-study-in-hope-lessons-from-oaklands-remarkable-reduction-in-gun-violence>.



because most lack subject matter expertise on program implementation. Furthermore, since federal agencies tend to select and fund larger TTA providers (annual budget of \$20M+) that currently have federal contracts, **inequity grows over time and there is no mechanism for correction.** This must be remedied to create an equitable, responsive TTA system in the CVI field.

### *Survey Community-Based Organizations to Understand Their Needs*

Community-based organizations with an explicit focus on high-risk clients play a critically important role in creating safe and peaceful communities across the United States. Many CBOs have developed a deep understanding of their local context and formed authentic relationships with hard-to-reach clients, have proven remarkably successful in helping to reduce community violence and healing those affected by it.

Many CBOs have done much of their work without sustained levels of funding or dedicated resources for administrative operations. As a result, CBOs located in high-burden urban contexts might not have the capacity needed to operate effectively at scale and administer federal funds. Generations of structural racism, inequity, and neglect have contributed to the levels of community gun violence we are currently experiencing and the expectations of CBOs are outsized compared to the capacity of any one organization or set of organizations. Even when CBOs are informed of available grant money, they often lack the staff, funding, and organizational infrastructure necessary to successfully apply for and maintain such funding. They also do not have existing funds to manage reimbursement processes.

These obstacles are exacerbated by the fact that such CBOs are rarely, if ever, consulted in the development of federal grant programs nor engaged to examine ways to increase their organization's ability to implement their work successfully, manage their funding needs and improve program outcomes. As a result, federal funding programs fail to identify, conduct meaningful outreach to, and/or meet the needs of the very organizations best positioned to reduce violence and heal victims. **It is, therefore, essential that federal agencies survey CVI groups and create a mechanism for ongoing communication about their needs and what kinds of support would be most helpful.**

DOJ and HHS can help address these issues and better support the CVI field by:

- 1) Developing intensive site support for CVI strategies by leveraging technical assistance and training capacity nationwide;

- 2) Partnering with community-oriented intermediary organizations<sup>27</sup> that specialize in identifying and supporting CBOs that may lack the infrastructure to leverage traditional federal opportunities; and
- 3) Addressing the processes and norms (such as traditional requirements placed on existing federal grant dollars) that may create barriers to racial equity in the administration of these funds.

### *Intensive Site Support and Training and Technical Assistance*

As part of this historic investment in violence intervention and prevention, DOJ and HHS should deliver intensive site support through the deployment of tailored training, technical assistance and capacity building for all entities engaged in CVI implementation including: community-led organizations, city government, hospital programs, and others. The goals of this effort should be to disseminate information and best practices to cities and CBOs looking to implement effective violence intervention programs, support cities and CBOs in identifying existing assets and opportunities, and support CBOs to receive and successfully administer federal funding. To advance racial equity, tailored, one-on-one technical assistance should be made available to both applicants and awardees. Ultimately, our hope is that technical assistance for applicants will help to eliminate some of the barriers to accessing sustainable funding and contribute to a more robust and effective network of violence prevention organizations nationwide. To ensure that these resources are equitably distributed, applicants should have the ability to allocate up to 100% of administrative staffing to program grants, given the administrative burden of federal funding.

This would be similar to what OVW offers in the domestic and sexual violence space through its Technical Assistance Program, which offers “in-person and online educational opportunities, peer-to-peer consultations, site visits and tailored assistance for OVW grantees *and potential grantees.*”<sup>28</sup> DOJ and HHS should collaborate to provide similarly comprehensive assistance to the CVI field, working with training and technical assistance providers that have a proven track record in providing effective support to community-based organizations and the communities they serve. Until recently, DOJ and HHS have minimally engaged some of the lead CVI training

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<sup>27</sup> Here “community-oriented intermediary organizations” refer to entities that understand and address power imbalances among CBOs by actively engaging in capacity-building efforts to support the development of the CVI field.

<sup>28</sup> Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/grant-programs>.

and technical assistance providers. The White House’s 16-jurisdiction CVI Collaborative has begun to change this through a process of engaging leading training and technical assistance organizations who exclusively focus on standing up CVI strategies.

