CBPS COLLECTIVE

NICJR National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform

URBANPEACE INSTITUTE

SETTING THE STANDARD:

A Collective Vision to Advance Standards in the Field of Community Violence Intervention

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This is a project of the CVI Action Plan. We're grateful to the Action Plan funders who made the convening possible, and to the community partners whose presence and commitment strengthen this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, the field of Community Violence Intervention (CVI) has experienced unprecedented national attention and investment as an essential component of public safety. In response to this rapid growth, over 300 CVI practitioners, advocates, researchers, and community leaders united to create the CVI Action Plan—a roadmap to define, strengthen, and increase the capacity of the national CVI movement.

The "Setting the Standard" convening was born out of recommendations from the CVI Action Plan to develop consistent standards for the field. The Urban Peace Institute (UPI), National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR), and the Community Based Public Safety Collective (CBPSC) hosted the Setting the Standard convening to create a dedicated space for practitioners and leaders to discuss key issues for CVI implementation. Over two days in Los Angeles, a total of 121 attendees, representing 72 organizations across 45 cities, engaged in robust, small-group discussions around five critical themes essential for professionalizing the field:

1. Defining Core CVI Services and Strategies
2. CVI Standards of Practice, Shared Language, and Core Training
3. The Role of CVI and Law Enforcement
4. CVI Capacity Building and Sustainability
5. Data Collection and Evaluation

FINDINGS

The findings aim to reflect the voices of the convening participants, emphasize prominent themes, and highlight areas of agreement and divergence. Overall, participants of the convening expressed strong support for building more unified definitions and standards of practice; but, throughout the discussions, they also underscored the importance of not over-professionalizing or "sterilizing" CVI work.

Defining Core CVI Services and Strategies

Participants stated that core CVI strategies must focus on violence interruption, proactively engaging individuals at the center of violence, and employing peacemakers with a License to Operate (LTO) in the communities they serve. Core CVI activities include conflict mediation and resolution, prevention of retaliations, conflict de-escalation, proactive violence intervention, incident response, and the establishment of non-aggression agreements, and case management/life coaching.

The group distinguished core CVI services and strategies from adjacent services that typically do not focus on the "highest risk" individuals. They also distinguished CVI from gun violence intervention and gun safety strategies, which focus on guns as opposed to engaging individuals or groups involved in street-level violence to find alternatives and work toward transformation.

Many people asserted that unified language would help protect the field from misrepresentation, co-optation, and dilution. In addition to clearly defining CVI, people said the field needs a narrative on what CVI is and its effectiveness to educate funders, government agencies, and the general public.

CVI Standards of Practice, Shared Language, and Core Training Objectives

The group identified important core standards for CVI workers and highlighted examples such as "Don't tell or inform," "Don't cross the yellow tape," and "Keep a consistent presence in the field." Participants also emphasized that accountability is crucial to ensuring standards are upheld.

In discussing training and professionalization, participants emphasized the importance of including personal development and life coaching as part of training for frontline practitioners. Key stakeholders such as law enforcement, funders, researchers, and management within CVI organizations also need training to ensure mutual respect and understanding with frontline staff.

The Role of CVI and Law Enforcement

Participants discussed how clear boundaries with law enforcement are essential to protecting CVI autonomy, community trust, and workers' safety by maintaining their LTO.

Adopting the shared language of "professional understanding" with law enforcement can act as a firewall to clarify boundaries. The group highlighted effective boundaries in communication with law enforcement and discussed strategies to help create accountability for when these boundaries are broken.

People discussed how CVI differs greatly from law enforcement, as CVI focuses on love, healing, and redemption and law enforcement focuses on investigations, arrest, and incarceration. They also further distinguished deterrence-based from community-led strategies, and said focused-deterrence is not CVI. However, the report highlights some points of divergence around focused-deterrence and law enforcement.

CVI Capacity Building and Sustainability

People highlighted career pipeline development and recruitment for the next generation of CVI workers as pressing areas for CVI capacity and sustainability. They also highlighted a need to bridge the gap between management and frontline workers to foster trauma-informed organizations and prevent burnout.

Participants emphasized the need for sustainable models to create long-term, dedicated funding streams for CVI work, and to invest in organizational infrastructure—not just services and programming—to effectively sustain CVI organizations.

In the area of partnerships and technical assistance, people said collaboration and using intermediaries can increase collective impact, reduce competition, and simplify administrative tasks. This is particularly helpful for smaller organizations.

Data Collection and Evaluation

Participants discussed how data is important for capturing the impact of CVI work; however, they said data collection should be informed by frontline practitioners and meaningful to the communities they serve. People emphasized the importance of community-level outcomes and client-centered metrics that capture more subtle measures of progress.

People also discussed historic challenges with research and evaluation. While some shared negative experiences of working with researchers, others felt that establishing effective partnerships is possible when evaluators take the time to build relationships and understand CVI work. They also strongly emphasized the need to protect clients in collecting and sharing data. Data systems need strong protections to respect clients' privacy, ensure transparency, and preserve community trust.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report uplifts actionable recommendations for policymakers, funders, researchers, and organizations to strengthen the CVI field.

1. **Establish a national CVI council, shared definitions, and core standards**
   Create a council of seasoned CVI leaders from across the country to build shared definitions and standards for CVI nationally. Cities can also establish local Professional Standards Committees to reinforce standards and training.

   - **Build a national definition for CVI:** Attendees consistently uplifted the need for a national definition of CVI. Convening participants uplifted community credibility, being "community-led," and working with the individuals at highest risk of violence as essential components of the definition. While definitions were presented in the CVI Action Plan and the Setting the Standard convening, discussions made clear that the CVI field needs more consensus and buy-in to define CVI at a national level. People also uplifted a need to more clearly define "high-risk" individuals in the CVI context, as well as "professional understanding" with law enforcement.

2. **Adopt national standards and ethical boundaries with law enforcement**
   Clear boundaries and safeguards between CVI and law enforcement are essential for peacemakers' safety and effectiveness. People highlighted the following guardrails to maintain boundaries between CVI and law enforcement, which should be reinforced by training and protocols:

   - **One-way information flow:** Law enforcement can provide situational awareness to CVI organizations, but CVI practitioners must not share information with law enforcement. This separation safeguards community relationships and ensures CVI work remains non-enforcement-based.
   - **Public communication with trusted observers:** In unique situations where frontline staff must converse with law enforcement, they should ensure conversations happen in a visible public space and bring trusted community members with them to prevent rumors.
   - **Designated point of contact:** Organizations should have clearly designated points of contact for interfacing with law enforcement. These people are usually in leadership positions and should not be frontline staff.

   People also discussed how local offices of violence prevention should be housed outside of law enforcement agencies, and that these offices can act as a liaison between law enforcement and CVI organizations to facilitate shared understanding, gain buy-in from command staff, address issues, and work towards accountability when agreements are violated.

3. **Support national alignment and a unified narrative strategy**
   Many people uplifted the need for a clear messaging and narrative campaign to align the field nationally, build buy-in for shared definitions and standards, and educate a broad array of stakeholders on the power and effectiveness of CVI.

4. **Build the CVI workforce and invest in infrastructure**
   The following recommendations will build the capacity and sustainability of the CVI field:

   - **Develop career pipelines for the next generation of CVI workers:** The CVI field needs to recruit and empower the next generation of CVI workers while supporting the older generation to transition into new roles and retirement, for those who are ready. CVI organizations and funders should invest in the leadership development of frontline staff, especially those with lived experience, so they can grow into more senior roles through training, transferable skills, and competitive compensation and benefits.
   - **Invest in training for all stakeholders:** Funders, government agencies, and organizations must invest in consistent training for new staff and continued education for CVI workers. Organizations also uplifted the need for communications and public relations training. Funders, law enforcement, researchers, and all levels of organizational staff also need training to ensure stakeholders in the CVI ecosystem understand and support the integrity of CVI work.
   - **Support frontline workers:** Organizations can support frontline workers through trauma-informed work cultures and human resources policies that encourage self care. They can build greater understanding among CVI workers and other staff by

ensuring that all staff understand the reality of dealing with violence and creating opportunities for frontline staff to shape internal decision-making.

- **Invest in infrastructure:** Funders and government agencies must expand funding beyond direct services to support infrastructure for CVI agencies including workforce development, data management, communications, grants, and administrative support.
- **Support intermediaries and funding collectives**: Intermediaries can increase collective impact, reduce competition, and simplify funder relations through shared data systems, collective reporting, and pooled administrative resources.

5. **Advance policies for sustained funding**
   Policymakers and advocates should support sustainable funding streams for CVI work through national and state legislation and local ballot measures.

6. **Invest in the capacity of CVI organizations to own their data and avoid burdensome systems**
   Data can be a tool that empowers, not burdens, CVI agencies when the right protections and considerations are in place.

   - **Fund and support CVI organizations to build and shape their own data systems:** Organizations who are able to own and design their own data systems reported feeling most empowered by data; however, they need additional funding for data systems, staff, training, and evaluations.
   - **Build data capacity and leadership:** Build up the leadership and capacity of CVI organizations to collect their own data and have the analytical skills to tell their stories of success.
   - **Take extra precautions to ensure privacy and protect staff and clients:** Internal and external data collection systems must have strong protections and transparency of usage to ensure the safety and privacy of staff and clients.
   - **Work to define measures of success that feel meaningful to staff and community members they serve:** Evaluations should include outcomes that measure community-level impact and that are meaningful to communities and practitioners.
   - **Avoid using multiple systems:** Avoid using multiple systems and streamline data collection and reporting requirements to reduce the burden on CVI organizations.
   - **Use data for equity-driven policymaking:** Funders and policymakers should use data, especially data informed by CVI organizations and frontline workers, to make sure violence reduction resources are allocated equitably.

The recommendations in this report—namely creating a national body to further advance core definitions and standards—are critical for maintaining the autonomy and integrity of CVI as it gains prominence across the country and faces new challenges in the political sphere.

INTRODUCTION

The field of Community Violence Intervention (CVI) has arrived at a pivotal moment. After decades of development and advocacy by practitioners, CVI strategies have received unprecedented national attention and investment as an essential component of public safety. This long-overdue recognition, however, brought with it the profound challenges of rapid growth. The CVI field now faces new challenges under the Trump administration, as the Department of Justice has significantly cut CVI grants and reverted back to law enforcement-centered approaches that are linked to mass incarceration and deportation.[1]

As new resources flow from state, local, and private funding streams, and policies are designed, the CVI field faces an urgent need for greater strategic alignment, shared language, and consensus on the core principles that define its work.

Community Violence Intervention Action Plan

The "Setting the Standard" convening was born out of the CVI Action Plan which, under domain six, outlines the need to develop a coherent understanding of what CVI is and what it is not.[2] The development of the CVI Action Plan consisted of a 15-month process engaging over 300 CVI practitioners, advocates, researchers, and community leaders to develop a vision and roadmap for the field. The document outlines six key domain areas that require essential investment to define, strengthen, and increase the capacity of the national CVI movement. The CVI Action Plan was developed as a comprehensive, charter-like document for the field. Shaped by input from leaders and practitioners, the Action Plan established a collective vision and strategic direction for strengthening and scaling CVI nationwide.

The six domains of the Action Plan are as follows: 1) Capacity Building, Wellness, and Professionalization; 2) Fieldwide Collaboration; 3) Grassroots, Local, State, and Federal Policy Development and Advocacy; 4) Narrative Change; 5) Research, Evaluation, Quality Improvement, and Impact Analysis; and 6) Standardization of Essential CVI Elements: Definitions, Data-Driven Performance Management, and Direct Service Coordination.

The six domains reflect key recommendations for the current landscape of community-based safety in the U.S. These strategies represent the perspectives of a community-driven process that seeks to cement CVI as an essential pillar of public safety by scaling non-punitive efforts in Black and Brown communities most impacted by violence. This notion directly challenges efforts to criminalize, over-police, and over-rely on incarceration as the only approaches to the creation of safety.

