

JULY 2026

CVI ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT:

Building Unity in the Face of Opposition

URBANPEACE
INSTITUTE

CBPS
COLLECTIVE

NICJR★
National Institute for
Criminal Justice Reform

COMMUNITY
JUSTICE 

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THE
HEALTH ALLIANCE
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OUR PARTNERS & FUNDERS

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



01 SECTION 01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CVI Action Plan was released in the fall of 2024 at a time when the field of community violence intervention (CVI) was experiencing an unprecedented influx of recognition, funding, and support. While 2025 saw huge progress, with violence dropping to historic lows in cities across the country, the field was confronted with serious challenges—namely federal funding cuts and political and budgetary shifts that threaten progress on the ground.



The CVI Action Plan is organized under six major domains for investment and field development: (1) Capacity Building, Wellness, and Professionalization; (2) Fieldwide Collaboration; (3) Policy Development and Advocacy; (4) Narrative Change; (5) Research, Evaluation, and Impact Analysis; and (6) Standardization of Core CVI Elements and Data Practices. The CVI Action Plan Committee is comprised of leaders from the five organizations that released the plan: Community Justice, Community-Based Public Safety Collective (CBPSC), the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (the HAVI), National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR), and Urban Peace Institute (UPI).

From January 2025 to May 2026, the committee completed a significant amount of work to advance the domains of the Action Plan,

seek input from and build capacity for CVI organizations from across the country, and provide recommendations that support the sustainability of the field. They were supported by National Project Manager and respected CVI leader, Eddie Bocanegra, from December 2025 to May 2026.

National Activities to Advance the Action Plan and Increase Representation

The Action Plan Committee held a series of national activities including a webinar series, in-person convenings, and regional listening sessions to advance the Action Plan and include more CVI leaders to shape its next phase. These activities successfully increased geographic representation and reached a wider audience of CVI professionals from across the country.

WEBINAR SERIES: From January through April 2026, the committee hosted six webinars that brought together a vast group of CVI stakeholders nationally to build collective knowledge on the CVI Action Plan’s key domains. 675 unique individuals from 38 states and D.C. attended at least one webinar, with 72% of those people attending at least two webinars, showing a deep level of engagement. Through the series, the CVI Action Plan mailing list grew from 355 to 1,257 individuals—more than tripling the list of actively engaged individuals. The six webinars were:



Setting the Standard

Hosted by UPI, NICJR, and CBPSC to release the “Setting the Standard” report.



Worker Wellness

Hosted by the CVI Action Plan Committee to present best practices that strengthen CVI teams and sustain frontline work.



Advancing CVI

Hosted by CBPSC to explore some of the most urgent questions facing the CVI field, including how to bolster capacity and professionalize CVI in the current political climate.



Tackling Research Challenges and Opportunities

Hosted by the Black and Brown Collective for Community Solutions to Gun Violence, a group of multi-disciplinary researchers, to discuss CVI research and areas for growth.



Power of Narrative

Hosted by the HAVI to discuss a national messaging strategy and how to shift away from harmful tropes and toward a narrative of transformation, investment, and public health.



Policy Advocacy

Hosted by Community Justice to align the public safety ecosystem around a shared CVI policy agenda and advocacy strategy in the current political and economic climate.

IN-PERSON CONVENINGS: The Action Plan Committee held four in-person convenings which brought together leaders from across the country to build unity and an inclusive vision for how to advance these Action Plan domains in a new political and fiscal landscape.

- **Narrative Change |** Hosted by the HAVI and led by the Narrative Initiative in February 2025, this two-day convening in Miami, Florida brought together 97 leaders representing 66 organizations from across the country, including philanthropic foundations, government agencies, CVI agencies, and organizations from the academic, media, and consulting sectors. Participants learned about narrative change strategies that can garner public understanding and support of CVI, explored effective messaging from adjacent sectors, and engaged in two interactive working sessions. A deeper exploration of these sessions can be found in the report, [“The Power of Narrative: Empowering Local CVI through National Strategy.”](#)



- **Standardization of Core CVI Elements and Data Practices** | The “Setting the Standard” convening was jointly hosted by UPI, NICJR, and CBPSC in June 2025 in Los Angeles, California. The two-day convening brought together a total of 121 attendees representing 72 organizations across 45 cities in the U.S. The attendees engaged in robust, small-group discussions structured around five themes essential for professionalizing the field. Notes were carefully reviewed, analyzed, and released in the report, [“Setting the Standard: A Collective Vision to Advance Standards in the Field of Community Violence Intervention.”](#)
- **Capacity Building, Wellness, and Professionalization** | This convening was hosted by CBPSC and held in Newark, New Jersey over two days in December 2025. Through dynamic plenaries and interactive workshops, 147 attendees from the community-based public safety field engaged in deep conversations and problem-solving around capacity building, fiscal infrastructure, workforce wellness, standard operating procedures, and leadership development. More key takeaways, urgent issues, and recommendations that emerged from the convening discussions can be found in the report, [“Advancing CVI: Investing in Capacity Building, Wellness, and Professionalization.”](#)
- **Policy Development and Advocacy** | In April 2026, Community Justice hosted members of the Action Plan Committee and 51 CVI leaders and advocates from 20 cities in Chicago, Illinois to align around a policy and advocacy strategy that meets the moment in the current political and economic climate. The convening used panel discussions and facilitated conversations to build a shared understanding of key political, fiscal, and legislative shifts impacting CVI sustainability. Attendees also explored what a coordinated national policy and advocacy strategy could look like moving forward to advance the field. A forthcoming report will detail further findings, to be posted on [cvi-actionplan.org](#).

REGIONAL LISTENING SESSIONS: The Action Plan Committee held two listening sessions to hear from regions who are traditionally less represented in national CVI spaces—the Southwest and the South. The sessions highlighted local practitioners through panel discussions and explored key topics in break-out sessions to center the knowledge of attendees around central areas of the CVI Action Plan.

- **Southwest Regional Listening Session |** This session brought together leaders from the Southwest and western mountain regions in March 2026 in Tucson, Arizona. The convening brought together 46 attendees across six states—Arizona, South Dakota, Colorado, Texas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma.
- **South Regional Listening Session |** This session brought together 36 leaders from eight southern states—Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas. It was hosted in Atlanta, Georgia in April 2026.

The findings from these sessions emphasize the topics that came up most consistently in the conversations, and areas of distinction between the two regions. They focus on five topics related to the Action Plan domains: (1) CVI Worker Wellness, (2) Standardization, (3) Research and Evaluation, (4) Communications and Narrative Change, and (5) Policy and Advocacy, as well as overall takeaways that are unique to the two regions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the learnings from the webinars, in-person convenings, and regional listening sessions, the CVI Action Plan Committee presents six recommendations to sustain CVI organizations in these challenging times. They forecast what will be needed to build a national movement with inclusive representation to advance the next phase of the CVI Action Plan and establish the field as a permanent fixture of the public safety ecosystem.

1 | **Sustain capacity-building, professionalization, and wellness**

While CVI leaders are ready to unify nationally to push for a larger policy agenda, this is only possible if organizations have the infrastructure and support they need to sustain their life-saving work. For this reason, funders and philanthropists must remain steadfast in their commitment to building organizational capacity and promoting worker wellness guided by the concrete recommendations that grew out of the in-person convenings held by the committee.

2 | **Fund multi-disciplinary, community-rooted research and evaluation**

Generating knowledge and scholarship is essential to further establish and strengthen the CVI field. Philanthropic and government partners must deepen their investment in research and evaluation by trusted researchers in the field, such as those in the Black and Brown Collective for Community Solutions to Gun Violence. Investment should aim to support more rigorous process and implementation evaluations, diversify analytical methods to better capture the impact of CVI, and “build the bench” of culturally-informed and community-driven researchers, particularly Black and Brown researchers whose lived, cultural, and professional experiences often position them to conduct research that is more relationally accountable and responsive to community realities.