Examples of the types of technical assistance that might be helpful include:

- Program implementation
- Partnership Development and Strategy
- Case conferencing
- Operations and Strategy
- Workplace Conflict
- Data collection and research
- Administrative and fiscal management of federal funds
- Human resources management and ongoing staff development
- Communications, dissemination, and social media engagement
- Technology and IT infrastructure
- Funding and Sustainability, Including federal, state, local and private funding

Typically, investments in technical assistance and capacity building for CVI implementation sites have been determined by outside entities such as private philanthropy, government, or researchers, rather than those doing the work. As discussed above, we strongly encourage DOJ and HHS staff to gather input about technical assistance needs directly from community-based organizations and existing TA providers in the CVI field.

### *Cultivating Peer Learning*

Peer learning across CVI strategies in jurisdictions across the country is essential to foster thriving communities of practice. Learning engagements that focus on a range of needs—from effective community participatory research to effective community-based public safety strategies—help expand local capacity to address community violence. Site visits can also facilitate the cultivation of best practices that also work to advance innovation within the field. TTA providers should work to build peer learning networks and convenings.

### *Technical Assistance and the Role of Public Agency Partnerships*

When it comes to addressing community violence, effective partnership between CBOs and other public sector stakeholders are critical, and technical assistance plans should account for

this. In addition to providing technical assistance directly to CBOs, DOJ and HHS should also prioritize technical assistance for other violence prevention and intervention stakeholders, such as state and local government officials including those who may be serving as pass-through entities, public health departments, hospitals, law enforcement, and other public sector human services agencies.

For example, **current training and technical support for law enforcement engaged in CVI strategic partnerships is insufficient or inappropriate** because it does not involve a robust curriculum on the CVI ecosystem. Law enforcement agencies will need to understand the role of CVI, the historical and political structures that have led to the need for CVI, how and when CVI organizations and law enforcements should interact with each other, and the types of data that law enforcement can provide to facilitate successful CVI program implementation (such as administrative data that can be used by researchers or service providers). DOJ in particular should consider what guidance it can provide to local law enforcement agencies, and whether through its other grantmaking or programming, it can provide and update/evolve technical assistance to law enforcement focused on to support CVI efforts.

Furthermore, **state and local government entities, which are often leveraged to serve as a pass through for CVI funds, can also create inequitable distribution of funding.** Historically federal funding structures have given tremendous discretion and little accompanying accountability to city and state officials; funding outcomes seldom extend beyond complying with wide parameters established by the federal agencies or authorizing statutes themselves. Racial equity as a process and an outcome in CVI funding will both be dependent on examining the practices of these entities and creating new forms of guidance, collaboration, and accountability across the federal agencies, pass through entities, and the field as a whole. Meaningful technical assistance at this level can play a significant role in achieving that.

### *Diversifying the TTA Field*

The field of technical assistance providers within the CVI space needs to be intentionally cultivated and supported as part of this historic investment. To that end, we recommend that both DOJ and HHS create grant programs specifically designed to directly support the capacity of technical assistance providers in the CVI field. As an example of this, the Office on Violence Against Women offers TTA grants for which eligible applicants are “national, tribal, statewide, or other nonprofit organizations that have the capacity to provide training and technical

assistance on a national level.”<sup>29</sup> This could also be enhanced through innovative national or regional demonstration projects that help to foster this support while also learning more about what it requires in order to be successful and sustained.

In addition, in order to increase national awareness of quality technical assistance providers, the catalogues of TTA providers and Subject Matter Experts maintained by DOJ and HHS (e.g., BJA and OVC’s National Training and Technical Assistance Centers), must be updated to include a CVI-specific TTA category that includes organizations with a track record of providing quality, equity-centered technical assistance in the CVI field. The current BJA TTA provider catalogue, when sorted by “Crime Prevention,” “Gun Violence” and “Violence Reduction” is almost entirely devoid of such providers.<sup>30</sup> **Subject matter experts selected for ad hoc or sustained TA engagements through Office of Justice Programs-administered programs are most often from larger, mainstream organizations and not necessarily representative of the communities of color who they serve. This needs to be corrected.**

The DOJ and HHS should reexamine their processes and criteria for vetting and listing TTA providers to ensure they are as inclusive and equitable as possible, as well as appropriately reflective of the racial and cultural diversity of this field.

Finally, in order to encourage and incentivize the use of technical assistance providers, solicitations issued in connection with this funding should require applicants to describe their plan for working with a qualified technical assistance provider, or otherwise explain why technical assistance is not needed.