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[1] U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, "FY25 Office of Justice Programs Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative (CVIPI)," Found at: https://www.ojp.gov/funding/docs/bja-2025-172468.pdf

[2] "Community Violence Intervention Action Plan: Mapping Transformation For The Field," (2024). Found at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/66ba86a03840716e574eab29/t/66bc16d24ba9b012a1f55aac/1723602646179/CVI_Action+Plan_Full+Report_v10.pdf

The creation of the CVI Action Plan was led by a committee of three key organizations: The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (HAVI), National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR), and Community Justice Action Fund (CJAF). Three months prior to the release of the report, Urban Peace Institute (UPI) and Community-Based Public Safety Collective (CBPSC) joined the committee to support the refinement of the plan and outreach to additional partners for support. The CVI Action Plan Committee, consisting of these five organizations, prioritized three key domain areas to convene the national CVI community around in 2025: 1) narrative change, 2) policy and advocacy, and 3) standardization.

Setting the Standard

While the Action Plan provides a vital roadmap, its successful execution hinges on building deeper, field-wide consensus on its details. The "Setting the Standard" convening was jointly hosted by UPI, NICJR, and CBPSC on June 18, 2025 and June 19, 2025 in Los Angeles as a direct response to one of the Action Plan's most central recommendations: the need for greater alignment and standardization across the field in its language, practices, and tactics. The goal was to move from the "what" of the Action Plan to the "how" of its implementation, creating a dedicated space for practitioners and leaders to engage in the consensus-building process themselves.

The pressing nature of this task was starkly illustrated in the responses gathered prior to the convening. When asked to identify the most urgent issue requiring collective agreement, a clear majority of participants—53%—pointed to the need to establish a clear and shared definition of what CVI is and what it is not. This single statistic reveals a field grappling with its own identity, even as it is called upon to play a larger role on the public stage. Other priorities, such as understanding different CVI models and creating standards of practice, further underscored the demand for a more unified and structured professional foundation.

To address these challenges, the convening brought together key stakeholders from CVI organizations across the country. Over two days, these professionals engaged in robust, small-group discussions facilitated by staff from the coordinating organizations. The conversations were structured around five critical themes essential for professionalizing the field:

1. Defining Core CVI Services and Strategies
2. CVI Standards of Practice, Shared Language, and Core Training
3. The Role of CVI and Law Enforcement
4. CVI Capacity Building and Sustainability
5. Data Collection and Evaluation

This paper documents the dialogue, debates, and key insights that emerged from this pivotal gathering. It does not seek to impose a top-down framework or offer a simple list of prescriptive recommendations. Instead, following the reflective spirit of the event itself, this paper aims to mirror the conversations, elevate the collective wisdom of those present, and share the findings so that the field can act on them. The insights presented here are grounded in a rigorous, multi-modal data collection process designed to capture a wide spectrum of contributions—from live notetaking and public post-it notes to anonymous digital submissions.

Ultimately, this document is intended to serve as an addendum to the CVI Action Plan. It provides the nuanced, field-informed definitions and guidance necessary to translate a strategic charter into actionable standards. It is a snapshot of a field in the process of building its own professional identity, from the ground up. We begin by detailing the methodology used to capture and analyze this rich dialogue, followed by a summary of the findings, and conclude with recommendations for a more defined, coordinated, empowered, and impactful CVI ecosystem.

METHODS

Participants

The convening brought together a total of 121 attendees representing 72 organizations across 45 cities in the United States. Participants spanned a range of roles in the Community Violence Intervention (CVI) ecosystem, with 44% of attendees identifying as Frontline Practitioners (53 participants), 40% as Administrators (49), 34% from Advocacy (41), 27% from Policy (33), and 15% as Researchers (18).[3]

Attendee recruitment for the convening strived to have diverse national representation from cities across the country, with an emphasis on frontline workers. Invitations were sent to 350 individuals on the CVI Action Plan distribution list, as well as practitioners in the networks of the organizing partners. And, the conveners took extra precautions to ensure broad representation from across the country, as not to favor LA-based organizations.

Following their confirmation and as a part of this preparatory process, attendees were asked to identify the issue they believed most urgently required collective consensus. The top three issues prioritized by attendees were Defining what CVI is and what it is not (53%), Understanding the different CVI models and approaches (17%), and Creating standards of practice for CVI work (13%).

Materials and Procedure

Understanding prior harm and distrust of research and evaluation in this field, the data collection process aimed to create an inclusive space for all participants to contribute meaningfully, regardless of their role, background, familiarity, or comfort in these settings. While the main method of engagement was facilitated discussions, the strategy incorporated multiple ways for participants to engage. Participants in each session were encouraged to record their thoughts by writing them on sticky notes and attaching them to poster boards. A digital feedback form was also made available through QR codes throughout the convening which included all of the themes and discussion questions, so people could include additional thoughts, or share their perspective if they were not comfortable speaking in a large group.

Each breakout discussion explored one of the five themes for professionalizing the field. Each session lasted one hour and was supported by two facilitators and two notetakers composed of staff from the three organizations who organized the convening. Facilitators were encouraged to prioritize frontline perspectives, ensuring that those with direct experience in the field and who are most proximate to the work helped

[3] Because people could identify themselves under more than one category, the numbers add up to more than 100% and 121 attendees.

drive the conversations through deliberate engagement. In each breakout room, two notetakers used a structured notetaking guide developed for the event to capture general discussion points, key themes, areas of agreement and disagreement, emergent questions, unresolved tensions, and potential direction for future collaboration.

The materials submitted by notetakers following the convening—live notes on physical poster boards, participant sticky notes, and online submissions—were compiled by UPI's Research and Evaluation team for thematic analysis.

Analysis

UPI staff reviewed 133 pages of notes from the notetakers covering the five themes. Information was organized under the session topics, discussion questions, and key themes that emerged across sessions. The findings emphasize the topics that came up most consistently in the conversations and highlight areas of agreement and divergence. In order to capture practitioners' direct voices, quotes from participants were utilized to capture the theme at hand. Actionable recommendations that emerged from the conversations were uplifted to provide guidance on concrete next steps the CVI field can coalesce around nationally.

Sessions were not recorded, therefore no transcriptions are available. Notetakers did their best to document exact quotes from participants to capture the direct voice of practitioners and other participants; however, in some cases, quotes have been paraphrased to capture the essence of what participants expressed.

FINDINGS

Findings cover the key themes highlighted by participants in the five discussion sessions of the Setting the Standard convening: 1) Defining Core CVI Services and Strategies; 2) CVI Standards of Practice, Shared Language, and Core Training; 3) The Role of CVI and Law Enforcement; 4) CVI Capacity Building and Sustainability; and 5) Data Collection and Evaluation.

Defining Core CVI Services and Strategies

In these sessions, participants explored key components of CVI core strategies, what services are complementary and adjacent to CVI, and how shared language and national alignment can help protect the field from co-optation.

Core CVI strategies and complementary and adjacent services

The discussion among participants centered on how core CVI services must be community-led, meaning they are co-developed, led, and informed by community leaders at the forefront of the CVI field. There was consensus that leaders of community-led CVI work must have a license to operate (LTO), lived experience, and/or cultural competence within the field of CVI. Individuals with lived experience—including former members of street groups,[4] those who are formerly incarcerated due to group involvement, and others deeply familiar with street violence and in good standing within their communities—are best positioned to deliver core services.

"**LICENSE TO OPERATE**" is the permission and credibility of an individual based on their status as a community member or former gang/group member to engage active individuals or groups to interrupt violence, de-escalate tension, and broker non-aggression agreements as a peacemaker.

Core components of CVI

The group distinguished two different approaches to CVI—one being the core services and the other being adjacent services in the larger CVI ecosystem. Participants stressed the importance of defining CVI to hold groups accountable to the core of the work. One participant stated, "Too many orgs receiving CVI dollars are not actually doing the work. We need a criterion to stop orgs who are more interested in the funds rather than upholding the work with integrity."

[4] People may also refer to street groups as "gangs," "cliques," "street crews," "neighborhood crews," or other names for a shared group identity, oftentimes based on a neighborhood.

To distinguish core elements of CVI from adjacent services, it is helpful to think about two core questions. One participant raised the question: "What is going to most immediately stop the violence?" This question highlights the core elements of CVI. Another key question is "Who do we need to help us?" This question helps identify examples of the ecosystem of services needed to support core CVI work.

Services focused on violence interruption, incident response, high-risk individuals,[5] and employing individuals with LTO were highlighted as core elements needed to increase safety. Violence interruption—meaning the prevention of a shooting, retaliation, or the escalation of street violence—is at the core of CVI services. This includes activities such as conflict mediation and resolution, prevention of retaliations, conflict de-escalation, proactive violence intervention, incident response, and the establishment of non-aggression agreements. Participants also discussed the importance of life coaching, mentoring, and case management for individuals at the highest risk of being involved in violence to create behavioral change.

The ability to proactively engage individuals at the center of violence before conflict erupts is essential to peacemaking. One participant explained, "We cannot be reactive, we must be proactive out there preventing violence before it occurs." Another participant shared, "Relationships with those at highest risk, those who have access to the neighborhood-level drivers of violence, are crucial to violence interruption."

Participants discussed the importance of street outreach workers getting "buy-in from potential shooters" in order to increase safety. The main strategy is working with the people with the highest potential of "doing the shooting and/or getting shot." Intentionally outreaching to the highest-risk individuals and providing resources such as food distributions, holiday giveaways, and getting people together to share a meal is necessary to build buy-in.

> **"We cannot be reactive, we must be proactive out there preventing violence before it occurs."**

Participants also identified ensuring safe passage at schools and for funerals as essential to safety. Victim services and burial assistance, youth development, rapid housing, community events and food giveaways also should be included as important complementary CVI services.

CVI workers should build relationships with entire families and key stakeholders such as other service providers and parole or probation officers. One participant stated, "We must

[5] High-risk individuals are defined as those most likely to be victims or perpetrators of community violence.

> **"Relationships with those at highest risk, those who have access to the neighborhood-level drivers of violence, are crucial to violence interruption."**

engage the entire family unit to provide services for the entire household, not just the individual because the whole family is impacted." Building these relationships will strengthen treatment and support individual transformation.

Adjacent services

The group highlighted the need to differentiate CVI from traditional "prevention" services that typically do not focus on the "highest risk" individuals and mainly focus on those not yet involved in the cycle of violence. This distinction is essential to create funding lanes that clearly delineate the role of CVI separately from other services that address community needs.

Participants discussed CVI as a "complex industry," and in trying to reflect what it means to the community, they noted the stark differences between group violence intervention and community violence intervention. Group violence intervention includes a component that partners community members with law enforcement to deliver a message to high-risk groups that community violence will have consequences and to offer services. Programs that focus on law enforcement-centered, punitive approaches are not aligned with core CVI strategies.

Additionally, gun violence prevention (GVP) frames CVI as a gun safety strategy. The focus on guns as opposed to street-level violence decenters the efforts of CVI to focus on individuals or groups to build alternatives to violence and work toward transformation. CVI work focuses on supporting those individuals caught in the cycle of violence and building a community safety workforce that includes them and is a part of public safety efforts. Linking CVI to gun safety efforts can lead to movement co-optation when GVP is primarily a policy issue and CVI is a function of public safety—two separate strategies are conflated.

Shared language and national alignment to protect against co-optation

There is a feeling that, as CVI received more attention and funding in recent years, many organizations have labeled themselves as intervention organizations without fulfilling the core components of CVI discussed above. Participants said they have seen misrepresentation, or even co-optation, of their work by service providers that do not perform core CVI services and by law enforcement. Some participants said that agencies try to fit themselves into a "CVI mold," and some have "changed their mission statement to make themselves look like CVI." One person said, "Since CVI received funding, every org says they do CVI work when the last 10-15 years they have been doing homeless outreach or mental health work."

Beyond practitioners and law enforcement, some expressed a concern that particular researchers were misrepresenting intervention and that funders needed more education on what CVI is.