3 | Build structures for national participation and governance

The work of the CVI Action Plan Committee has allowed key leaders from across the country to build relationships that are essential to fortifying the CVI field nationally. In order to create unified strategies for advancement, the field must establish a national structure for representation and decision-making. Part of creating a national body includes regional convenings to support regional representation, organizing, and sharing of best practices. These convenings should include electing one to two representatives from each region to join a larger national governing body that can make foundational decisions to move the field into the next phase. This body will serve as a backbone to support larger national efforts such as standardization, narrative change, strategy development, and policy advocacy.

4 | Standardization of core CVI elements

As outlined in the “Setting the Standard” report, a national governing body can support a critical domain for advancing the CVI field: standardization of core CVI elements and codifying key definitions. Finalizing a definition of CVI—as well as other key areas such as establishing professional standards—can and must be achieved through a governing body that has national representation and clear decision-making processes to advance the field in these key areas.

5 | Narrative Change

Throughout national and regional convenings and webinars, people have uplifted the need to streamline language and build a more compelling narrative for what CVI is and how it is effective. A national messaging and narrative campaign will help the CVI field and allies to clearly explain the work and its value, which will build more supporters and champions and encourage long-term investment and sustainability. The report includes concrete strategies to support narrative change work nationally.

6 | Build a national policy and advocacy agenda

A coordinated national advocacy and organizing strategy that pushes toward broader systems change will allow the CVI field to establish itself as essential to public safety. Recommendations include strategies to build up a national infrastructure for policy and advocacy, enhance capacity and coordination, and build power on the ground to move a CVI policy agenda from concept to reality.

By working in relationship with one another and listening to CVI leaders from across the country—both in cities where the work is long-established and areas where it is only getting started—the CVI Action Plan Committee and the larger, national CVI movement can establish the field, take the Action Plan domains to the next level, shift narratives, and build toward a policy agenda that allows CVI to become a permanent part of public safety across the country.



02 SECTION 02 INTRODUCTION

The field of community violence intervention (CVI) has experienced an unprecedented influx of recognition and support in recent years. Increased investment allowed for greater impact in reducing violence and saving lives but also demonstrated a need to unify efforts to protect and sustain CVI nationwide. In response, the CVI Action Plan was developed as a community-led strategic framework designed to serve as a blueprint for the national CVI movement. Released in the fall of 2024, the Action Plan could not have been more timely.

In 2025, violence dropped to historic lows in cities across the country.¹ Many local and state leaders celebrated these declines by recognizing the essential role of CVI in producing public safety. This showed that when we invest in people with the credibility to engage those closest to violence, everyone is safer. To sustain this progress, CVI must be adequately funded and scaled so that the practitioners on the frontlines can do what they're qualified to: save lives. The CVI field's momentum now faces significant opposition. Federal funding cuts and political turmoil threaten to destabilize our hard-won progress. In April 2025, the Trump administration's Department of Justice (DOJ) terminated \$500 million in grants to support community-centered violence reduction programs, including Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative (CVIPI) grants.² This impacted dozens of CVI organizations across the country, who received abrupt notice that their multi-year awards were no longer aligned with the DOJ's mission and priorities. For many of these agencies, these federal awards had allowed them to fully establish and grow their programs for the first time. At the same time, budget shortfalls and the politicization of CVI have led to further cuts at the state and local level. The ramifications of the funding cuts are already destabilizing CVI organizations across the country with staff layoffs, limited programming, and burnout.

Still, the field is resilient—because of the dedication of the people on the frontlines moving the work forward. This report and its recommendations intend to be a guide on how to unify and build power for the field so we can continue advancing our collective vision of safety for all.

¹ Some examples: [“Kansas City nonfatal shootings down roughly 30% for 2025”](#); [“Detroit homicides drop 19% for 2025, the fewest since 1964”](#); [“NYPD, Mamdani announce ‘historic’ decline in murders, shootings across NYC in 2025”](#); [“Chicago violence fell to historic low in 2025”](#); [“L.A. homicide rate lowest in decades; the reason why is up for debate”](#); [“Shootings fell to record low in NJ in 2025, officials say”](#)

² [“Gun violence prevention groups disqualified from grants built around their work”](#); and [“DOJ Funding Update: A Deeper Look at the Cuts”](#)

03 SECTION 03 BACKGROUND

The foundation of the CVI Action Plan began in 2023, when leadership from Community Justice, the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (the HAVI), and the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR) convened CVI leaders from across the country for in-person convenings, virtual roundtable discussions, in-depth individual interviews, and virtual feedback sessions with the goal of creating a national, unified vision to advance the CVI movement. Prior to its release, leadership from the Community-Based Public Safety Collective (CBPSC) and Urban Peace Institute (UPI) joined the coordinating committee to provide additional feedback and shape the vision. Together, these five organizations formed the CVI Action Plan Committee and released the final CVI Action Plan in the fall of 2024. After its release, the group quickly began activities to implement its priorities.



The Action Plan is organized under six major domains for investment and field development:

- 1 Capacity Building, Wellness, and Professionalization
- 2 Fieldwide Collaboration
- 3 Policy Development and Advocacy
- 4 Narrative Change
- 5 Research, Evaluation, and Impact Analysis
- 6 Standardization of Core CVI Elements and Data Practices



As this report will further outline, after the Action Plan's release, a significant amount of work was completed from January 2025 to May 2026 to advance the domains, seek input from and build capacity for frontline practitioners, and provide recommendations that support the sustainability and advancement of the field. As we envision the next phase of the CVI Action Plan, it's critical to reflect on lessons learned to ensure that the coordinating organizations are moving in lockstep and that efforts continue to be grounded in the experience and expertise of CVI workers.

The CVI Action Plan, and the work that followed, provided the opportunity for five national leaders in the CVI field to collaborate and build relationships. While many members of the Action Plan Committee had known and worked with one another in some capacity for years, the Action Plan prompted us to come together for shared leadership, visioning, and decision-making. Part of our effort was to acknowledge each organization's area of expertise and assign leadership of the Action Plan domains for maximum impact. Through this process, we learned to navigate differing opinions, perspectives, and priorities on how to move the work forward. Collectively, we identified gaps in our approach and some shortcomings of the original Action Plan and collaborated on building solutions to overcome challenges.

One major finding was that unifying a national movement needs the leadership of a project manager and dedicated staff to streamline coordination and decision-making across the coordinating organizations. Once this need was discovered, the Action Plan Committee brought on respected CVI leader, Eddie Bocanegra, to serve as the National Project Manager from December 2025 to May 2026. Having this role placed the responsibility of coordinating meetings, planning events, and conducting outreach to wider audiences under the leadership and expertise of one person, which greatly facilitated our progress. Importantly, any person or organization in this role must have credibility and trust among the coordinating organizations *and* frontline CVI practitioners to be an objective mediator when differing opinions arise to facilitate final decisions. Additionally, adequate support staff to ensure deliverables were met was essential to the completion of this phase. Lessons learned over the last year and a half informed our recommendations for the next phase of leadership for the CVI Action Plan, which can be found in the Recommendations section of this report.

04 SECTION 04 PROGRESS UPDATE:

National activities to advance the Action Plan and increase representation

The Action Plan Committee’s collective vision and commitment to keeping CVI practitioners at the forefront prompted a series of in-person gatherings, listening sessions, and webinars to advance the six key domains. The rationale for the activities was clear: inclusivity of more CVI leaders in the field with intentional representation of wider geographic identities and realities. The various formats of the activities allowed for purposeful outreach to achieve this goal. For example, the webinar series meant that interested audiences from any city and professional sector could engage, while the in-person, regional listening sessions made it possible to hone our understanding of CVI efforts in areas of the country that are typically less represented. More targeted outreach and engagement is necessary to strengthen the work nationwide—the CVI Action Plan activities over the last year and a half have generated significant momentum to do so.