### *To Support a Coordinated CVI Ecosystem, Develop Coordinated TTA Providers*

Due to the lack of sustainable investment, the CVI field has been tremendously fragmented. This fragmentation has not only had an impact on the coordination of CVI strategies in local jurisdictions, but has also impacted the rollout of CVI technical assistance. To address this issue, federal agencies should develop solicitations that encourage robust, equitable collaboration among TTA providers of the CVI ecosystem. Coordination of TTA requires significant investment in capacity building of providers and offers new opportunities for equity.

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<sup>29</sup> O-OVW-2021-74002, OVW Fiscal Year 2021 Training and Technical Assistance Initiative Solicitation, Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=332802>.

<sup>30</sup> See TTA Catalog, Working with BJA, <https://bjatta.bja.ojp.gov/tta/providers>.

As an example, the White House announced a 16-jurisdiction CVI implementation initiative that included the coordination of four national technical assistance providers, each run by persons of color, and dozens of individual minority subject matter experts. These four organizations are Cities United,<sup>31</sup>

Community-Based Public Safety Collective,<sup>32</sup> The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention,<sup>33</sup> and The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform.<sup>34</sup> This initiative supports 16 jurisdictions that have made historic investment in CVI strategies through their allocation of ARPA funding.

### **Recommendation #5: Partner with Intermediary Organizations to Help CVI Sites and Community-based Organizations Compete for Federal Funds**

Federal agencies can play a crucial role in the development of a network of equity-focused and culturally competent intermediary organizations capable of managing federal grants on behalf of smaller CBOs. These intermediary organizations should have a strong track record of focusing on issues of race and equity in their efforts to analyze problems, fashion solutions, and define outcomes. They should also have already demonstrated not only a willingness, but also a reliance on soliciting input from directly impacted individuals in formulating their approaches, as well as a history of providing support to CBOs. In essence, these organizations would be marked by a keen interest in understanding the people and communities they strive to serve and, as a result, be seen as credible partners by existing CBOs.

Intermediary organizations could also play a role providing capacity building support to CBOs. Most importantly, these organizations could accept, report, and manage federal funding and

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<sup>31</sup> Cities United supports a national network of mayors, community and young leaders who are committed to reducing the epidemic of homicides and shootings among young Black men and boys ages 14 to 24 by 50%. <https://citiesunited.org>.

<sup>32</sup> The Collective advocates for and provides TTA to community-driven violence reduction strategies that use targeted casework, high-risk intervention, victim advocacy, school safe passage, and community organizing to increase community safety. For more information: <https://cbpscollective.org>.

<sup>33</sup> The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (HAVI) is the only national organization that provides training, certification, and membership for hospital based violence intervention programs. For more information: [www.thehavi.org](http://www.thehavi.org).

<sup>34</sup> NICJR provides technical assistance, training, consulting, research, organizational development, and advocacy in the fields of juvenile and criminal justice, youth development, and violence prevention. For more information: <https://nicjr.org>.

subgrant to CBOs. They may offer these services as a fiscal sponsor and/or as an incubator to a CBO that already has its 501c3. Additionally, intermediaries can partner with the federal government to conduct and facilitate outreach to CBOs regarding grant availability, develop streamlined requests for proposals targeted at CBOs, assist CBOs with applications, and work with federal agencies to select awardees.

In undertaking the above activities, intermediary organizations would support the immediate needs of CBOs in accessing and managing federal funds. Ultimately, however, intermediary organizations may also help CBOs gain self-sufficiency in attaining funding and scale up their services in order to better meet the needs of their communities.<sup>35</sup> Along these lines, should they have the expertise, intermediary organizations would be tasked with providing training and technical assistance to CBOs to strengthen administrative and fiscal management, build and implement more effective IT systems and data collection plans, recruit and train staff, and develop staff structure.

Similarly, intermediary organizations could also provide invaluable expertise in leadership development, systems of self-care and trauma support, help CBOs create strategic plans, implement staff supervision protocols, strengthen communications and marketing through both traditional media and community outreach and inclusion, broaden partnerships, and increase funding and internal sustainability. Finally, intermediary organizations may also provide valuable access to best and promising practices in order to help CBOs not only deliver quality programs, but also ensure continuous improvement in programming.