To help guard against co-optation, many participants highlighted a need for a clear definition of CVI and shared language to define key elements, in addition to clear standards.

The need for a shared definition and language

Participants shared that unified language could help protect the field from misrepresentation, co-optation, and dilution. A common language is essential to establishing conceptual frameworks and a clear articulation of CVI-specific activities that differentiate it from other public safety professions. One participant stated, "A unified framework would allow organizations to individualize their work while still aligning with core CVI values and standards."

Building shared language will require opportunities for "cross-pollination" to ensure it incorporates the perspectives of CVI practitioners from across the country. People also emphasized that centering the voices of frontline practitioners to define and protect the

> **"A unified framework would allow organizations to individualize their work while still aligning with core CVI values and standards."**

work is a vital part of building alignment. Participants stressed that community credibility and lived experience, and working with the individuals at highest risk of violence, must be part of what defines CVI. They also said the field needs to clearly define "high-risk" individuals and "credible messengers."

People said that shared language and definitions should have some "non-negotiables" that always remain the same, but language should consider regional differences, and the implementation should be adaptable to regional culture and vocabulary.

Once developed, engagement and training will be needed to socialize language and standards with CVI groups and stakeholders across the country. The definitions that are developed must be clear for all agencies who say that they do CVI—as well as relevant stakeholders such as law enforcement, government agencies, researchers, and funders—so they can better understand and support the work. One person noted that funders often focus on organizational branding instead of assessing the organization's understanding of what CVI truly is.

> **"...funders often focus on organizational branding instead of assessing the organization's understanding of what CVI truly is."**

While participants saw the importance of getting to a shared definition, they also warned against "intellectualizing" the work to protect the CVI field and ensure it remains accessible to communities.

Unified messaging and strategies

Participants identified a need for a campaign to align the field nationally. In addition to clearly defining CVI, people also said the field needs a clear message and narrative on what CVI is and how it is effective. This is needed to educate funders, government agencies, and the general public. Some people noted that even in communities where CVI is working, many community members are not aware of what it is. The CVI field needs a larger narrative strategy to claim success and grow its base of support.

Clear definitions and messaging can also assist in having consistent and proactive conversations with law enforcement on what CVI is and what it is not so practitioners can reinforce clear boundaries and a "professional understanding" with law enforcement.[6]

People also discussed the need for a national campaign to support common language development, advocacy, and media strategy, which would require more convenings and investment. Developing local, state, and national coalitions was also identified as an essential need for building the field.

[6] "Professional Understanding" is a term used in Community Violence Intervention (CVI) to describe the code of conduct between law enforcement and CVI practitioners. It highlights the importance of maintaining independent, parallel roles in the shared effort to reduce violence, save lives, and ensure public safety. Establishing and upholding this understanding is essential to preserving operational boundaries—commonly referred to as 'firewalls'—between street outreach and law enforcement, in order to protect the safety and integrity of outreach work and sustain community trust. This concept is explored in further detail in the The Role of CVI and Law Enforcement section of this report.

CVI Standards of Practice, Shared Language, and Core Training Objectives

In discussing standards, shared language, and training, participants uplifted the importance of building standards and mechanisms for accountability. In the area of training, they emphasized the need for training to reinforce standards, the importance of personal development, and making sure that training remains relevant to changing dynamics.

What standards of practice and conduct should be used to define high-quality, ethical CVI work?

The integrity and autonomy of the field will require a clear vision of standards and expectations for CVI practitioners nationally to ensure the work does not become diluted—and, therefore, ineffective. Participants discussed the establishment of a universal code of conduct to be adopted across the country to fortify power, unity, and legitimacy. Standards of conduct will help to legitimize the field while protecting it from co-optation. While participants recognized the need for field-wide standards and professionalism, they also warned against "sterilizing" or over-professionalizing the work. As one participant aptly stated, "Standardization should never become sterilization."

People affirmed that, no matter where you go, CVI should be implemented similarly with some room for regional adjustments. One participant highlighted how law enforcement is generally practiced the same across the country with core standards; however, there are regional differences based on culture, and state and local politics. Participants felt that standards must be adaptable and malleable to different regions throughout the country based on local dynamics. One participant expressed that, "National shared standards can also be regionally adapted and made community-specific to reflect hyper-local realities." However, there should be core standards that all groups adhere to, and participants stated that there also needs to be checks and balances if standards are broken.

Core standards of practice

The group identified important core standards or "standards across the board," and highlighted some examples. Consistency and integrity of how a CVI worker shows up in the field were identified as key to maintaining credibility with both the community and public sector, and should therefore be integrated into the core standards. People also emphasized that CVI workers should understand the importance of standards, how upholding standards keeps them safe, and how they apply both on and off the clock.

Clear standards and protocols will help ensure CVI autonomy from law enforcement and safeguard CVI workers' credibility or LTO. These standards are explored in further detail in the The Role of CVI and Law Enforcement section of this report.

> **"Standardization should never become sterilization."**

In addition to the core standards named above, participants said that the CVI field should develop standards on sexual harassment in the workplace and with external partners, rules of engagement with researchers, and how to prevent burnout. People also raised topics for standards and training such as creating a more inclusive culture, learning how to work with and support women in the field, ensuring younger intervention workers are recruited and developed, and knowledge of how the younger generation engages in street violence.

Accountability and enforcing standards

Accountability is crucial to ensuring standards are upheld and maintaining field fidelity. Participants consistently uplifted this theme, particularly around ensuring that organizations are serving those at the highest risk of violence and that individual CVI workers are adhering to professional standards. People also raised nepotism as a concern, and requested clear hiring standards and criteria for being a CVI worker.

Core CVI Standards Identified:

- Don't tell or inform
- Don't cross the yellow tape
- No drug use
- Never be under the influence while working
- Don't make promises you can't keep
- Be mindful of your ego and conscious of your reactions
- Keep consistent presence in the field
- Set and uphold rules of engagement with law enforcement, researchers, and public officials

Standards should ensure that all CVI workers remain within ethical and legal boundaries, as CVI workers must respect both neighborhood and city politics to remain effective. Participants emphasized that when CVI workers "play both sides" or "ride the fence"—such as portraying a professional street outreach worker by day and engaging in street violence or crime by night—it harms the field nationally. Any improper conduct that is not in alignment with standards of practice should be addressed for the protection of the field. One participant shared, "There are eyes watching you even when you don't know it."

Establishing standards and accountability will also require training to ensure workers understand their limitations and are aware of legal liability when engaging with individuals caught in the cycle of violence.

Participants discussed the need to develop a national body responsible for developing and upholding standards like other professions. This should include an assessment of what standards currently exist across the country and what is missing to identify gaps. In addition to a national body, people stated that there needs to be a Professional Standards Committee in each city implementing CVI strategies. A standards committee is composed of veteran intervention workers who develop and uphold standards and ensure accountability among the local CVI field.

While standardization is critical, it will not be without challenges. One participant shared that in the U.S. South, there is a huge struggle to "get even a sliver of this work approved by the people and institutions that are in power and still deeply oppressive, racist, and destructive." Even if approved, the risk of co-optation remains eminent. This poses a continued challenge for standards and accountability to the CVI field nationally.

Training and professionalization for the CVI field

CVI training must focus on the "non-negotiables"—the essential elements for all CVI workers across the country. Training should also focus on what "workers need to feel comfortable and confident in the work." Throughout the conversations about developing shared language and standards for the CVI field, people emphasized how these areas must be reinforced by consistent and continuous training.

In addition to training for CVI workers, throughout the convening, participants highlighted the need to train funders, law enforcement, researchers, and organizational staff in leadership and administrative positions to ensure that these stakeholders understand the work, maintain its integrity, and support CVI workers.

Participants discussed a two-pronged approach for training CVI workers focused on standards of conduct and practice, and personal development. Participants also stated that CVI workers should be trained in life saving skills such as how to perform CPR, treat gunshot wounds, and administer NARCAN and first aid.

Personal development and transformation

The area of personal development was highlighted as an essential area of training, and people explained it as a CVI worker's quality of presence and self-awareness. Workers must know their triggers and engage in consistent self-care to maintain a balanced approach to peacemaking. As part of self-care, people highlighted healing circles and debriefing spaces to reflect on difficult or tragic events as specific needs.

Personal transformation is essential to the development of professionalism and training. As one participant stated, "It takes time and patience working with CVI workers—because there is a lot to navigate with people who are processing their own internal journey." The group discussed that "you must lose yourself in order to find yourself" meaning that the

personal journey to become a CVI professional requires deep transformation which takes time and needs support. People also shared that uniforms help support CVI workers to identify themselves as peacemakers, but also to differentiate themselves from their former lives. As one participant stated, doing CVI work is "not just about commitment to community, it's about continually staying on your own personal journey."

> **"...not just about commitment to community, it's about continually staying on your own personal journey."**

Making sure training is effective and relevant

Participants shared that shadowing people, professional coaching, and formalized supervision would support their growth. They also noted that training must continually evolve to address the changing dynamics of violence and the streets. Additionally, it is important to have practitioners with ground-level experience be the trainers because they have credibility.

While people expressed that training is a critical and often underestimated, underutilized tool in this work, they also cautioned against over-professionalizing the field. Key points of this conversation centered on ensuring training is accessible and understanding that not every jurisdiction is operating from the same entry point. For example, in the U.S. South, there is not the same level of state and local buy-in to CVI. Again, this makes the community safety strategy vulnerable to co-optation and dilution by people who seek contracts but are disconnected from the ground.

Participants shared that the work needs to be institutionalized but not commercialized—meaning CVI leaders need to build up its infrastructure while preserving the integrity and essence of CVI. As one person stated, "It's very tricky to start institutionalizing this work—but it is also essential to build power in this work." A core theme of the conversation focused on how over-professionalization could dilute a worker's credibility. There were concerns that professionalizing this work could exclude people and communities who have felt a deep connection to the work.

The Role of CVI and Law Enforcement

In the sessions related to CVI and law enforcement, participants explored topics such as what guardrails with law enforcement are needed to maintain community trust, how to uphold boundaries through a "professional understanding," how to maintain checks and balances, and accountability when guardrails and professional understanding have been broken.

What boundaries or firewalls are essential to protect CVI autonomy and community trust?

Establishing clear boundaries between law enforcement and CVI practitioners is critical to keeping credibility with the community and maintaining one's own credibility. By definition, interventionists must engage the groups and individuals at highest risk of being the victims or producers of community violence to prevent future harm. Participants repeatedly noted the importance of community members trusting that no information will be shared with law enforcement, and that it is critical to their work and safety that they not be viewed as informants or collaborating with law enforcement in any way. This allows them to build trusting relationships with the people in the greatest need of CVI services and to effectively prevent violence. As one participant put it, "If I can't talk to gang members, I can't do my job." Another participant noted that trusting relationships and individual credibility are CVI workers' only armor in a dangerous field.

> "If I can't talk to gang members, I can't do my job."

Participants noted that there are inconsistencies in the boundaries CVI organizations draw with law enforcement nationally and, in some cases, even within the same city. These inconsistencies compromise a CVI practitioner's credibility and create confusion for all parties, including law enforcement and community members.

"PROFESSIONAL UNDERSTANDING" is a term used in CVI to describe the code of conduct between law enforcement and CVI practitioners. It highlights the importance of maintaining independent, parrallel roles in the shared effort to reduce violence, save lives, and ensure public safety. Establishing and upholding the understanding is essential to preserving operational boundaries—commonly referred to as 'firewalls'—between street outreach and law enforcement, in order to protect the safety and integrity of outreach work and sustain community trust.

How should the concept of "professional understanding" guide interactions between law enforcement and CVI?

A critical component of creating and reinforcing boundaries with law enforcement is the concept of "professional understanding." This concept and definition is used in cities such as Los Angeles and Chicago to establish clearly defined and distinct roles between CVI and law enforcement. Many participants emphasized that adopting the shared language of "professional understanding" can act as a firewall to clarify boundaries. They also noted that certain terms and verbiage can fracture trust with community members—this includes phrases such as CVI's "collaboration" or "relationship" with law enforcement, or saying that CVI is "complementary" to law enforcement—because they can create the perception that CVI workers are part of law enforcement strategies or investigations. As noted above, this perception can be dangerous for CVI workers, and a lack of clarity creates confusion for all stakeholders.