Webinar Series

Between January and April of 2026, the CVI Action Plan Committee hosted six webinars that brought together a vast group of CVI stakeholders from across the country to build collective knowledge on the CVI Action Plan’s key domains. The webinars were moderated by Eddie Bocanegra, CVI Action Plan National Project Manager, and featured expert panelists, along with an interactive question and answer (Q & A) section.

The webinar series allowed the Action Plan Committee to share knowledge and collect data from the CVI field. It also allowed the committee to significantly increase its list of engaged supporters. The webinar series reached a broad base of new CVI professionals—most of whom stayed engaged for more than one webinar—and expanded the CVI Action Plan’s geographic reach. Key metrics include:

- 675 unique individuals attended at least one of the six webinars
- 487 individuals attended more than one webinar (72% of attendees) showing a deep level of engagement
- 38 states plus D.C. and Puerto Rico were represented in at least one of the six webinars
- **The CVI Action Plan mailing list grew from 355 to 1,257 subscribers—more than tripling the list of actively engaged individuals.**

Our expanded reach provides a foundation to continue to involve and mobilize CVI leaders and supporters from across the country, as the movement pursues larger goals such as standardization, narrative change, and policy wins.

The CVI Action Plan Committee also used the webinar series to learn more about the people engaging in the webinar topics. Prior to each webinar, an RSVP email was sent out to all individuals on the CVI Action Plan mailing list. The committee quickly realized that the registration forms were a valuable data collection tool that could be used to elicit insight from hundreds of CVI stakeholders across the country regarding who they are, the work they do, and their organization’s needs. After Webinar 1, the CVI Action Plan Committee added new questions, including topic-specific questions. Several days before each webinar, the registration responses were shared with the host organization and used to inform the agenda and content to be most useful to those attending.

The webinars allowed the CVI Action Plan Committee to share knowledge, reach a wider audience of CVI professionals from across the country, and learn about the field more broadly. A description of each webinar is below as well data on the webinar participants.



Setting the Standard – January 28, 2026

The Setting the Standard webinar was hosted by UPI, NICJR, and CBPSC to release the [Setting the Standard report](#), which was the culmination of a two-day convening in Los Angeles dedicated to advancing a collective vision of standards in the CVI field. This webinar had 267 attendees from across 29 states plus D.C. and featured the following panelists:

- Fernando Rejón – Executive Director, *Urban Peace Institute*
- David Muhammad – Executive Director, *National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform*
- Aqeela Sherrills – Executive Director, *Community Based Public Safety Collective*

Worker Wellness – February 12, 2026

The Worker Wellness webinar was hosted by the CVI Action Plan Committee and presented best practices that strengthen CVI teams and sustain frontline work. This webinar had 138 attendees from across 25 states plus D.C. and featured the following panelists:

- Kathryn Bocanegra – Assistant Professor, *University of Illinois Chicago*
- DeAngelo Mack – Founder, *Macknificent World*
- Johnnie Williams – Executive Director, *Denver Youth Program: GRASP and Metro Denver Partners*

REGISTRATION DATA INSIGHT

In the webinar registration, people were asked, “What wellness or safety topics feel most urgent for your team right now?” Participants were allowed to select as many answers that applied among the following options: training and professional development, staff burnout and secondary trauma, organizational culture and morale, field safety and risk mitigation, supervision and support structures, and “other.”

The top selected Urgent Wellness/Safety Topics were:

- 1 Training and professional development
- 2 Staff burnout and secondary trauma
- 3 Organizational culture and morale

Advancing CVI – February 25, 2026

The Advancing CVI webinar was hosted by the Community Based Public Safety Collective and explored some of the most urgent questions facing the CVI field, including how to bolster capacity and what it means to professionalize CVI in the current political climate. This webinar had 150 attendees from across 28 states plus D.C. and featured the following panelists:

- Aqeela Sherrills – Executive Director, *Community Based Public Safety Collective*
- Lyn Jackson – Chief Executive Officer, *Peace City Oklahoma*
- Fernando Rejón – Executive Director, *Urban Peace Institute*
- Adrian Cook – Executive Director, *Let Our Voices Empower*

REGISTRATION DATA INSIGHT

People registering for this webinar were asked: “What are your most urgent capacity building needs?” People were allowed to select as many answers that applied among options including fundraising support, data and evaluation, onboarding and training CVI staff, accounting and finance, communications support, legal support, building supervisory skills, recruiting a new generation of CVI workers, and “other.”

The top selected Capacity Building Needs among all Webinar 3 registrants were:

- 1 Fundraising support
- 2 Data and evaluation
- 3 Onboarding and training CVI Staff

Tackling Research Challenges and Opportunities – March 13, 2026

The Tackling Research Challenges and Opportunities webinar was hosted by the Black and Brown Collective for Community Solutions to Gun Violence, a group of multi-disciplinary researchers committed to improving the efficacy of research, policy, and practice that addresses safety and well-being in communities directly affected by violence. Experts from the collective discussed key areas of CVI research that are essential to strengthening the field and securing long-term investment. This webinar had 133 attendees from across 25 states plus D.C. and featured the following panelists:

REGISTRATION DATA INSIGHT

When asked if they have ever collaborated with a research partner in the past, about two-thirds of registrants (68%) said “yes” and about one-third (32%) said “no.” Registrants who responded “no” were asked a follow-up question to expand on why not. The top selected reasons were “lack of funding,” “unsure how to connect with a research program,” and “don’t have time or capacity.” Registrants who responded “yes” were asked to provide an open-ended answer explaining what was most helpful about their experience. Some responses included “gaining a greater understanding of the data,” “being able to demonstrate impact,” and “using data to drive programming changes.”

Power of Narrative – March 26, 2026

The Power of Narrative webinar was hosted by the HAVI. Based on the CVI Action Plan’s Narrative Change Workshop in Miami, this webinar brought together the architects of a new national messaging strategy, alongside credible messengers, to discuss how to shift away from harmful tropes and toward a narrative of transformation, investment, and public health. This webinar had 162 attendees from across 33 states plus D.C. and featured the following panelists:

- Fatimah Loren Dreier – Executive Director, *The HAVI*
- Anthony Smith – Executive Director, *Cities United*
- Andrew Woods – Chief Executive Officer, *Hartford Communities That Care, Inc.*
- Ro Patrick – Senior Vice President Campaigns and Programs, *The Ad Council*

REGISTRATION DATA INSIGHT:

People registering for this webinar were asked to provide an open-ended answer to “What is your organization’s primary focus for narrative change this year?” Some of the most common responses fell under the following categories: promoting the success of CVI in reducing violence and recidivism; standardizing language used to describe CVI; and engaging, educating, and empowering the community.

Policy Advocacy – April 16, 2026

The Policy Advocacy webinar was hosted by Community Justice and aimed to align the public safety ecosystem around a shared CVI policy agenda and advocacy strategy in the current political and economic climate. This webinar had 128 attendees from across 29 states plus D.C. and featured the following panelists:

- José Alfaro – Executive Director, *Community Justice*
- Amber Goodwin – Founder, *Community Justice and Community Violence Legal Network*
- Pam Mejia – Consultant

REGISTRATION DATA INSIGHT

People registering for this webinar were asked “Which policy advocacy priority feels most urgent given today’s federal & state landscape?” People were allowed to select their top priority, and the options included year-round advocacy at all levels of government; coordinated policy and advocacy efforts; and expand and protect policy capacity.