We recommend that DOJ and HHS implement one or more grant programs to directly support community and faith-based intermediary organizations. This is in line with a 2018 Urban Institute report on community-driven public safety, which recommended that government entities “consider a funding intermediary to bridge agencies and community-based organizations.”<sup>36</sup> As an example of what this can look like at the federal level, the Department of Labor in 2020 administered the Young Adult Reentry Partnership (YARP) grant program, with eligibility limited *exclusively* to qualifying intermediary organizations partnered with multiple sub-grantees in a minimum number of geographic areas. Of note, the solicitation gave priority

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<sup>35</sup> Urban Institute, Investing Justice Resources to Address Community Needs, see p.6 “Providing Oversight and Support through an Intermediary,” 2018, [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/96341/investing\\_justice\\_resources\\_to\\_address\\_community\\_needs.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/96341/investing_justice_resources_to_address_community_needs.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> Urban Institute, Public Investment in Community-Driven Safety Initiatives, 2018, [https://www.urban.org/research/publication/public-investment-community-driven-safety-initiatives/view/full\\_report](https://www.urban.org/research/publication/public-investment-community-driven-safety-initiatives/view/full_report).

consideration to “applicants that identify serving communities in high-poverty and high-crime areas.”<sup>37</sup> Working directly with intermediary organizations is one of the important ways by which DOJ and HHS can support the development of grassroots CVI organizations that are doing critical work, but that may lack the capacity to directly leverage federal funding opportunities.<sup>38</sup>

## Recommendation #6: Examine and Ease Burdensome Compliance and Reporting Requirements for Federal Grantees

Currently, nearly all federal grant programs, including funds passed through state and local government entities, come with extensive and often arduous requirements. One such area is the required submission of mandatory Performance Measurement Data (PMT). Though data collection is and should remain an important component of both CVI work and federal grant management, it should be done purposefully. Current PMT requirements have been especially burdensome and prohibitive for many CBOs. Existing support within the federal agencies and contracting entities funded to facilitate this data collection and respond to grantee questions and challenges is inaccessible or insufficient to meet the need. In this context not only do current and potential grantees suffer, but also the quality and consistency of the information collected.

Furthermore, the data collected is often not meaningfully analyzed, translated, or released by federal and/or state administering agencies for use and dissemination throughout the field in a timely and effective manner, if at all. This spurs resentment and frustration from CBOs who are strained because current grant requirements are burdensome. Understandably, CBOs prefer prioritizing direct service, often crisis-driven work over cumbersome, under-utilized reporting. *If it is required, make it matter.*

In order to make these efforts worth it, and to ensure the quality and consistency of mandatory data collections, DOJ and HHS should examine and ease where possible these requirements to ensure they do not arbitrarily exceed the information necessary for use. Furthermore, DOJ and HHS should support meaningful technical assistance and capacity building for grantees and subgrantees in collecting any performance measurement data

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<sup>37</sup> FOA-ETA-20-05, Young Adult Reentry Partnership (YARP), Department of Labor, <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=325079>.

<sup>38</sup> See The Role of Intermediaries: How Large Organizations Can Help Small Nonprofits Access Public Dollars, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDfNdU65TBY>.



required and to collaborate with CVI organizations to determine what performance measurement data should be collected.

Another area in which federal agencies can facilitate the grant administration process for and with grantees is through improvements in the use of technology. Currently, too many offices—particularly at the state and local pass-through level—administer federal funds using archaic paper files, and obsolete filing and reporting systems. Federal agencies can play a role in supporting the infrastructure and technological capacities of grantees, easing the burdens of grant administration and compliance.

### **Recommendation #7: Recognize Partnership Challenges Between CVI Programs and Law Enforcement/ Criminal Justice Agencies**

The purpose of the \$5 billion federal investment in CVI is to help balance America’s public safety portfolio by directly supporting evidence-informed CVI programming administered by community-based organizations and other agencies. Several grant programs at DOJ—representing billions of dollars annually—are already solely dedicated to funding law enforcement and provide enormous state and local discretion to law enforcement agencies for violence reduction efforts, often without transparency or a nexus to evidence-informed approaches.<sup>39</sup> As a result, CVI-related funds should not be used to directly fund law enforcement agencies. Applicants receiving awards proposing to implement community violence interruption strategies or interventions and technology solutions must include in their application an assurance that law enforcement agencies will not receive funding.