As one participant put it, "What can we learn from what exists? The police and fire department have a professional understanding. Police won't put out fires, fire won't arrest. They are both public safety, but it's clear that they are different."

How does the role of CVI differ from traditional law enforcement within a public safety system?

While CVI organizations and law enforcement agencies have one shared goal—to keep communities safe—the other goals and approaches of each party are starkly different.

As participants described, CVI practitioners intervene to stop cycles of violence, save lives, de-escalate, and prevent violence from happening in the first place. They focus on healing, love, restoration, compassion, peace, and redemption. CVI looks at people's holistic needs, builds years-long relationships, and works alongside families for as long

as they need the support. While law enforcement responds to an incident and leaves, peacemakers are a permanent part of their communities. Participants emphasized that the role of CVI is not to investigate, but to build trust in order to minimize retaliations.

As one participant stated, CVI works toward "safe, hopeful, helpful communities with a public health lens. No guns, no handcuffs. These are the tools that change the conditions. If a carpenter only has a hammer to paint the wall, all you will get are holes. You need the right tools."

Meanwhile, participants shared that law enforcement's approach to safety is part of a punitive legal framework that relies on suppression. They respond to incidents of violence after they occur and and their primary role is to arrest, investigate, and incarcerate.

One participant noted that CVI and law enforcement are "looking for different outcomes from the same group of people. Law enforcement is going for punitive, CVI is going for redemption and peace. CVI is not anti-gun or anti-group. You don't have to renounce what you've done or where you come from. Just because you own a gun doesn't mean you are at highest risk. CVI can see that difference, but the courts and law enforcement can't. The outcome isn't to get you to disown your people, it's to get you to not kill someone."

Another person shared, "You can't arrest and enforce your way out of street violence. CVI understands the streets and the manifestation of violence. Violence has its own rules, and an outsider can't understand the governance to interrupt cycles of violence."

Some participants said that police can have a dehumanizing mindset and that their presence is triggering. One person noted that an additional difference between CVI and law enforcement is that CVI is given much less resources for their work, and that they are held to a higher standard.

Deterrence-based versus community-led strategies

Noting the difference between CVI and law enforcement, many participants shared the sentiment that if law enforcement has any involvement in a strategy, then that should not be considered CVI. As one participant put it, "If they are sharing and riding with law enforcement, that's not CVI." Another stated, "Focused deterrence is police-driven, you can't start a relationship with a threat."

This sentiment is sometimes complicated by misrepresentations, misunderstandings, and inaccurate information. Further complication includes the fact that some funders, researchers, and even organizations that say they do CVI work, consider focused deterrence and group violence intervention strategies as part of the CVI umbrella, even though these strategies incorporate law enforcement and incarceration as part of their model.

> **"Law enforcement is going for punitive, CVI is going for redemption and peace. CVI is not anti-gun or anti-group. You don't have to renounce what you've done or where you come from. Just because you own a gun doesn't mean you are at highest risk. CVI can see that difference, but the courts and law enforcement can't. The outcome isn't to get you to disown your people, it's to get you to not kill someone."**

Focused deterrence was discussed as a "fear-based" strategy, and one participant stated, "Gun violence prevention [deterrence-based] strategies are harmful because law enforcement coupled with other individuals push folks with credibility to deliver the message 'either take these services or go to jail'." Another participant said, "It's harmful to be put on a list that is being targeted for enforcement when the goal is to change violent behavior. Whether they take the services or not, you are putting that person at risk. You put your reputation on the line."

There was general concern around CVI workers being tied to anything that may be interpreted as being an extension of law enforcement. This perception can negatively impact someone's LTO—or worse, a worker's safety can be compromised. People expressed the need to educate funders, city leaders, and agencies on why this type of collaboration can put peacemakers' safety at risk and impact their ability to effectively do their job.

It is important to note, while some jurisdictions have implemented enforcement-based focused deterrence efforts that use harmful practices, other jurisdictions have not. There is significant misunderstanding, and sometimes misrepresentation, of these efforts that have created effective firewalls between enforcement and CVI such as the City of Oakland.

> **"...you can't start a relationship with a threat."**

In describing the difference between deterrence-based and CVI strategies, two participants specifically expressed that focused deterrence should not be considered CVI. Another said that CVI services should have "no strings attached," and that focused deterrence uses a "carrot and stick" approach, where the stick always tends to get bigger and the carrot smaller, meaning that many times there is an overemphasis on punitive measures as opposed to direct support services.

There was also a shared concern that law enforcement could easily co-opt CVI by framing deterrence-based strategies as "community-driven," which impacts funding available to CVI organizations and threatens CVI's autonomy. Funding for focused deterrence strategies usually runs through law enforcement, which makes it difficult to maintain boundaries. Furthermore, one group shared that, when a focused deterrence strategy was introduced in their city, the city council redirected funding from community programs to law enforcement. They felt that even though their work contributed significantly to reductions in homicides, law enforcement got all the credit.

Further distinguishing deterrence-based strategies from CVI

One participant said they created a definition for CVI in their city to clearly distinguish it from law enforcement, defining CVI as a community-led strategy that reduces gun violence but does not increase surveillance and incarceration. If there is collaboration with law enforcement, an agency would not be able to avoid increasing surveillance and incarceration, and it is therefore not CVI. Adopting this type of language into a universal definition of CVI could help clarify the differences between deterrence-based versus CVI strategies.

Some points of disagreement

Most participants clearly delineated the difference and boundaries between CVI and law enforcement; however, there were some points of disagreement that are worth noting.

While many participants expressed skepticism, focused deterrence was cited to work in some cases, and people noted the importance of implementing the model with fidelity. One participant shared a detailed example from Oakland, where law enforcement and CVI do not work together, but in parallel efforts. Oakland maintains a "one-way flow of information" where law enforcement provides CVI managers with information about recent shooting incidents and CVI managers take that back to their staff, assess the information, and use it to help determine which neighborhoods, groups, and individuals to focus community interventions on. A participant said, "We hire credible messengers that already have relationships in east Oakland. Clients need to know it's no bullshit and it comes from the heart. It really matters who the messengers are. There's no correlation with arrest if you take the services or not."

Another point of divergence was the political reality CVI organizations face in different regions of the country. While the majority of participants asserted that CVI should have clear boundaries and firewalls that separate it from law enforcement, some participants shared that—due to political dynamics, funding requirements, and the lack of a shared definition—sometimes CVI agencies and offices of violence prevention in their cities are required or encouraged to collaborate with law enforcement. One example was shared from California where an office of violence prevention works out of a police department. Other people, particularly those from the U.S. South and Southeast, shared that public

funding often requires some level of sharing sensitive information and collaboration with law enforcement. One agency from New York did not oppose agencies working with law enforcement and openly supported it. The national CVI field will have to work through these differences to establish consistent definitions and standards for the work.

Strengthen training, professionalization, and standards around law enforcement

Participants uplifted clear standards, training, and protocols as crucial components of reinforcing definitions and boundaries to create clarity and consistency across the field.

- **Standards and professionalism:** Participants named the need for clear standards, ethics, and codes of conduct to define "professional understanding," boundaries, and clear lanes with law enforcement. As one participant shared, "If different groups don't agree on the standards, this gets muddy." Others raised the need to increase the professionalism of CVI practitioners nationally, and noted the need for professional recognition in order to have professional understanding.
- **Training:** Participants emphasized that training around shared terminology, roles, conduct, and "professional understanding" are essential to creating consistent and clear lanes and boundaries between CVI and law enforcement. This not only includes training for CVI workers, but also for law enforcement. Law enforcement needs training to understand what CVI is, how it is effective, and the importance of maintaining separation and professional understanding for the safety and efficacy of CVI workers. One participant suggested that more progressive police officers who understand the work can be effective messengers to train other law enforcement agents.
- **Protocols:** In addition to standards and training, many participants underscored how CVI organizations need to create documented protocols, if they do not already have them, to ensure effective boundaries in communication with law enforcement, and rules of engagement. Some suggested a handbook and strong onboarding process. One participant said that many jurisdictions, such as King County, Washington and Washington D.C., already have protocols, so agencies and jurisdictions that do not can build from what exists to save capacity. The participant also named the importance of having clarity and protocols with district attorneys, since CVI workers can be subpoenaed as witnesses.

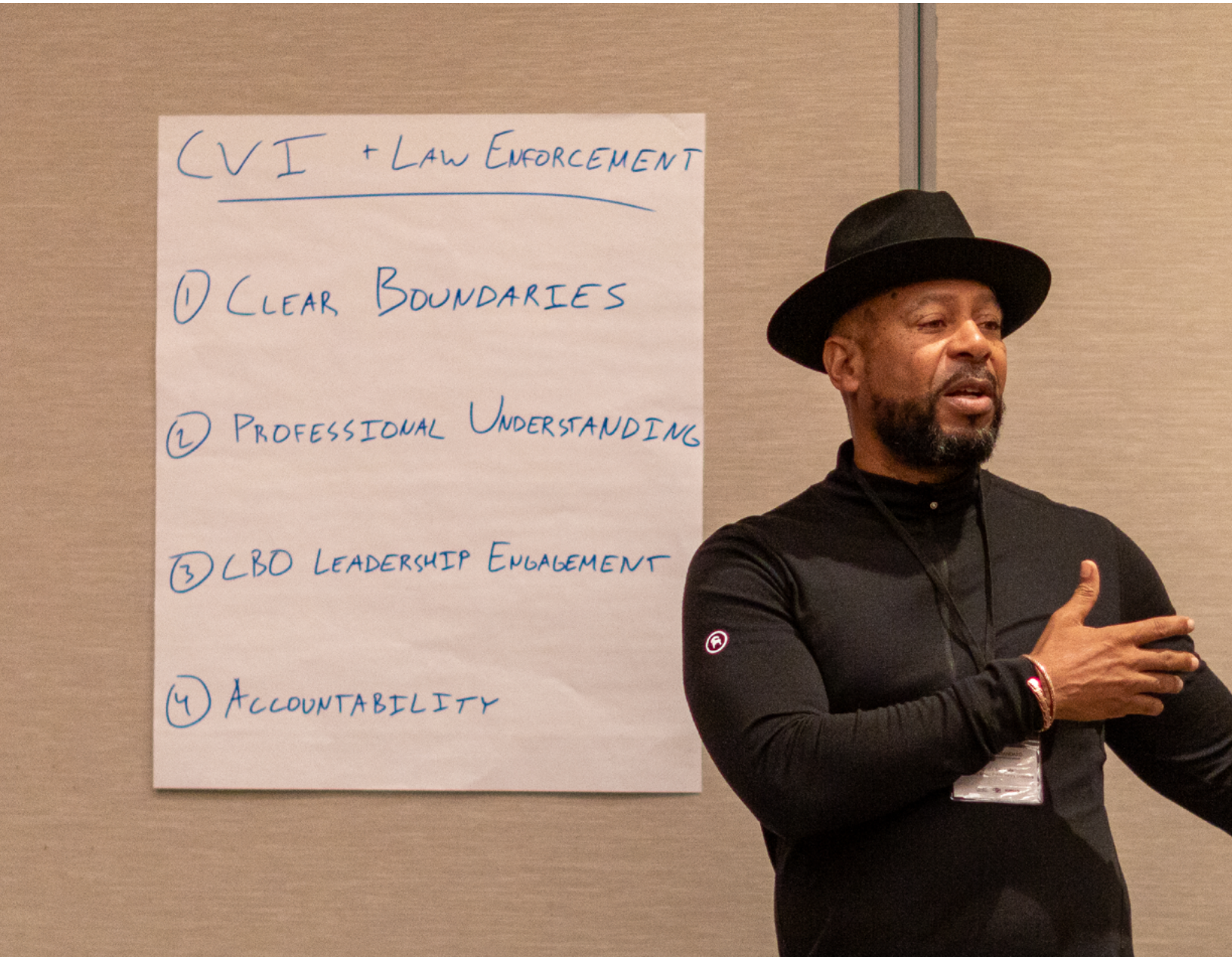
What structures should community-based organizations have in place to ensure effective boundaries in communication with law enforcement?