The top selected Policy Priority among all Webinar 6 registrants was:

- 1 Year-round advocacy at all levels of government



Data from participants

The data collected through webinar registrations provides a better understanding of webinar attendees' roles, experience, and capacities in the CVI field. The following graphs depict responses to some of the general registration questions collected from all unique attendees across the webinars:

FIGURE 1: Roles of Webinar Attendees

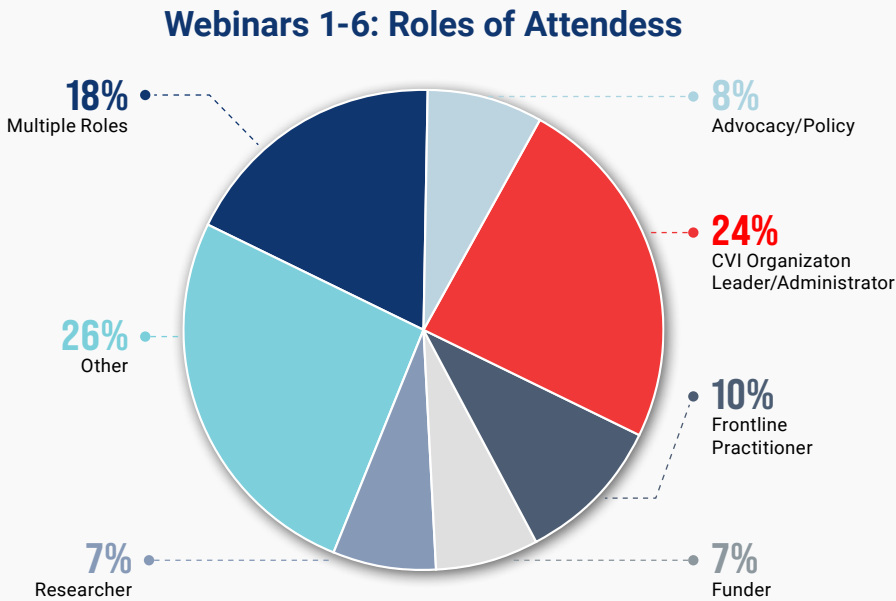


FIGURE 1 depicts the breakdown of unique attendees' roles. The largest selection was "Other" and the second largest was "CVI Organization Leader/Administrator." As the registration form was updated, it asked participants to elaborate on their response if they selected "Other." Some responses received included "program developer" and "volunteer."

FIGURE 2: Years of Experience in the CVI Field of Webinar Attendees

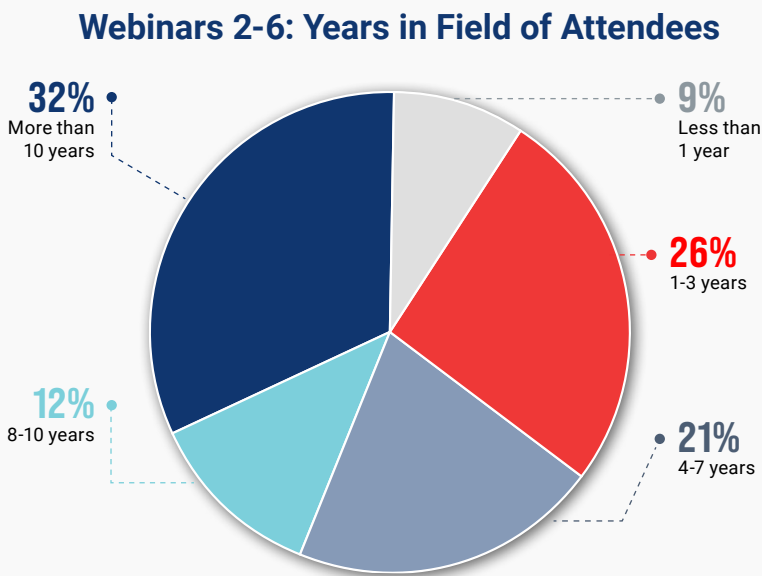


FIGURE 2 depicts the breakdown of unique attendees' years of experience working in CVI or a related field. The largest selection was "More than 10 years" and the second largest was "1-3 years," demonstrating a wide-range of interest from experienced and emerging professionals in the field.

FIGURE 3: Webinar Attendees' Organizational Capacity

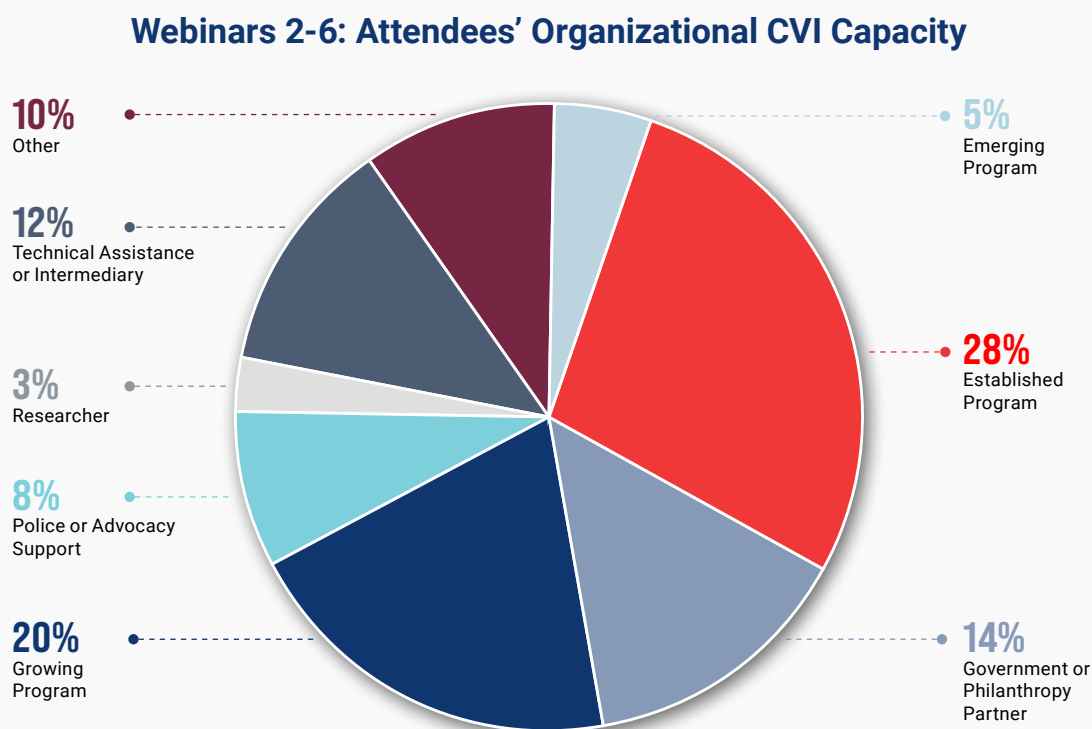


FIGURE 3 depicts the breakdown of unique attendees' organizational CVI capacity. This question was included to gauge which kinds of organizations attendees were part of and, if providing direct services, the organizations' level of program development. The graph shows that over 50% of attendees came from emerging, growing, or established CVI programs, with over a quarter of attendees coming from established programs. The remaining attendees came from varied roles, with "Government or philanthropy partner" and "Technical assistance of intermediary" combined making up about a quarter of the attendees.

Evolution of engagement

To learn from the data and continue to expand the reach of the CVI Action Plan, a webinar analytics report was produced for each webinar and shared with the Action Plan Committee to shape outreach efforts for the following webinars. The committee assessed how many people were joining and from which geographic regions. For instance, areas with high metropolitan populations, particularly California, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and D.C., had high attendance across the webinars. Committee members conducted targeted outreach to continue to grow overall attendance and increase representation from states across the country in order for the webinars to be an inclusive, wide-reaching, and collective space for knowledge-sharing to occur.