While law enforcement agencies are not a target for funding, their partnership, as well as collaboration with relevant state and local government agencies, may be both useful and important to many CVI applicants. However, CBO applicants should not be coerced into such collaboration. While state and local government agencies will have relationships with law enforcement, any CVI funding they receive should be focused on building CVI infrastructure within the agency and growing the CBO network doing CVI work.

Some CBO applicants may already collaborate with relevant state and local government agencies as part of their work, including criminal legal agencies and law enforcement, or could establish such partnerships if they determined it would strengthen their programs. However, for many potential applicants and the communities and people they serve, there are such high

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<sup>39</sup> See Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, *America at a Crossroads: Reimagining Federal Funding to End Community Violence*, 2020, [https://giffords.org/lawcenter/report/america-at-a-crossroads-reimagining-federal-funding-to-end-community-violence/#footnote\\_356\\_37750](https://giffords.org/lawcenter/report/america-at-a-crossroads-reimagining-federal-funding-to-end-community-violence/#footnote_356_37750).

levels of distrust of state and local government, and criminal legal agencies in particular, that collaboration is not only impractical, but could harm their ability to work effectively with people most vulnerable to gun violence.

Solicitations should therefore allow CBO applicants the option to determine if CVI funding should be used to support or develop governmental partnerships. Solicitations should be clear that the applicants are solely responsible for setting the terms of proposed state or local governmental partnership and list examples of possible CVI funded activities, including technical assistance, training, and establishing data sharing agreements. Additionally, law enforcement agencies' ease of access to other streams of federal funding should be taken into consideration when evaluating applications, and in no way should potential applicants' capacity to work with state and local governmental agencies positively or negatively impact organizations' applications.

Furthermore, in support of this recommendation, the DOJ is encouraged to dedicate portions of its existing law enforcement funding to help address low levels of trust in communities implementing CVI. For example, the DOJ-funded Collective Healing National Demonstration Initiative<sup>40</sup> was designed to assist law enforcement agencies—through the direct feedback and collaboration of their community partners—in addressing the needs of those affected by violence and healing tension and barriers to trust between community and police, including those exacerbated by police behavior surrounding high profile and divisive events. This initiative centered the role that unaddressed trauma within police agencies often plays in perpetuating harm and mistrust, incorporating strategies and tools in officer wellness and beyond on the need to shift culture and heal.

Existing law enforcement funding could also support explicit training on the ways in which law enforcement can work with CVI partners as part of the overall CVI ecosystem. Many agencies are not familiar with CVI strategies nor understand how to engage these partners, including best practices in communication (when it is or isn't appropriate to publicly speak to CVI practitioners). This lack of understanding and deference currently presents challenges in many communities, including in ways that jeopardize the effectiveness of CVI staff. In addition to leveraging existing federal funding, agencies, such as BJA, can offer guidance and support to State Administering Agencies (SAA) in the use of funds, such as Edward Byrne Memorial Justice

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<sup>40</sup> Cooperative Agreement No. 2016-MU-GX-K026, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. For more information about the project, see International Association of Chiefs of Police, Pathways Toward Collective Healing - Law Enforcement and the Communities they Serve: Collective Healing in the Wake of Harm. (Alexandria, VA: IACP, 2021); <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/Pathways%20Toward%20Collective%20Healing.pdf>

Assistance Grant (JAG) Program funds, to help support this effort. Since states have discretion in the use of these funds, guidance from the federal government can support innovative uses that spur greater reduction of harm within jurisdictions.

### **Recommendation #8: Maintain Active Engagement with CVI Sites Throughout the Lifecycle of Grant**

It is critical that federal agencies recognize that many of the community-based organizations best equipped to provide effective violence intervention and recovery services are reluctant to apply for federal grants because many believe they are burdensome, they are unqualified, or, more broadly, that the grant programs were not designed with them in mind. With this in mind, federal agencies must address these barriers by promoting funding opportunities by not only meeting potential applicants where they are—including in-person engagement—but also harness the efforts of organizations, associations, and governmental partnerships to support grantees throughout the lifecycle of their federal grant and beyond.

The CDC/DOJ should aim to **promote solicitations where people most impacted by gun violence are likely to learn about them**. This should include advertising in local media, community newspapers, organizational newsletters, radio, and social media, in an ongoing way and within a meaningful timeframe for potential applicants to respond. As with all promotion and dissemination efforts, this outreach should include media serving non-English speaking communities as well as Black communities. All grantees and subgrants under the solicitation shall make all meetings, communications, and convenings accessible as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for the inclusion of people with disabilities.