Participants consistently identified three standards and protocols that could be adopted as national models to guide interactions with law enforcement and reinforce consistency. As discussed above, these guardrails are essential to ensuring that peacemakers can maintain their LTO, which is essential for their safety and effectiveness in the field.

One-way flow of information

To help create safety and save lives, CVI and law enforcement agencies should adopt formal agreements for a one-way flow of information, where law enforcement shares information related to incidents of violence with CVI, but CVI does not share information with law enforcement. Participants named Oakland and Seattle as two places that uphold this standard, along with many other cities. This should be agreed upon in writing by both parties.

Point of divergence: Participants named a couple of examples where limited information was shared with law enforcement, such as letting them know that the retaliation level is high, but not sharing more specifics. Another example was an instance when they had to contact law enforcement to ensure that a body was covered up in a timely fashion. Understanding that these types of communications may come up, written agreements should include clear guardrails to guide and limit information sharing.



Designated point of contact

Some interaction between law enforcement and CVI agencies is often necessary due to the nature of the work; therefore, CVI agencies should have a designated point of contact who is not a frontline practitioner to handle all interactions with law enforcement. The designated contact should normally be at the director or management level and should be trained in all protocols that guide interactions. Frontline practitioners should avoid interacting with law enforcement. Participants also said that it is helpful to have a designated point of contact within law enforcement agencies, preferably in a leadership position, so they can help navigate any conflict or tensions that may arise.

Many participants also named the "triangle protocol" in Los Angeles as another model. In this case, the Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) has regional program managers that act as a liaison between CVI agencies and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). Since the mayor oversees both the GRYD office and LAPD, this protocol creates a buffer that allows CVI agencies to protect their LTO and navigate any conflict that may arise between LAPD and CVI agencies. The triangle protocol is key when incidents of community violence arise, as it helps parties gather and share any vital information, in real time, without jeopardizing anyone's LTO.

If you need to talk to law enforcement, do it in public and bring trusted people

While there was broad agreement that frontline practitioners should avoid contact with law enforcement, some participants named instances when it may be necessary. People raised examples such as being asked by community members to step in to de-escalate tense situations, such as the gang unit approaching a group of people at a public park, or interactions arising at large community events. If one of these occasions arises, participants said it is important to keep interaction limited, ensure that conversations are in a public and visible setting, and bring additional community members who also have LTO, so they can vouch that no sensitive information was shared and avoid rumors. These guidelines should be reinforced through written protocols and training.

Who is responsible for checks and balances when law enforcement breaks boundaries and how do we ensure that there is accountability when that happens?

Participants were also asked about checks and balances to ensure accountability when law enforcement or CVI practitioners break boundaries. In the discussion, people uplifted a need to ensure internal accountability and clear consequences if CVI staff communicate with law enforcement outside of protocol. One person said it is best to call out the violation in the moment and follow up with a conversation with directors and administrators to ensure protocols are adhered to.

Unfortunately, in terms of law enforcement, many participants expressed skepticism that any meaningful accountability is possible, even when a situation is brought to leadership. As one participant put it, "We can't even hold cops accountable when they kill people. How are we going to hold them accountable when they disrespect us?"

While this perspective is valid—and reinforced by history and countless tragic events—other participants uplifted mechanisms which show promise to improve relations and accountability with law enforcement.

Chain of command

To create accountability for law enforcement, many participants uplifted the importance of CVI directors and managers building relationships at the top of the law enforcement chain of command, such as bureau chiefs, police chiefs, and even deputy mayors. They noted that these relationships should happen at the institutional level, because visible relationships between frontline police officers and CVI staff—such as attending Coffee with a Cop, or sharing pictures together on social media—can compromise LTO and make the relationship and expectations murky for all CVI organizations, even those who do not engage in those types of activities. While building these relationships at the institutional level can be helpful and important for building trust and accountability, some participants noted that this can take many years and dynamics such as staffing changes create additional challenges.

Offices of violence prevention as liaisons

CVI work is often funded through local departments outside of law enforcement that focus on community safety, such as offices of violence prevention. Many participants expressed that a primary role of these offices, in addition to providing funding and coordination, should be to act as a liaison between law enforcement and CVI to address issues, gain buy-in from command staff, and work toward accountability when agreements are violated. Participants stated that it is important that these offices be housed outside of law enforcement, so they can act as a third party liaison and guard against parameters that blur the boundaries between CVI and law enforcement.

As mentioned above, the GRYD office in Los Angeles is housed within the mayor's office. Some participants shared that this positioning is helpful in resolving issues and promoting mutual respect, professional understanding, and accountability since LAPD is also overseen by the mayor.

It is important to acknowledge the emerging tension with offices of violence prevention (OVP) seeking CVI funding. Concerns have been expressed regarding the conflict these offices can create when they do not directly fund community-based organizations (CBOs) and instead hire frontline CVI workers to work on behalf of the city. This results in a failure to build community capacity to address safety issues and puts the public agency in competition with the local CBOs. Additionally, just because a CVI leader is recruited

to lead or direct an OVP does not mean that the strategy is "community-driven" because of bureaucratic and political limitations. There is additional concern with OVPs not seeking outside technical assistance and training expertise, attempting to conduct development "in house" which can create strategy misalignment. As OVPs across the nation seek to find their identity within the CVI field, these tensions need to be unpacked and roles need to be clarified.

Body cameras and other documentation

The GRYD office in Los Angeles also uses body camera footage to help bring mutual accountability to law enforcement and CVI practitioners. If a conflict between law enforcement and CVI workers is reported, a senior director at GRYD will review the body camera footage and facilitate a mediation that includes LAPD leadership. This not only helps hold police officers accountable, but also helps identify times when a CVI worker could have improved their behavior. This process is meant to mediate conflict and provide learning for everyone involved. Participants stated that, even though things can get heated at times, the process has been working.

In addition to body cameras, participants named the need for other forms of documentation in order to track incidents to help build accountability.

Spaces for shared accountability

Community spaces with shared goals and diverse stakeholders can support CVI agencies, build power, and bring some accountability to law enforcement. These spaces, such as neighborhood safety councils, usually meet regularly and include stakeholders such as community-based organizations, residents, police officers, police leadership, CVI workers, faith leaders, and staffers of elected officials. When incidents or tensions arise, these spaces can help bring accountability and ensure that law enforcement leadership is aware and willing to address the issues.

CVI organizations can also build partnerships with local city council members, faith leaders, and civil rights and police accountability organizations to raise issues that CVI agencies might not feel comfortable raising alone. One participant noted that these partnerships can also help increase advocacy to grow support for CVI in communities.

CVI Capacity Building and Sustainability

The discussion on capacity building explored the most urgent workforce development, infrastructure, and technical assistance needs for the growth and stability of CVI organizations.

Many organizations said they have gone through rapid growth and this has increased their capacity building needs. Others recognized that organizations and staff need support but said many do not know exactly what they need.

What are the most pressing organizational and workforce development needs facing CVI agencies today?

In discussing the most pressing needs for CVI agencies, people highlighted career pipeline development, increasing understanding between leadership and frontline workers, trauma-informed work cultures, and organizational development as the most urgent priorities.

Career pipeline development and recruitment for the next generation of CVI workers

From recruitment to retirement, participants emphasized that the CVI field needs to develop pathways for entry-level outreach workers to advance to management and senior leadership positions, as well as parallel professions. People highlighted the need to recruit younger workers and get them excited about the work, but said this can be challenging because people are usually not familiar with CVI or they lack experience. To recruit new CVI practitioners, one person raised the idea of “ROTC-style” pipelines to identify and recruit the next generation of CVI workers.

People also described a generational divide and challenges navigating the different “street values” of younger and older CVI professionals. Many participants agreed that conflict

mediation looks different between generations, and that this can affect team dynamics. They discussed the need to build more intergenerational understanding, team cohesion, and professional development to create upward mobility and succession plans for senior workers. This will build capacity in the field by creating opportunities for the next generation of CVI leaders.

Participants emphasized the need to formalize career ladders and specifically invest in frontline staff, especially those with lived experience, so they can grow into leadership roles. They said management can empower frontline staff through training, transferable skills, and competitive compensation and benefits. Some suggested broadening the role of CVI practitioners through positions in policy, research, advocacy, government, and philanthropy to create more career opportunities and ensure that people who understand CVI work are shaping policy and funding decisions.

People also raised the need to support the older generation of CVI workers so they can transition into new roles and retire with dignity. Some suggested creating alternate career paths for aging or transitioning staff by offering off-ramps from frontline roles and providing them with transferable skills that can be taken into new career opportunities for those who want a change. Part of preparing CVI workers for retirement is ensuring that people have good retirement and health benefits, including life and disability insurance, health and mental healthcare, and wellness benefits. Additionally, people expressed a need for financial literacy training so staff can take the most advantage of their benefits and learn about retirement planning, investment, and wealth-building to proactively prepare for retirement.

Bridging the gap between management and frontline workers

Many participants felt that frontline staff and people with lived experience are underrepresented in upper-management and governance roles, particularly in larger agencies. Frontline workers said their voices are not adequately considered when shaping strategy, policy, or governance, and they have untapped leadership skills that are not being properly invested in. Some noted that grassroots agencies oftentimes have frontline CVI practitioners in leadership positions, but larger agencies tend to have people in management and administration who are not familiar with CVI—or CVI is often just another program among many others. People agreed that many agencies need to change their mindsets on frontline workers, provide mentorship, and respect frontline realities. As one person stated, "If you are going to be in a management position, you need to have respect for the people doing the work."

While people highlighted some divides, they also offered concrete ideas for how organizations can ease tensions and increase understanding across staff. Participants offered the following ideas to bridge these gaps:

- **Create opportunities for experiential learning exchanges:** For example, frontline staff can attend grant meetings, and executives can shadow frontline staff. Organizations can also connect back-office staff with direct service work and help management understand the reality of dealing with violence. This will cultivate sensitivity and increase mutual understanding.
- **Elevate practitioner voices:** Create systems and opportunities for "boots on the ground" workers to elevate their voices and shape internal decision-making and strategy.
- **Leverage middle management:** Program managers and mid-level management can provide instruction and support to frontline workers and "act as a buffer" to those in leadership to increase understanding.

Trauma-informed organizational cultures and preventing burnout

People also named a strong need for organizations to support frontline staff who are often navigating prior trauma while experiencing pain and tragedy as part of their day-to-day work. One person stated, "the job puts you right back in the place you escaped from, but there's a lack of healing for CIWs [intervention workers] going back in to do the work, and the trauma they bring." Another person stated, "Staff want to turn pain into purpose but still carry their own trauma. Resources and time need to be provided for staff, especially frontline workers, to take care of themselves."

Participants said trauma-informed organizations and human resources (HR) practices can help workers heal from prior harms and prevent burnout from the vicarious trauma that comes with CVI work. They noted disparities in how different organizations understand and invest in staff wellness, and named the following ways organizations can foster healing and wellness for CVI workers:

- Mental health and wellness benefits, including life insurance, must be included, and organizations can hire employees who specialize in therapy and social work to also support staff
- Promote wellness practices as a critical part of the work, not as something that is indulgent
- HR processes that are designed to promote healing and prevent burnout, including wellness retreats, restorative time, and sabbaticals
- Flexible schedules to accommodate for when the work actually needs to be done
- Sensitivity training around trauma, community violence, and lived experience for management and back-office staff
- Trauma-informed internal debriefing groups and healing circles

> **"Staff want to turn pain into purpose but still carry their own trauma. Resources and time need to be provided for staff, especially frontline workers, to take care of themselves."**

Consistent skills training and organizational development

Many CVI organizations have grown rapidly, making training for CVI workers even more imperative. People said new CVI workers need a strong knowledge of standards and thorough preparation to engage in this dangerous work. They also said CVI practitioners and organizations need ongoing training and continued education to build concrete skills, maintain knowledge, and support innovation when dynamics change on the ground.