FIGURE 4: Webinar Attendees by State

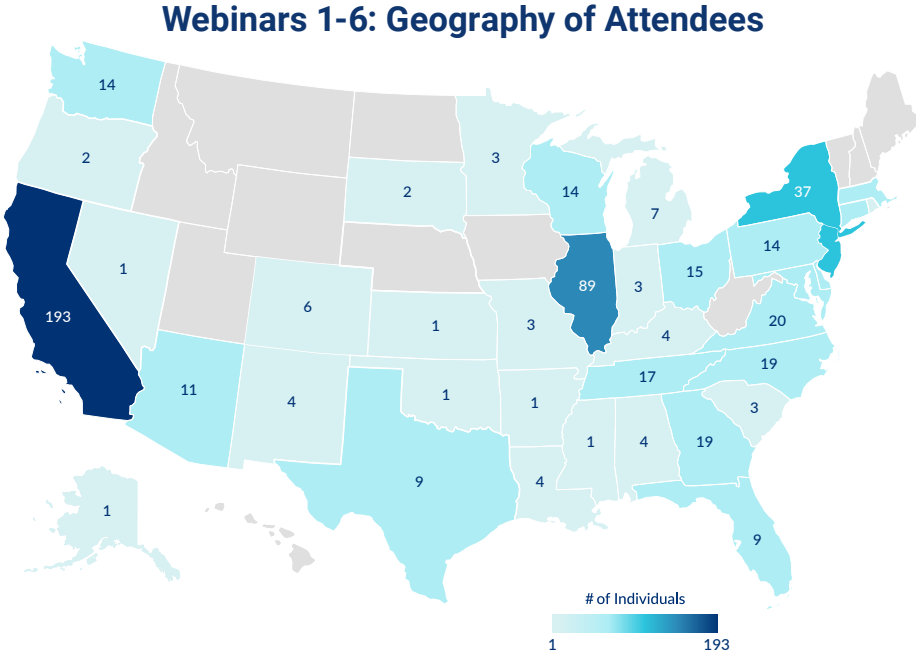


FIGURE 4 depicts the geographic location of unique attendees across all webinars. The top three states represented were California (193), Illinois (89), and New Jersey (40).³

³ These states were not represented in any of the webinars: HI, IA, ID, ME, MT, ND, NE, NH, UT, VT, WV, WY.

After the first three webinars, the midpoint of the series, the Action Plan Committee reviewed the states attendees were coming from and made efforts to reach new audiences.

FIGURE 5: New Webinar Attendees by State from Midpoint to End of Webinar Series

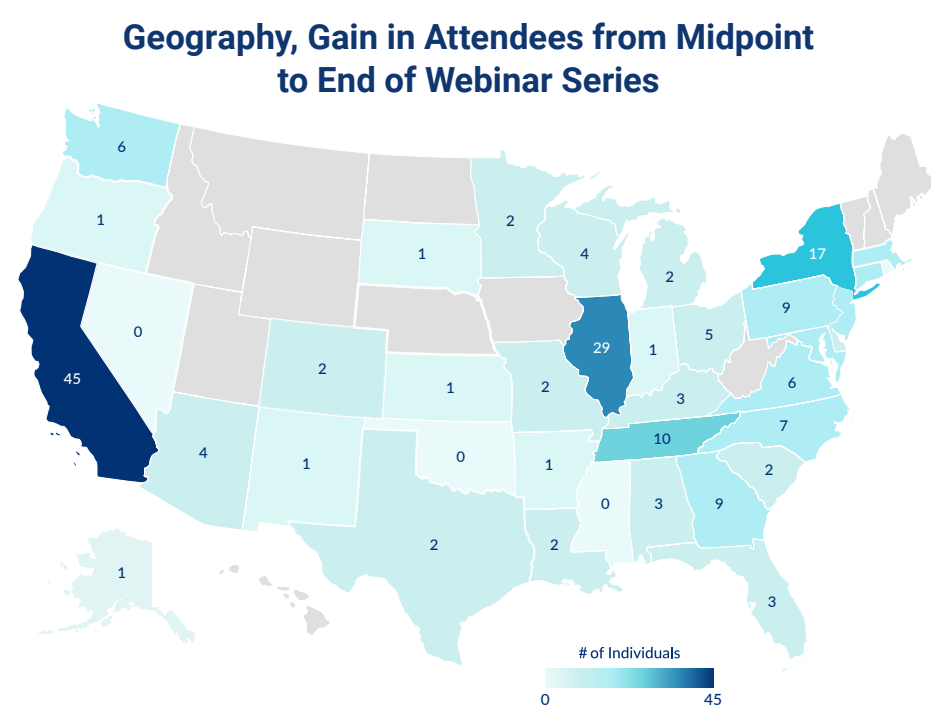


FIGURE 5 depicts the gain in 224 unique attendees by state from the midpoint to the end of the webinar series. 34 states plus D.C. had an increase in new attendees. While the largest gains remained in the states that were already most actively engaged—California, Illinois, and New York—the committee also saw gains in places such as Tennessee, Georgia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Washington, and Arizona.

WELCOME!

CVI Action Plan Policy Advocacy Convening

DAVID

Hosted by Community Justice



In-person Convenings

The CVI Action Plan Committee held four in-person convenings which brought together leaders from across the country to explore and advance key domains:

- 1 **Narrative Change** – February 2025, Miami, FL
- 2 **Standardization of Core CVI Elements and Data Practices** – June 2025, Los Angeles, CA
- 3 **Capacity Building, Wellness, and Professionalization** – December 2025, Newark, NJ
- 4 **Policy Development and Advocacy** – April 2026, Chicago, IL

These convenings worked to build unity and an inclusive vision for how to advance these Action Plan domains in a new political and fiscal landscape. Critically, they worked to strengthen relationships among CVI leaders from across the country to lay the foundation for a unified movement.

Narrative Change

On February 18, 2025, and February 19, 2025, the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention hosted the “CVI Narrative Strategy and Communications Workshop” in Miami, Florida. Led by the Narrative Initiative, the convening brought together 97 leaders representing 66 organizations from across the country. Facilitators were intentional about centering local leadership and grassroots expertise with 45 community-based organizations (CBOs) and nonprofits at the forefront. The event also reflected strong cross-sector collaboration, including participation from eight philanthropic foundations, seven government agencies, and six organizations from the academic, media, and consulting sectors, each contributing critical research and technical perspectives.

The workshop included two interactive working sessions where participants engaged in an activity to landscape helpful and harmful narratives, such as the belief that CVI is essential to the public safety ecosystem (helpful) or that law enforcement alone creates safety (harmful). Additionally, participants learned about narrative change strategies that can garner public understanding of and support for CVI and were given examples of effective messaging campaigns from adjacent fields.

A deeper exploration of these sessions can be found in the report, [“The Power of Narrative: Empowering Local CVI through National Strategy.”](#)

Three comprehensive narrative change strategies emerged from the convening that underscore the need to invest in and prioritize unified messaging to accurately represent and bolster broad public support for CVI efforts:

- Evidence-Based Narratives: Prioritize research and data to inform messaging and validate impact by promoting credible messengers who can provide authentic, community-driven narratives
- Coordinated Action: Establish a national working group for strategic alignment, threat response, and shared principles
- Empowered Infrastructure: Build capacity through training, resource distribution, and talent development for sustainable communication efforts

Setting the Standard

The “Setting the Standard” convening was jointly hosted by UPI, NICJR, and CBPSC on June 18, 2025, and June 19, 2025, in Los Angeles to build greater alignment and standardization across the field in its language, practices, and tactics.