When possible, enlist **state, city, and county governmental agencies** to promote CVI solicitations to organizations in their jurisdiction. Agencies that may be especially helpful include local and state offices of violence prevention, public health departments, probation, school systems, victim services agencies, and criminal justice and violence prevention administering agencies. In addition, training and technical assistance providers, with local and national presence can be contracted to build a pipeline of grantees for upcoming funding opportunities. Over time, those who are targets of this outreach can begin to **build formal and informal networks** that can help disseminate the solicitation and support eventual CVI implementation.

When the CDC/DOJ releases its solicitation, it should seek to leverage organizations on the ground, it has identified to help validate and host informational sessions. To help with this

process, the CDC/DOJ should create a webpage with video tutorials and brochures that can be easily accessed by those who cannot attend the informational sessions. There should be a dedicated phone number and an email address for additional questions. From the beginning of this process, it is important to actively demystify federal funding and seek input from people most impacted by gun violence and the organizations that serve them. These efforts include accommodating people with multiple jobs by hosting informational sessions during the evening and weekends.

The applicant review process is also a critically important opportunity to advance racial equity. **Federal agencies should commit to a more transparent and inclusive process of selection and utilization of peer reviewers that prioritizes lived experience alongside academic and other traditional qualifications.** An advisory committee with practitioners and other stakeholders should help review and score applications. In addition, community scoring panels or advisory boards that include diverse organizations and communities with direct experience with the issue should be formed. In collaboration with panel members, fund administrators can develop an application scoring rubric and selection criteria that award high marks to grassroots, community-based organizations with demonstrated ability to work in and with communities most impacted by violence.

Once grants are administered, grant administering agencies at the federal, state and local level are encouraged to get out of their offices and visit programs throughout the lifecycle of the grant. This is critical for fostering meaningful relationships with communities and gaining true appreciation for the work. This is currently rare for federal and SAA funders alike, other than minimal site visits conducted almost exclusively for the purposes of compliance and monitoring. In-person community collaboration, including as part of the solicitation development or application process, can make a big difference for all personnel involved.

### **Recommendation #9:** Create an Agenda for Actionable Research Priorities That Focus on Implementation Science, Process, and Outcome Measures Across the CVI Ecosystem

Data are critical to ensuring that the appropriate CVI strategies, actions, and activities are being directed to the targeted population in each jurisdiction.<sup>41</sup> Data are also necessary for ensuring

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<sup>41</sup> For more information on recommendations for research, see webinar *The state of federal funding for gun violence research and data*: <https://www.joycefdn.org/webinars/the-state-of-federal-funding-for-gun->

that the actions and interventions applied are facilitating individual- and community-level changes that will ultimately lead to violence reduction, healing, and improved health outcomes for those being served. Thus, it is imperative that the data collection and research are integrated in CVI strategies in ways that help improve program outcomes, benefit the organizations and those at highest risk of violence involvement, and help expand the knowledge and field of effective CVI components.

Existing research funding for CVI program evaluation is too narrow in scope and inadequate in scale to sufficiently contribute to increased understanding about the elements of CVI strategies that are most effective at reducing violence. The limited existing funding also has too frequently neglected to invest in researchers who have genuine relationships with the communities and programs being evaluated. To substantially advance CVI program effectiveness in a racially equitable manner, the following considerations for data and research must be included:

- 1) Prioritize Research Funding.** Funding for CVI data collection and research (within a particular CVI strategy and across the CVI ecosystem in a given jurisdiction) must be incorporated into the solicitations for CVI programmatic, training, and technical assistance needs;
- 2) Co-determine Evidence Development.** Researchers and CBO's should collaborate to jointly determine the data and evidence used to demonstrate applicant competencies, program outcomes and track record of success;
- 3) Timely Release of Data.** Federal agencies and State Administering Agencies (SAAs) must expedite the timely release of relevant data for CVI, disaggregated in ways that communities and CBOs can utilize. This will help CVI stakeholders decide how to prioritize neighborhoods and populations to serve.
- 4) Promote Local Data Sharing.** There are significant challenges addressing community violence given tremendous fragmentation in existing data systems. Funding that allows local jurisdictions to advance policies that promote data sharing should be prioritized.<sup>42</sup>

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[violence-research-and-data](#)