People named a variety of training needs and said CVI staff carry a dual burden of maintaining street credibility while also experiencing public and political scrutiny. As one person put it, "We need to be trained like politicians because we're under the microscope." This suggests the need for training in advocacy and public engagement, and people highlighted training in empowerment, confidence-building, and leadership skills.

Participants also named many training and capacity-building areas for organizations, including:

- Support for onboarding new staff
- Building supervisory skills, including how to provide constructive feedback to help frontline staff grow and advance into new roles
- Legal support
- Board development and strategic planning
- Data and evaluation support, including how to capture data and measure impact[7]
- Technical and computer skills
- Case management

Communications

In addition to the areas named above, many people emphasized the need to develop communication skills among CVI organizations, including:

- Establishing narrative frameworks and messaging that highlight impact and values
- Encouraging staff to tell their stories in a way that is empowered, and does not feel re-traumatizing or exploitative

[7] This topic is explored in detail in the Data Collection and Evaluation section of this report.

- Alignment across communications staff, program management, and grant writers to create narratives that compel policymakers and funders to support the work
- Grant writing, public relations, public speaking, and marketing

What infrastructure is required to grow and sustain CVI organizations effectively?

In describing what infrastructure organizations need to sustain and grow their work, participants uplifted grant and fiscal administration, hiring and supervisory support, and operational systems as the areas of greatest need.

For finance, grants, and administration, participants described needing more training and back-office staff to assist with accounting, administration, and organizational systems. They uplifted needing support in areas such as QuickBooks, managing receipts, creating memorandums of understanding (MOUs), invoicing, billing, and grant management, particularly federal funds. People also said they want support to diversify their funding to receive government grants at the local and federal level, private funding, and individual donations.

Participants also described a clear need for training managers and supervisors to be able to successfully hire, onboard, and supervise staff. Managers need training to understand the reality of what this work requires. Multiple attendees spoke about the need to develop recruiting, hiring, and vetting processes. They emphasized needing protocols to vet for lived experience and to help distinguish what candidates are a good fit for CVI work, including who is mentally and emotionally ready.

Lastly, people raised the need to support organizations with more centralized systems, such as technology infrastructure, centralized data management systems, and operational tracking.

Sustainable funding models

In discussing sustainable funding models, many people said that funders are often narrowly focused on programming and direct services, which leaves organizations unable to cover critical needs like development, wellness, and administrative overhead. People emphasized the need for funding to support infrastructure and capacity building for organizations, including workforce development, leadership pipelines, longer grant periods (at least three years), and more realistic scopes of work that recognize the resource-intensive nature of CVI work. While tension with funders' expectations were raised throughout the convening, some said they have seen some shifts in the funding landscape as people with boots-on-the-ground CVI experience have become program officers.

To gain more sustainable funding, participants stressed that CVI must be framed as a critical part of the public safety infrastructure, not just a social program. People said CVI should be seen as an essential service and receive ongoing funding the same way housing, fire, police, street sweeping, and trash pickup do. For self-sustaining funding, one participant gave the example of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, which generates revenue through their job training programs and associated businesses. Another person highlighted a ballot initiative in Oakland that creates a nine-year funding stream for holistic approaches to public safety, including CVI work. [8]

Technical assistance and partnerships to support stability and growth

Participants agreed that technical assistance (TA) and growing internal capacity are essential for CVI organizations' stability and advancement, as third-party support can help organizations assess their needs and support strategic planning and growth.

Many felt that partnering with larger, "more corporate" organizations and intermediaries can help build a unified voice for CVI organizations, streamline reporting, and reduce competition.

[8] "City of Oakland Measure NN," Found at: https://acvote.alamedacountyca.gov/acvote-assets/02_election_information/PDFs/20241105/en/Measures/32%20-%20Measure%20NN%20-%20City%20of%20Oakland%20-%20Citywide%20Violence%20Reduction%20Services.pdf Oakland's Measure NN, passed by voters in November 2024.

Building networks and using intermediaries can increase collective impact and simplify funder relations through shared data systems, collective reporting formats, and pooled administrative resources. This is particularly supportive of smaller organizations. People said that some larger CVI organizations have credibility in assisting smaller organizations in areas such as grants and administration, which builds capacity and encourages greater collaboration in the field.

Some said collaboration can help build out CVI in places where the work is still very new, such as Georgia, by sharing lessons learned from other jurisdictions and helping organizations recognize when they have the relationships and experience to start doing CVI work.

Increasing collaboration and reducing competition will strengthen the CVI field. As one person put it, "There's no competition in saving lives."

> "There's no competition in saving lives."

Data Collection and Evaluation

In discussion sessions about data and evaluation, participants discussed the need to move beyond traditional outcome measures, and to employ data collection and evaluation practices that are relevant to frontline staff and the community members they serve. People warned against harmful data and research practices but also recognized the power of data to tell their stories. They supported organizations owning and collecting their own data, and expressed that more training and support is needed to fully empower CVI organizations through data and research.

What types of data should CVI programs collect to demonstrate effectiveness?

When asked about what data CVI programs should collect to demonstrate effectiveness, participants discussed individual and program-level data points, as well as indicators that measure the community-level and more subtle impacts of the work that are often hard to capture. People also shared a general consensus that existing metrics do not fully capture the impact of CVI work, and shared measures they feel should be captured.

Program and individual-level information

Participants uplifted the need to capture program and individual-level information that supports external reporting, internal management, and fidelity across programs.

At a programmatic level, participants suggested capturing data points such as the number of clients,[9] caseload numbers, completion rates, and areas an organization is servicing. Some suggested capturing the cost and types of supplies that go toward supporting clients, such as buying diapers or shoes for a job interview. They also raised the need to track dosage and frequency of contact, such as how often case managers engage with clients and how deep those relationships go.

At a client or individual level, people suggested collecting various data points such as:

- **Demographics and population served:** Client demographics and zip codes, and metrics to ensure the target population is being served.
- **Reinjury:** Rates of reinjury, such as whether a person has been shot within a certain timeframe, to measure whether programming is helping to reduce risk and violence.
- **Client growth:** Measures of growth, behavior change, and strengthened relationships, such as whether a client got a mentor, and whether trust was increased.
- **Employment milestones:** Gaining and retaining employment. Participants shared that even getting a job for 30 or 60 days should be considered a meaningful win and tracked accordingly.
- **Client-centered metrics:** Personalized, client-centered metrics that reflect progress toward personal goals. Participants emphasized the importance of these indicators, and suggested client-centered exit surveys, and including youth voices in defining how success is measured.
- **Family impact:** Measures to intentionally document family impact, rather than just individual outcomes.

Community-level outcomes

Many people expressed the need to capture community-level outcomes over individual metrics, even if they are hard to measure. An intervention worker's visibility in a community and community trust in an organization are key components of the work and real indicators of impact. Participants shared that a lot of CVI work operates through trusted community networks and word of mouth, and that effective violence prevention and intervention depends on being genuinely embedded and known in the community. Some participants shared that many agencies who come from outside the community are only there for the money.

To measure community-level outcomes, someone also raised the need to disaggregate data to distinguish between types of violence, such as intimate partner violence, suicide, gang violence, and other types of gun violence.

[9] While many organizations prefer not to use the word "client" to describe the community members they serve through their programs, and people noted that they prefer to use the word "participant," this report uses the word "client" because the word "participants" in this report refers to the people who participated in the thematic discussions of the Setting the Standard convening.

Qualitative data

People highlighted the importance of qualitative data to fully represent the work and provide important context for interpreting quantitative metrics. Many noted that funders often emphasize and require quantitative data; however, the numbers alone can be misleading, and law enforcement often uses data selectively. Qualitative data can help tell the story of a community's history and people's lived experience. It can also capture important stories of success, such as breakthroughs with clients, and gaining community's trust and recognition.

Broadening the idea of "impact" and capturing subtle progress

There was a strong sentiment that the slow work of intervention is oftentimes overlooked, and that data collection is often oriented around what funders want, not what feels meaningful to CVI workers. CVI activities such as de-escalation, temporarily housing someone, or removing a weapon can be difficult to document. Because these actions do not always get reported or tracked in systems, the slow process of building trust or getting someone to change their behavior does not get captured and, therefore, can feel unrecognized and unvalued by funders.

Participants agreed on the need to track subtle, client-level changes alongside traditional outcomes like recidivism or reductions in crime and violence. While hard to quantify, emotional growth, trust building, behavior change, and relationship shifts are impacts that should be captured.

Practitioners value the daily, incremental progress clients make, even things like arriving on time or showing up consistently. The data asked for by funders usually overlooks these small yet meaningful changes, and can often force organizations to mark things as failures, even if they are meaningful signs of growth for the people they serve. People felt that a short-term engagement that leads to progress like getting an ID should be recognized as a success, but it could be documented as a failure or "incomplete" if not all program requirements are met. Similarly, recidivism data is often oversimplified. Funders may interpret any arrest as failure, even if it's unrelated or less serious than prior offenses. As one person shared, "We see it as progress."

Serving the small population at highest risk requires different measures of progress, and more time to work with each individual. People said it is important to capture the number of hours and effort it takes to reach someone. As one participant shared, "When we say we serve 'high-risk' individuals in our region, that typically means about 1% of the population is actively involved [in high-risk violent behavior]. So if we serve 100 people and it costs $5 million, people ask why. That's when we need to tell the story—like showing the number of hours spent."

People also said that program timelines are too short and unrealistic, and data metrics do not capture their efforts. As one person shared, an organization may spend five months working with someone, but if a client is not ready, the case manager may have to drop them. Despite all of the effort, the data just says the client "dropped off."

What are the most effective ways to evaluate CVI programs?

In exploring the most effective ways to evaluate CVI programs, practitioners uplifted that success should be self-defined and based on progress indicators that make sense in real-life contexts. This means evaluation metrics, goals, and processes should be co-designed with frontline staff, and should also include clients' voice and perspective.

Others emphasized the need to clearly define the focus and scope of the program, such as geography and target population, as well as measures of success. One person noted that the definition of "success" can feel vague, and that some programs might be well-run but have no real impact on violence in the community.

In addition to these themes, people described the types of evaluations they feel are valuable, how evaluators can build effective partnerships with CVI organizations, and underlying tensions and challenges with research and evaluation.

Evaluation types and strategies

Participants named various evaluation strategies and approaches to effectively document and assess the impact of CVI work.

- **Process evaluations:** Some noted that in the CVI field, practitioners often have valuable knowledge and the strategies they use are not well documented. Participants uplifted process evaluations as an effective way to capture the steps and knowledge that often gets overlooked. One participant asked, "What steps are we taking for knowledge management? What creative ways can we use to document what's actually happening?" Process evaluations are a strategy to support these goals.
- **Internal evaluations**: Participants also discussed the importance of internal evaluations to strengthen CVI work. Regular self-evaluations, supervisor reviews, and TA meetings are built into many agencies' operations to ensure accountability and contract compliance. Some discussed using weekly check-ins and entering notes in a data system as a method for internal evaluations, and one person shared that they evaluate their work every six months through self-evaluations and an evaluation of supervisors.

Some people uplifted the importance of evaluating staff effectiveness and the cost and effort it takes to train staff. People recognized that only a small percentage of staff do most of the work, and that those voices should be central in shaping standards. As one person stated, "20% of people are doing 80% of the work. Let those people help define success."

> **"20% of people are doing 80% of the work. Let those people help define success."**

Some tension around outcome and time-measured evaluations

While some people highlighted the importance of using evaluations to measure success and impact, others felt that outcome evaluations are often imposed by outside entities and that they put pressure on organizations while law enforcement is not held to the same standards. One person shared, "I reject outcome evaluations for my program because I don't think they reflect our actual success. Instead of traditional outcomes, we collect longitudinal data. I'm not going to run an evaluation just because someone outside the community wants one. I'll share things in broad terms, because I'm protective of our people and data."