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 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).⁴

⁴ Because people could identify themselves under more than one category, the numbers add up to more than 100% and 121 attendees.

Over two days, these CVI professionals engaged in robust, small-group discussions facilitated by staff from the coordinating organizations with two notetakers per session. The conversations were structured around five 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**

Notes were carefully reviewed and analyzed by UPI staff to produce “[Setting the Standard: A Collective Vision to Advance Standards in the Field of Community Violence Intervention](#).” This report seeks to capture key themes that emerged across sessions, and areas of agreement and divergence across the five topic areas. It centers the direct voices of practitioners and uplifts actionable recommendations to provide concrete next steps to advance the CVI Action Plan domain of Standardization of Core CVI Elements and Data Practices.



Capacity Building, Wellness, and Professionalization

The Advancing CVI: Investing in Capacity Building, Wellness, and Professionalization convening was hosted by CBPSC and held in Newark, New Jersey on December 10, 2025, and December 11, 2025. The convening brought together 147 community-based public safety practitioners, nonprofit leaders, trainers, funders, and municipal agencies for a powerful two and a half-day strategy session focused on strengthening the infrastructure of CVI. Notably, Mayor Ras Baraka joined for the morning of the first day to provide welcome remarks and show support for community-led safety.

Through dynamic plenaries and interactive workshops, attendees engaged in deep conversations and problem-solving around capacity building, fiscal infrastructure, workforce wellness, standard operating procedures, and leadership development. Some of the takeaways from these discussions include:

- Community-based public safety is delivering real impact, but the infrastructure supporting it has not kept pace with expectations placed on the field.
- Workforce burnout driven by trauma exposure, role overload, and inadequate compensation is an urgent issue to address.
- Workforce care strategies that move beyond individual wellness to address structural harm.
- Stronger coordination and partnership across the CVI ecosystem are needed to reduce isolation and duplication.

More key takeaways, urgent issues, and recommendations that emerged from the convening discussions can be found in the report, "[Advancing CVI: Investing in Capacity Building, Wellness, and Professionalization](#)."

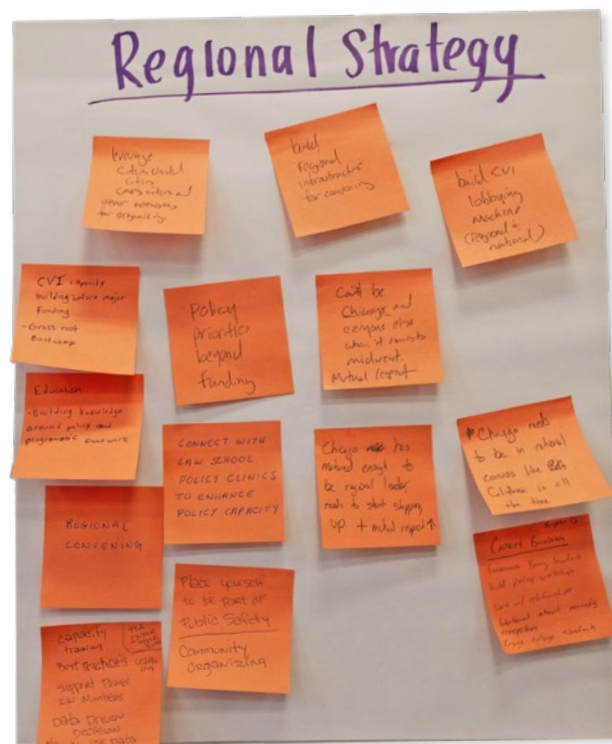
Policy and Advocacy

On April 27, 2026, and April 28, 2026, Community Justice and the CVI Action Plan Committee hosted a final convening on CVI policy advocacy in Chicago, Illinois. In this two-day event, 51 CVI leaders and advocates from 20 cities came together to align around a policy and advocacy strategy that meets the moment in the current political and economic climate.

The CVI Action Plan Policy Development and Advocacy domain outlines three priorities: (1) Year-round advocacy at all levels of government, (2) Expand and protect policy capacity, and (3) Coordinated policy & advocacy efforts. Building off the Policy and Advocacy webinar, the convening used panel discussions and facilitated conversations to establish a shared understanding of key political, fiscal, and legislative shifts impacting CVI sustainability. Attendees discussed the three priorities for the Policy Development and Advocacy domain and identified field-wide needs to build and protect year-round policy and advocacy efforts at all levels of government. Small group discussions also explored what a coordinated national policy advocacy apparatus should look like, what infrastructure would be needed to build this, and how an organized, regional approach could support coordinated national efforts while allowing for regional differences and power-building.

Some key findings from the convening include:

- Participants called for a formalized participatory process to be integrated into the national policy advocacy infrastructure so CBOs and frontline practitioners across all regions of the country can directly engage in policy and advocacy work.
- National coordination and technical assistance are needed to enhance lobbying and advocacy practices at the national, state, and local levels.
- The field needs a leadership pipeline from the communities CVI serves, especially for youth and CVI workers, to scale policy advocacy within organizations and communities, and to include more of these leaders as collaborators and decision-makers in policy and advocacy work.
- Participants expressed wanting a better understanding of the electoral landscape and discussed various ways to engage in electoral activities, including voter registration and get out the vote (GOTV) efforts, endorsing or evaluating candidates, and establishing a CVI PAC.



The powerful, two-day Policy and Advocacy convening made one thing clear: the CVI field is ready to unify and advance strategic policy and advocacy efforts. With adequate support, CVI leaders across the country are eager to come together, build collective power, and establish CVI as a permanent, well-resourced fixture of the public safety ecosystem across the country. A forthcoming report will detail further findings and recommendations, to be posted on cvi-actionplan.org.

Regional Listening Sessions

In order to hear from regions who are traditionally less represented in national CVI spaces, the Action Plan Committee held two regional listening sessions, one in the Southwest and one in the South.

Southwest Regional Listening Session

The Southwest Regional Listening Session brought together leaders from the Southwest and western mountain regions in March 2026. It was hosted by Goodwill Industries of Southern Arizona in Tucson, Arizona. There were 46 attendees from across six states—Arizona, South Dakota, Colorado, Texas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. A key highlight of this event was a speech from Mayor Regina Romero of Tucson where she voiced support for CVI and described the success of CVI programs in Tucson. It is worth noting that a sizable proportion of the attendees of this event, particularly those from Tucson, came from the prevention and domestic violence fields, which meant there was a less concentrated understanding of CVI in the discussions.

South Regional Listening Session

The South Regional Listening Session was hosted by the Center of Civic Innovation in Atlanta, Georgia in April 2026. The session brought together 36 attendees from eight states—Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas—who come to the work from varying perspectives such as frontline CVI workers, trainers, government partners, and organizers. A key highlight of this event was a guided tour of the space, the Prince Hall Masonic Building in Atlanta’s historic Sweet Auburn District. The building has long been a hub for Atlanta’s civic and political life, especially for Black leaders and entrepreneurs, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Madame C.J. Walker, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and WERD, the nation’s first Black-owned radio station. During the listening session, participants were grounded in the importance of the space and made connections to its deep history and our efforts to transform systems of safety today.

Organization and Methodology

The first day of each convening consisted of a welcome dinner for attendees during which they got acquainted with one another and began to build relationships. The following full-day event included presentations, panels, and breakout sessions exploring local CVI work.