NORC Expert Panel on Firearms Data Infrastructure: <https://www.norc.org/Research/Projects/Pages/expert-panel-on-firearms-data-infrastructure.aspx> including [Blueprint for a US Firearm Data infrastructure](#)

Joyce Foundation's 100 Critical Questions for Gun Violence Research: <https://www.joycefdn.org/research-reports/insights-research-reports-100-critical-questions-for-gun-violence-research>

<sup>42</sup> See new data-sharing strategies (that help address HIPAA concerns) advanced by the Philadelphia Health Department

Invest in partnerships between CVI grantees and state statistical analysis centers (SACs) when possible to equip communities to understand the tools at their disposal. There are, of course limitations: reported crime statistics do not tell the full story. It is essential to leverage qualitative research methods to tell more complete stories.

- 5) **Prioritize CBPR.** Federal funding should incentivize researchers to deploy Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) methods and participant-engaged approaches<sup>43</sup> that incorporates the following values and concepts, which can be applied in multiple settings and project types:
  - a. Equitably involves all partners in all aspects of the research and evaluation process;
  - b. Enables all partners to contribute their expertise, with shared responsibility and ownership;
  - c. Enhances understanding of a given phenomenon; and
  - d. Commits to disseminating and/or integrating the knowledge gained
- 6) **Invest in Research-Practitioner Partnerships.** Priorities for research funding should be directed in a way that incentivizes research-practitioner partnerships, rather than simply providing funding for independent researchers with limited or no relationship with the organizations they are funded to evaluate or research.
- 7) **Focus on Implementation Science.** The success of CVI relies heavily on successful implementation across a number of strategies in a given jurisdiction. However, there has been limited investment in implementation and dissemination research that focuses on awareness, acceptability, reach, adoption, appropriateness, feasibility, fidelity, cost, and sustainability in the review of all measures and data elements.<sup>44</sup>
- 8) **Support Multi-site Data Collection With Investments In Technology.** Local CVI ecosystems will need the appropriate infrastructure to collect information.

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<sup>43</sup> See Policy Link's Community-Based Participatory Research: A Strategy for Building Healthy Communities and Promoting Health through Policy Change: <https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/CBPR.pdf>  
For a focus on CBPR among traumatized communities of color, please see: Ragavan MI, Thomas KA, Fulambarker A, Zaricor J, Goodman LA, Bair-Merritt MH. Exploring the Needs and Lived Experiences of Racial and Ethnic Minority Domestic Violence Survivors Through Community-Based Participatory Research: A Systematic Review. *Trauma Violence Abuse*. 2020 Dec;21(5):946-963. doi: 10.1177/1524838018813204. Epub 2018 Dec 3. PMID: 30501479; <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30501479/>

<sup>44</sup> Peters D H, Adam T, Alonge O, Agyepong I A, Tran N. Implementation research: what it is and how to do it *BMJ* 2013; 347 :f6753 doi:10.1136/bmj.f6753; <https://www.bmj.com/content/347/bmj.f6753>

- 9) Fund Research Over Longer Duration.** Given the long neglected and underdeveloped status of the CVI evidence base in comparison to its significance for public health and safety, it is imperative that federal agencies invest in projects spanning longer periods of time to meaningfully investigate how shifts in behavior and outcomes change over time. This is especially true for understanding what success looks like for those who live at the highest risk of violence, endure the highest rates of victimization, and have otherwise been most disconnected and disenfranchised from existing systems of support. This research must sustain its commitment to identifying and uplifting the perspectives of those with lived experiences through community-participatory and human-centered approaches throughout. A long-term commitment to CVI research that does not demand results overnight will be crucial to understanding where federal dollars have the most impact.
- 10) Research Promotion and Accessibility.** DOJ and HHS should support efforts to make the evidence base more accessible to practitioners and policymakers shaping CVI work by supporting free or low-cost access to academic journals that currently keep published findings inaccessible behind paywalls; funding and supporting new practitioner-friendly vehicles for dissemination, as well as hosting or fiscally-sponsoring multidisciplinary convenings bridging the gap between research, policy and practice —valuing the perspectives of each in order to translate the significance of new findings across the field.
- 11) Address Academic Research’s Contributions to Racial Inequity.** CDC and NIJ should fund research to examine and address problematic dynamics and incentive structures in academia that create barriers to community-participatory partnerships and the practical utility of academic work.