Some participants favor longer timeframes for measuring outcomes because CVI work can take time to show impact. Meanwhile, others shared concerns about longer evaluation timeframes, such as five years, given the unpredictability of information.

Effective partnerships

To effectively evaluate CVI work, evaluators should build meaningful partnerships with CVI organizations and on-the-ground practitioners. Evaluators must have a strong understanding of the work and should be integrated into an organization's ecosystem for meaningful collaboration and better participation and understanding. People shared that there are some researchers who have been in the field for a while who are able to create these types of partnerships.

Participants supported community-driven, client-centered, and co-designed evaluations which set clear boundaries with researchers and universities. One organization shared positive experiences where CVI workers and the organization co-designed a framework with researchers. They shared an example where a CVI worker asked, "How much of my effort did it take to help this child?" They created a "talk-back space" where staff can reflect and report their feedback. Everyone is deeply invested.

In addition to evaluators, people shared that building partnerships with larger training and technical assistance (TTA) organizations, funders, universities, and private companies can be helpful for building organizations' capacity to effectively measure their work. Some of these entities provide pro bono work which allows organizations to grow their leadership, understanding, and capacity around data. Building these partnerships leverages existing resources in a community and brings new people into the work who can grow a wider base of supporters.

Challenges with research and evaluation

While some people shared positive experiences with researchers, others shared concerns and historic harm. Some participants emphasized that prior research and evaluation efforts have traumatized communities of color, and that many use Eurocentric frameworks. Another shared that evaluations can be politicized, and one person said that past evaluations made them feel "like subjects."

There was a sentiment that those in leadership or institutional roles—such as funders, researchers, or administrators—often set rules without involving those closest to the work. Many shared frustration over funders and researchers who extract data without aligning with community values or offering meaningful support. Some warned against over collecting data to protect staff capacity, and others said there can be internal disagreements between administrative and frontline staff on how work should be captured and supported.

Many participants recognized that too few organizations—maybe 20%–25%—can clearly demonstrate impact when pressured by funders like the Department of Justice. This is not always due to ineffectiveness; it is often due to unclear definitions and a lack of capacity among organizations and researchers to effectively document and capture the impact of the work. One participant suggested that more skills and leadership need to be developed in this area.

Lastly, people emphasized that evaluation efforts and expectations must be grounded in the reality of available resources. Not every organization has $10,000 or $20,000 to pay for data management tools. One person raised the need to separate evaluation funding from programmatic funding.

How can we ensure data collection respects client privacy and community trust?

The nature of community violence intervention makes data collection a sensitive topic, as it can challenge practitioners' LTO and put clients at risk. When asked how data collection practices should respect clients and community trust, above all, participants emphasized the importance of protecting clients' privacy, trust, and safety when collecting any data. There was agreement that transparency is key, and organizations should be upfront with clients about what data is collected, and how the information will be used or shared.

Client privacy, protections, and safety

There was a strong emphasis on minimizing personally identifiable information to protect clients and communities. Many agreed on the importance of protecting clients' privacy and limiting data collection to what is necessary. Data collection and reporting must intentionally safeguard clients, especially in communities where many people are undocumented or where gang-related activities are tracked by law enforcement. Disclosing information—intentionally or not—can place workers and community members at real physical or legal risk (e.g., ICE arrests, retaliation).

Some participants reported past experiences with traumatizing data collection that was overly intrusive. Others shared that existing tools, like ETO (Efforts to Outcomes) and SET (Social Embeddedness Tool), sometimes force staff to enter negative or inaccurate information—such as labeling gang involvement—just to unlock services. This creates ethical and operational challenges. There was consensus that invasive or incriminating questions are unacceptable.

De-identified data: People emphasized using de-identified data and not using people's real names to protect client safety and trust. Many organizations agreed on the need to de-identify personal data and assign participant numbers.

Internal data handling and staff training

Participants shared that even internal data sharing should be handled cautiously. People uplifted staff training and data access controls as safeguards to ensure that clients' data is collected and handled responsibly.

- **Staff training:** Staff training was widely considered as essential to ethical and effective data practices. Some organizations have experienced internal breaches, like staff sharing sensitive information. Proper training is essential not only in data entry, but also in collecting information respectfully and with an understanding of trauma and context. Staff who are not frontline practitioners (e.g., admin, other departments) need more training on the nature of CVI work and appropriate ways to handle sensitive information.
- **Access and system controls:** Concerns exist around who internally can see and access data, and how to ensure it is handled responsibly and ethically. Strong data access controls can ensure that only appropriate and trained staff have access to client and program data.

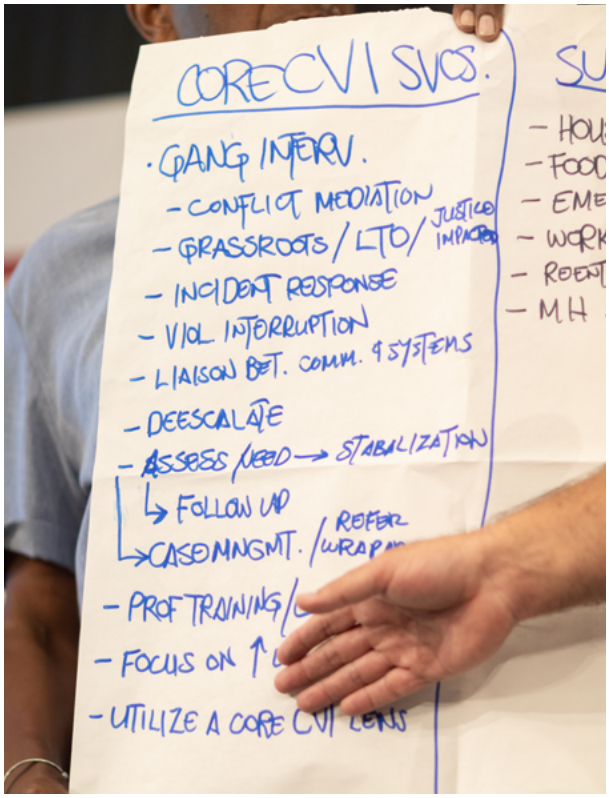
Data collection and reporting, client safety, and LTO

Workers face tough choices balancing accountability, data collection, and confidentiality. They often operate in a gray area to serve and protect their clients. Because maintaining community trust is crucial to their work and safety, many workers shared that they are unwilling to collect data that will be shared with law enforcement, administration, or funders if it might harm their clients. Others reported that some funding requires data to be shared with entities such as parole officers, which conflicts with community needs and cultural norms, requiring nuanced communication.

Some people were honest that they may alter data, collect the "bare minimum," or filter and withhold some data from leadership to maintain community safety. At times, workers may alter details such as people's names or date of birth in the system to protect themselves and their clients, especially those who are undocumented or have outstanding legal issues. They also shared that some details, such as gang affiliations or some shootings, will not get reported to protect clients and communities. One reason for this is because data systems that are owned by cities can be accessed externally. One person felt that data collection led to them being subpoenaed.

Some people expressed that they do not feel data is meaningful to their work or for their benefit. As one participant stated, "As someone on the ground, I don't believe in the data. I don't enjoy doing it. If it's required, you need to teach me how. We know the data is for your benefit—not ours—so why would I give it? I provide the bare minimum. We get crumbs. Funders aren't in this for the same reasons we are."

While workers may alter or withhold data to protect their work and client safety, some expressed feeling unsupported or misunderstood by their organizational leadership when pushing back against data-sharing practices.



Data ownership, sharing, and systems

Because of sensitivities around data sharing, participants expressed a shared belief that owning and controlling one's own data system, rather than relying entirely on external systems, is the ideal scenario for organizations. They also shared that data inputs and protocols should be developed in collaboration with frontline workers, not imposed from the top down.

When organizations must use a shared database, participants emphasize the importance of understanding who can access the system, and the need for strong written agreements around data sharing. One organization shared that they partnered with a pro bono lawyer to create written agreements. Participants also shared that it is important to get on the same page and align around expectations related to data with partners such as hospitals.

In relation to health data, people expressed confusion and tension around how to balance data transparency with privacy laws such as HIPAA. Some participants expressed uncertainty around how to establish collaborative data-sharing agreements under HIPAA, and said sharing guidance and best practices for the CVI field would be helpful. People also described tension around how HIPAA is used, as some believe it is used unnecessarily at times to avoid sharing data.

How can data be used to drive improvement, advocacy, and resource allocation?

Despite some challenges, there was overall recognition that data collection is important and necessary to demonstrate success and build more support for the field. People highlighted the following ways data collection and storytelling can be leveraged:

- **Demonstrating the importance of the work:** Many agreed that data and evaluation are essential for proving CVI's value and securing funding. It is particularly helpful when organizations can show their effectiveness and the return on investment of their work. Recognizing and publicizing successes supported by data, especially reductions in violence, helps build credibility and morale and builds the case for more investment.
- **Supporting continued improvement:** People also shared that data and evaluations can help agencies learn what is working and how they can improve. Data can also help identify key metrics to support CVI work such as how many individuals are truly at high risk. One person shared that, "Tracking key performance metrics allows CVI programs to continuously measure progress and adjust interventions as needed." Others shared that evaluation should be part of strengthening the field, not punishing it.
- **Reaching new audiences:** Publishing data and evaluations can also reach new audiences and create new champions for the work. People recognized a need for greater cross-field collaboration, especially with criminal justice, public health, and the legal field, to avoid siloed research and practice. To facilitate this, data and research should be accessible to a wide audience, not exclusively published in long reports.

Managing various data needs from multiple sources

In discussing how to manage various data needs from multiple sources, people noted a disconnect and lack of communication between funders, researchers, and practitioners which leads to ineffective funding decisions and unrealistic expectations. As one person shared, "For the last several months, I have been dealing with funders and researchers. I recommend the researchers, evaluators, and funders to talk to each other. The person who has the biggest mouth (i.e. best grant writer) gets the most money. Have the three groups seek information on how to be more effective. An evaluator takes pride in unreadable research. Funders provide three-year grants, which is not enough time to build a base or foundation."

Another person shared, "There should be clear guidance on what we collect and what we've agreed to measure. These expectations should be discussed up front. Right now, we're being pulled in multiple directions."

> **"There should be clear guidance on what we collect and what we've agreed to measure. These expectations should be discussed up front. Right now, we're being pulled in multiple directions."**

Multiple systems and system challenges

Many people shared that they need to manage multiple data systems, which is burdensome and time consuming. People expressed shared frustration with conflicting data demands from funders and stakeholders, as well as with expensive, rigid data systems.

People also expressed frustration with the high cost and complexity of systems like ETO and Apricot, as they create barriers for frontline workers, especially those underfunded or doing the work informally. Some agencies shared that they have opted out of certain contracts because they require them to use an external, city-owned data system which is too burdensome. Fragmentation of data management systems causes inefficiencies. People noted disparities in what data is collected and available through different systems. For example, some systems like ETO do not track geography to identify hotspots, but hospital-based systems do. People raised a need for unified systems across funders and agencies.

Agencies creating their own system

CVI agencies discussed that creating their own database is ideal, as it allows them to customize data collection to integrate the perspective of clients and frontline workers while also meeting reporting needs. Building their own system has allowed them to support internal decision-making and track data in ways that align with their values and needs. Programs feel more secure and confident using systems they have built, as opposed to relying solely on external platforms like ETO. As one participant shared, "We created our own data system. We wanted to be in control of the data. Intervention workers have certain data points that we need to collect."

> "Intervention workers have certain data points that we need to collect."