A large portion of each regional listening session was dedicated to breakout discussions in order to center the voices and knowledge of attendees. These sessions focused on five key areas that are central to the CVI Action Plan domains:

- CVI Worker Wellness
- Standardization
- Research and Evaluation
- Communications and Narrative Change
- Policy and Advocacy

All attendees were split into two groups facilitated by CVI Action Plan Committee members, and each group spent approximately 45 to 60 minutes dedicated to exploring each of the themes. In Tucson, breakout sessions included a discussion of wellness, whereas in Atlanta, wellness was covered in a presentation and full-group discussion to allow for more time to cover all topics in the breakout sessions.

In each breakout room, a designated notetaker used a structured notetaking guide developed for the event to capture general discussion points, key themes, and areas of agreement and disagreement. The CVI Action Plan team reviewed and analyzed over 50 pages of notes covering the five themes. The findings emphasize the topics that came up most consistently in the conversations and areas of distinction between the two regions. Sessions were not recorded. Notetakers did their best to document exact quotes to capture the direct voice of attendees; however, in some cases, quotes have been paraphrased to capture the essence of what attendees expressed.

The following findings cover the key themes highlighted by participants in the breakout discussions of the regional listening sessions.

CVI Worker Wellness

In discussing wellness for frontline CVI workers, people highlighted the many challenges that come with doing the work and the importance of promoting wellness to help people heal from past trauma and present losses. While people acknowledged that getting the CVI workforce to fully use wellness benefits can be a challenge, they also highlighted concrete ways organizations can better integrate wellness practices into CVI work and uplift culturally-based solutions.

Challenges

In both convenings, people discussed how intervention staff are often going through challenges themselves, such as financial stress and issues at home, while also having to deal with the past, present, and vicarious trauma that comes with the work. A Harris County, Texas attendee shared that they do a check in every day, and many days staff are dealing with financial and family stressors—such as sometimes not even having enough gas money to get to work—in addition to what they see on the job daily. A Southwest attendee shared that, after doing hospital work, he gained a large amount of weight, and it was not until someone asked him if he was okay that he realized he had been eating as a coping mechanism. He has since started therapy and said, “In the hood they don’t teach us to ask if we are okay, they teach us to hate.”



**In the hood they don’t teach us to ask if we are okay,
they teach us to hate.**



Many people shared the challenges of “always being on” in the work and “having to keep on pushing,” even when they lose clients or family members. A Southwest attendee shared a story of a colleague who lost multiple family members and did not stop working. “He literally crashed, and the team came to him and said he needs to go to therapy.” The attendee went on to say, “We need introspection and to take advantage of the resources that are available. We all need to be humble and know that we need to be checked on.”

Many others in the Southwest convening discussed the heartbreak of losing a client and supporting families who have lost loved ones. One person said, “When you have success with a participant, it brings me to tears. And when you lose a participant, it’s almost the same tears. How do you deal with that? You have to keep going whether you have success, or if things don’t happen the way you want them. How do you keep going, even when you don’t have success?” Another shared, “You lose someone and then have to get right back out there. Supervising a frontline team, taking calls, I started to exhibit signs of hyper vigilance.” He shared that he started hearing the sound of a phone or gunshots in his sleep. Helping frontline intervention workers heal from past traumas, and the ongoing grief that comes with the work must remain constant to help people keep going. As one person put it, “Grief is nonlinear, it’s a lifetime journey. There is no end date.”

While promoting wellness for the CVI workforce is paramount, it is not without challenges. Many shared that intervention workers “don’t always practice what they preach” to clients and, when wellness benefits are offered, they are not always utilized. One Southwest attendee said, “We tell people to go talk with someone, but don’t take the advice for ourselves.” Many attendees shared that people often do not take days off, even when they are offered, because they are financially strained or dealing with issues at home. A South attendee shared that, “For some people, the work is their wellness.” Others said that many people do not want to talk to therapists and shared that funders no longer provide funding for wellness retreats.

Solutions

While getting frontline staff to use wellness benefits can be a challenge, people shared concrete ways they have been able to incentivize and promote wellness in their organizations. In the South, people said staff orientation is key to teaching people the philosophy and practices of wellness at the organization, even saying that people should not be afraid of making certain wellness practices mandatory.

A Harris County, Texas attendee described a couple ways to integrate wellness practices. For instance, they do daily check-ins, and if someone checks in at a five or under on a scale of ten, they need to talk with a supervisor who facilitates access to counselors available through the county. They also started giving everyone three flexible mental health days, and their county has a program that gives employees financial incentives for making preventative appointments, watching educational videos, etc. They dedicate time and space at work to compel people to sign up for the benefits in recognition that people need to be okay themselves to be able to do the work. A Southwest attendee shared that they include a wellness budget in their contracts and grants whenever possible and encourage staff to do at least one wellness activity per week. After four weeks, they get a \$100 bonus. “They don’t have to tell the supervisor what it is, just need to confirm that they did it. We found that, when we were just giving wellness days, people were dealing with their own stuff, so their day alone was not enjoyable.” Lastly, another person shared an example of allowing an employee to use one week of their vacation, and cash-out another week of their vacation time to have a budget to get away. This is especially important since intervention workers live in the same communities they work in, so it can be hard to unplug from work. They also shared that after five years of doing frontline work, people automatically get three months off.

In the South convening, people also described ways management can be more supportive of wellness. They highlighted things such as “Listen and be curious,” “Acknowledge that people are struggling,” and “Be honest, and do not avoid conversations.” They also said managers should advocate strongly for a wellness budget for their programs, even if there is pushback.

Lastly, participants highlighted the need to lean on traditional, cultural practices for wellness rather than only focusing on mainstream versions of therapy. In the South, people highlighted faith-based traditions and culturally relevant peer support. They also highlighted wellness retreats, healing spaces where staff can speak openly about their experiences on the frontlines, and making time for staff to connect with one another.



In the Southwest, people highlighted Indigenous and cultural practices, as well as the healing power of connecting with nature. A Native American attendee shared, “What we are experiencing today came from before. We have special ceremonies to help heal from this. We lead with ancestral knowledge. We never had federal funding. There are only 71,000 of us left, which is by design. We know that we can’t rely on the federal government. We have to live our lives as servants to our relatives and be the bridge between our ancestors and our relatives who aren’t here yet.” A Colorado attendee described how their organization has 40 acres of land where they do a lot of camping to promote serenity, and they also highlighted practices such as creating men’s and women’s support groups in the organization. A Tucson attendee also highlighted the importance of connection to nature saying, “We are deeply violent to the earth, and if we are not connected to something that is healing the earth, we can’t heal violence. Even things like houseplants, something that brings us back into a relationship with our mother earth. It is an important part, also researching your ancestors.”

Standardization

In conversations about standardization, South and Southwest attendees discussed core and complementary services to CVI, partnerships they have established, and CVI’s relationship to law enforcement.

Core Components of CVI

South and Southwest attendees agreed that true CVI interrupts violence amongst individuals who are at the highest risk of perpetrating or being the victim of gun violence. Other key characteristics of CVI are that it is “boots on the ground,” community-led, and involves an immediate response. Someone from Austin explained, “CVI organizations get involved at the scene of violence and prevent

retaliation.” An attendee from Memphis stated that his organization is “either working with victims of shootings or the shooters.” Although there was agreement regarding the high-risk aspect of CVI, some attendees expressed the need for clarity on what high-risk means and how high-risk individuals should be identified. As someone from San Antonio said, “I realized a lot of people who were not labeled as high-risk were falling through the cracks.”