- **In-house data management:** In addition to their own system, organizations also expressed the need for dedicated, internal data staff to manage complex reporting requirements across multiple funders and programs. One participant emphasized that this role needs to be internal, not outsourced, and that every organization should aim to budget for a dedicated data person. While having in-house data staff is ideal, some have leveraged partnerships, such as hiring interns and outside experts, to try to fill the gaps. There is also recognition that using technology can be a challenge for some staff. Participants supported the idea of using daily logs as an accessible alternative for non-tech users.
- **Training:** People expressed a clear need for training on data management. In addition to training around data collection, protection, and literacy, people also raised the need for training on how to use data to tell a story. This will support the organization and help communities better understand and communicate their impact. This training is essential at all levels of the organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations seek to translate the views expressed by Setting the Standard participants into actionable steps for policymakers, funders, researchers, and CVI organizations to strengthen the CVI field.

1. Establish a national CVI council, shared definitions, and core standards

National and local bodies to define and reinforce standards

Participants recommended establishing a national body with representation from across the country to center frontline practitioners and develop national definitions, standards, and codes of conduct for CVI, much like other professions. This body should inventory and assess current standards to identify gaps and build standards for the field. In addition to a national body, people stated that each city implementing CVI strategies should have a local "Professional Standards Committee," a council of experienced CVI practitioners who can uphold standards and accountability at the local level. People also recommended building out standards and criteria for hiring new CVI workers.

Once definitions and standards for CVI are established, CVI leaders should educate and align with funders and government agencies to ensure resources and contracts go to organizations who are truly doing CVI work. Participants uplifted the importance of ensuring that agencies who receive CVI funding are serving "high-risk" individuals, that they have LTO in the communities they serve, and that they uphold boundaries and professional understanding with law enforcement.

Build a national definition for CVI

Participants consistently uplifted the need for a clear definition of CVI that is used and agreed upon by stakeholders across the country. Frontline workers' voices should be centered in establishing this definition, and convening participants uplifted community credibility, being "community-led," working with the individuals at highest risk of violence, and LTO as essential components of the definition. People also uplifted a need to more clearly define what is meant by "high-risk" individuals and to ensure CVI strategies are not connected to further criminalization or incarceration.

The definition for CVI should more clearly distinguish it from focused deterrence and group violence intervention or other strategies that include links to law enforcement.[10] One city offered a suggestion to include a clause in the definition clarifying that CVI "does not increase surveillance and incarceration."

[10] "Community Violence Intervention Action Plan," page 49.

The following definition was crafted during a group breakout session in the convening and was broadly supported; however, time did not allow for individualized feedback and thorough consensus building:

> Community violence intervention (CVI) is a healing centered approach that uses proven strategies to proactively reduce violence in real time through tailored community-centered initiatives. These multidisciplinary strategies intensively engage and respond to individuals and groups who are most likely to engage in violence to prevent and disrupt cycles of violence and retaliation to deliver services that save lives, address trauma, provide opportunity, and improve outcomes. CVI is conducted by trained professionals knowledgeable of their communities and violence.

While the CVI Action Plan offers a definition and core components of CVI,[11] and the definition above was presented to attendees in the Setting the Standard convening, discussions made clear that the CVI field needs more consensus and buy-in to define CVI at a national level. Key elements and points uplifted in this report should be considered in establishing a national definition.

Build a national definition and buy-in for "professional understanding"

Participants identified a need for a clear definition, ethics, and code of conduct to define "professional understanding" with law enforcement at a national level to define clear lanes and boundaries. These definitions and standards must be reinforced through training, professionalization, standards, and protocols.

2. Adopt national standards and ethical boundaries with law enforcement

There is a clear need for national standards to guide interactions with law enforcement and to create clear boundaries. This will not only help improve clarity for the CVI field, but also for key stakeholders such as law enforcement agencies, policymakers, and funders. It is important that all parties understand that the purpose of these standards is to make sure that CVI workers can do their job safely and effectively by being able to maintain their LTO and build trust with people at the highest risk of being involved in violence. The following standards should be supported by clear protocols and training:

- **One-way flow of information:** Law enforcement can provide situational awareness to CVI organizations, but CVI practitioners must not share information with law enforcement. This separation safeguards community relationships and ensures CVI work remains non-enforcement-based. Some exceptions may exist, but these should be clearly outlined and specific information should never be included.

[11] "Community Violence Intervention Action Plan," page X.

- **Public communication with trusted observers:** In unique situations where frontline staff must converse with law enforcement—such as to de-escalate group tension with police when other people are not available—frontline staff should ensure those conversations happen in a visible public space and bring trusted community members with them to vouch that no sensitive information is shared and to prevent rumors.
- **Designated point of contact:** As part of public safety work, CVI organizations need to create professional relationships with law enforcement to receive information related to violence, maintain a "professional understanding," and proactively address any points of tension. Organizations should have clearly designated points of contact for interfacing with law enforcement, and these people are usually in leadership positions and should not be frontline staff. Points of contact and protocols should be clear for all staff and relevant law enforcement agencies.

Develop relationships up the chain of command

To ensure buy-in and understanding from law enforcement leadership, organizational points of contact, usually directors, should build and maintain relationships with leaders in the law enforcement hierarchy and important officials such as deputy mayors. Building a shared professional understanding among leadership at the organizational level helps address tensions that may arise between frontline workers and law enforcement agents.

Offices of violence prevention as liaisons

A primary role of these offices, in addition to providing funding and coordination, should also be to act as a liaison between law enforcement and CVI agencies to help build shared understanding, gain buy-in from command staff, address issues, and work toward accountability when agreements are violated. Participants stated that it is important that these offices be housed outside of law enforcement, so they can act as a third party liaison. It should also be noted that when OVPs hire CVI community leaders directly, it does not mean that the strategy is "community-driven" because of bureaucratic and political limitations.

3. Support national alignment and a unified narrative strategy

People consistently uplifted the need for more opportunities to convene, connect, and support each other as a field. This will also be necessary to continue to solidify national definitions and standards. As part of this, many people uplifted the need for a clear messaging and narrative campaign to build buy-in for shared definitions and standards, and to educate a broad array of stakeholders on what CVI is and what it is not, as well as the power and effectiveness of CVI. Participants noted that, even in communities where CVI is working, people do not know what it is. A national

messaging and narrative campaign will also help build more supporters and champions for the work, which will support long-term investment and sustainability.

4. Build the CVI workforce and invest in infrastructure

Develop career pipelines for the next generation of CVI workers

Participants stressed the need to recruit and develop a new generation of CVI workers, and to build more cohesion among older and younger generations of peacemakers. CVI organizations and funders should invest in the leadership development of frontline staff, especially those with lived experience, so they can grow into more senior roles through training, transferable skills, and competitive compensation and benefits. Funders, government agencies, and organizations can also create specialized positions for people with frontline CVI experience to support policy, research, advocacy, government, and philanthropy so strategic decisions are informed by those who truly understand the work. Lastly, the CVI field needs to support the older generation of CVI workers so they can transition into new roles and retire with dignity, including offering benefits and financial training to help people plan for retirement.

Invest in training for all stakeholders

Funders, government agencies, and organizations must invest in consistent, quality training backed by national standards. This includes training for new staff and continued education for CVI workers to maintain knowledge, build leadership skills, and support innovation when dynamics change on the ground. Organizations also need training in communications and public relations for back-office and frontline staff, who feel the dual pressure of maintaining community credibility and political scrutiny. Lastly, as standards and definitions are developed, training must also be tailored for funders, law enforcement, researchers, and all levels of organizational staff to ensure people in the CVI ecosystem understand the work, maintain its integrity, and support CVI workers.

Build organizational cultures that support frontline workers

Organizations can better support frontline workers by ensuring all staff understand and respect CVI work and by creating trauma-informed work cultures. They can build greater understanding among CVI workers and staff in leadership, management, and administrative roles by ensuring that all staff understand the reality of dealing with violence, as well as creating opportunities for frontline staff to shape internal decision-making and understand the work of people in other roles, like grant managers. Lastly, people emphasized that creating HR policies and work cultures that encourage self-care for CVI staff through flexible time off, wellness benefits, and debriefing groups are essential to prevent burnout and support well-being for the CVI workforce.

Invest in infrastructure

Funders and government agencies must expand funding beyond programming and direct services to also include infrastructure support for CVI agencies. This includes workforce development, data management, communications, grants, and administrative support. Expanding the scope of funding is essential to building sustainable CVI organizations that can diversify their funding and effectively advocate for the field. Funders should also create and advocate for longer grant periods and more realistic scopes of work that recognize the resource-intensive nature of CVI work.

Support intermediaries and funding collectives

Building networks and using intermediaries can increase collective impact and simplify funder relations through shared data systems, collective reporting, and pooled administrative resources. This is particularly supportive of smaller organizations. Funders and government agencies can fund CVI agencies using larger organizations as intermediaries—as long as those organizations have trust and credibility with CVI agencies in the field. Intermediaries and collaboratives can build capacity, reduce competition, and encourage greater collaboration in the field.

5. Advance policies for sustained funding

Policymakers and advocates should support legislation and other actions that create sustainable funding streams that recognize CVI as a critical component of public safety. Examples of this include the Break the Cycle of Violence Act at the federal level and Assembly Bill 28, passed in California in 2023, which creates a funding stream for violence prevention and intervention programs through a new tax on firearms and ammunition in the state.[12] People also uplifted revenue generating enterprises such as Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, and Measure NN, passed by voters in Oakland in 2024, which creates a nine-year funding stream for holistic approaches to public safety, including CVI work.

6. Invest in the capacity of CVI organizations to own their data and avoid burdensome systems

Support CVI organizations to collect their own data and tell their own stories

Organizations who are able to own and design their own data systems reported feeling most empowered by data collection and analysis to support their work. Many people uplifted the power of designing and owning their own systems in coordination with frontline staff. To do this effectively, organizations need additional funding for data systems, data staff, training, and evaluations—separate from program funding.

[12] "S.2638 - Break the Cycle of Violence Act," Congress.gov., Found at: https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/2638; and "Bill Text: CA AB28 | 2023-2024," Legiscan. Found at: https://legiscan.com/CA/text/AB28/id/2842856

In addition to data systems, the field needs to build up the capacity of CVI organizations in data fluency and analytics so they can tell and shape their stories of success. Data and administrative staff inside organizations, as well as outside researchers and evaluators, must build meaningful relationships with frontline workers and strive to have a strong understanding of CVI work.

Take extra precautions to ensure privacy and protect staff and clients

Both internal data collection systems and external systems used by funders and government agencies must have strong protections and protocols to ensure the safety and privacy of staff and clients. Protective measures include using de-identified data, ensuring that data collection is trauma-informed and does not require incriminating information, strong internal and external controls around who can access data, training and protocols, and transparency across all stakeholders—especially for participants and practitioners—for who can access the data and for what purpose.

When organizations must use a shared database with funders or government partners, all parties must put strong written agreements into place and ensure transparency around who can access the data.

Work to define measures of success that feel meaningful to staff and the community members they serve

Participants felt that their tremendous efforts are often overlooked and undervalued in metrics of "success." Current measures fail to capture the more nuanced progress that happens when working with people at "high-risk" who face massive systemic barriers. Funders, researchers, and CVI organizations should center the voices of frontline practitioners to broaden measures of "success." Evaluations should include outcomes that measure community-level impact and that are meaningful to practitioners. Funders and policymakers should also place value on process evaluations and qualitative data—rather than just outcomes and quantitative data—to better capture and understand the impact of CVI work.

Avoid using multiple systems

Funders, researchers, policymakers, and CVI organizations should align as much as possible to avoid using multiple systems, and streamline data collection and reporting requirements to reduce the burden on CVI organizations.

CONCLUSION

The Setting the Standard convening builds on the foundation of the CVI Action Plan to center the voices of frontline practitioners and explore how CVI strategies should be implemented across the country. The findings in this report aim to further define core CVI services and standards of practice, and identify the most pressing needs for the field in the areas of capacity building, training, data collection, and evaluation. The recommendations—namely creating a national body to further advance core definitions and standards—are critical for maintaining the autonomy and integrity of CVI as it gains prominence across the country and faces new challenges in the political sphere. The collective vision uplifted in this report is crucial to safeguarding CVI as a field so peacemakers can continue to save lives and transform their communities.