Complementary Components of CVI

South and Southwest attendees also described other key reactive services of CVI, such as hospital-based intervention programs, and other complementary services that are integral to effective CVI. Such services include financial assistance, mental health counseling, childcare, and career support. South and Southwest attendees both emphasized that CVI organizations must be able to offer these resources because, as one individual said, “if someone wants to change but the resources aren’t there, they are going to be discouraged and go back to what they were doing.” A Tucson and Memphis attendee both explained that, in addition to tangible services, their organizations focus on holistic healing and creating spaces for participants to understand and discuss the root causes of violence. Other complementary work that was mentioned included educational groups for men who perpetrate domestic violence in Tucson; a program that teaches barbers and beauticians how to deescalate situations in Louisiana; re-entry work and youth mentorship opportunities in Miami; and crop production and land stewardship across the South and Southwest.

Based on these conversations, South and Southwest attendees recognized that “CVI is a name that encompasses so many different things.” They articulated a need for a clearer definition of what constitutes CVI so that it is not too narrow while simultaneously not so inclusive that, as one attendee put it, “we are getting sloppy and naming everything CVI.”

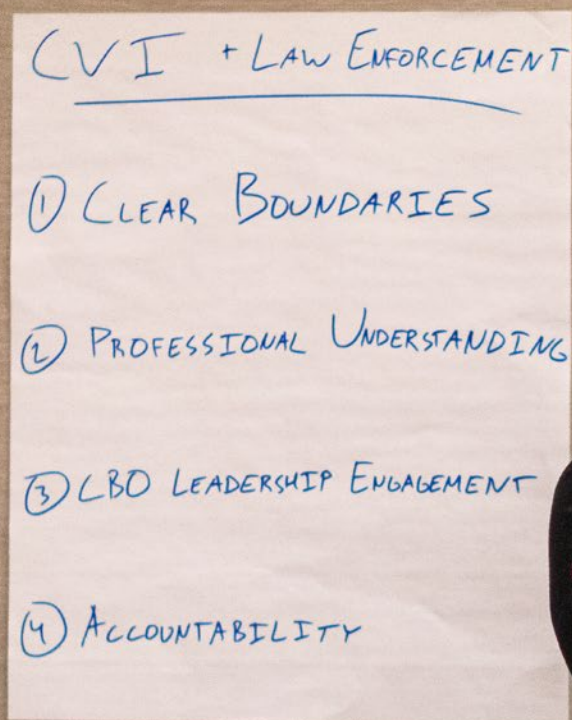
In addition to sharing their core and complementary CVI services, South and Southwest attendees described some of their partnerships that allow them to provide these services. Such partners include probation officers, public defenders, prosecutors, schools, and homeless shelters. In Tucson, the police department and juvenile courts refer youth offenders to Goodwill. Once connected, Goodwill builds trust and rapport with these individuals and offers them support and resources. In Texas, Harris County Public Health has collaborated with the Sheriff’s Office to establish an alternative 911 response program. Additionally, the Dekalb County Government in Georgia used data to narrow down four high-need neighborhoods and presently works with CVI organizations to intervene with high-risk youth and adults in these identified areas.

Role of Law Enforcement

Attendees also discussed what the relationship should look like between CVI organizations and law enforcement and how CVI maintains its independence. Some organizations across the South and Southwest have no relationship at all with police and believe that is necessary in order to be credible messengers. As one attendee in the South stated, “We work in our lane, and [law enforcement] stays in theirs.” Other organizations have working relationships with law enforcement and view it as mutually beneficial—many police departments recognize the contribution of CVI to public safety, and CVI workers benefit from receiving alerts directly from police about harm that has occurred. As mentioned above, other organizations, such as Goodwill and Harris County Public Health, have gone a step further and developed close partnerships with law enforcement.

Almost all organizations that work with law enforcement agree that it is important to maintain a one-way stream of information, and they do not share anything about their participants with the police. Additionally, all attendees agree that if there is a relationship with law enforcement, there must be a clear distinction made with their participants that they do not work for law enforcement and are a separate entity. One Southern attendee also asserted, "Since CVI is community-led, the community must be at the forefront. So, if law enforcement is in the room, it should only be because the community invited them."

“ Since CVI is community-led, the community must be at the forefront. So, if law enforcement is in the room, it should only be because the community invited them. ”



Several attendees expressed the desire for more police or emergency response support. One attendee from Tucson, who is not affiliated with an organization, stated that he and other men in the neighborhood have to do policing themselves. As he put it, “Fentanyl is everywhere and the police get tired of coming.” He often responds to crises and is the one who has to clean things up. Another Tucson attendee explained that many domestic violence survivors do not get police responses until the day after an incident, and there needs to be other viable options that people can call upon when they need immediate support and safety.

Research and Evaluation

In conversations about research and evaluation in the South and the Southwest, convening attendees recognized the importance of research while also highlighting persistent challenges. The two regions uplifted many of the same themes, while unique histories and demographics surfaced some distinctive differences.



Showing Effectiveness and Telling Your Own Story

Attendees at both convenings shared examples of when research has been vital to showing the effectiveness of their work, claiming credit for reductions in violence, and improving programming.

Attendees in the South raised many examples of how research has bolstered their work. A Florida attendee shared that his agency was contacted by a researcher who studied the zip codes they work in. In August 2025, these results were published in a national report that showed a 60–80% reduction in homicides in those areas. In Greensboro, North Carolina, the Community Safety Department was able to show how the CBOs they contract with contributed to a 45% reduction in violent crime through a shared database that captures mediations, outreach, and violence interruption activities. Rather than only crediting the police, this showed how safety was a collective effort and demonstrated

how their work helped reduce crime in specific areas. In Atlanta, Circle of Safety is working to build a broader community data infrastructure so they can collect and report on their own data to demonstrate their impact. They are also trying to conduct a qualitative study to understand what safety looks like for Black men, so they can use that research to guide their work rather than relying on standards set by other people.

In the Southwest, people expressed similar sentiments. One person shared that they often have to justify what they are doing and why it is important. Having the research to back their work helps establish legitimacy with decision-makers. Throughout the conversation, people expressed the importance of pairing quantitative with qualitative research. As an example, one person shared that they partnered with a university to make short films about their work. By having these, it made it harder for others to co-opt what they have achieved. The same attendee said, “We need to work with them, even if it’s hard, because they can promote the work.” Another person shared how in Colorado, a hospital-based CVI program teaches workers research methods, how to ask questions, and how to tell stories with this data to get more support for their programs.

Both regions also said they use research to improve programming. In the South, an attendee discussed how evaluations need to go beyond basic metrics to improve the work. Rather than counting the number of trainings or training attendees, they administer evaluation methods like pre- and post-tests to ensure trainings are effective. Similarly, in describing the importance of research and evaluation, attendees in the Southwest expressed wanting to “know that I am making a real difference” and “ensure the needs of the community are met.” As one attendee put it, “You can’t know where you are going if you don’t know where you have been.” Research and evaluation help you to “know trends” and “shift focus.”

Building Trust with Research Institutions

In the regional convening in the South, many attendees emphasized the importance of building trust and meaningful partnerships with researchers—something that is not always present. One person said, “We need people who can take data, but have the long-term thought process to tell the story, produce research that is nuanced, and break into mainstream research.” Another person shared an example when an outside research university was hired to do research in their city, but they contacted the local CVI organization because they did not have local relationships. The research was published and he was able to go to Washington D.C. to speak about it. In reflecting on this experience he said, “Let us be the voice for the research. Pay us and let us make connections with those institutions.” One person highlighted the Southern Ground Initiative, an effort focused on building relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to continue fostering relationships with researchers.

“ Let us be the voice for the research. Pay us and let us make connections with those institutions. ”



While a couple of attendees shared some positive experiences partnering with universities in the Southwest, others highlighted a lack of trust with researchers. One person said that, in New Mexico, many people think research is going to be used to further stigmatize their community. One researcher in attendance shared that research institutions can also create a lot of barriers and make it hard for researchers to do community work.

Challenges

In addition to issues around trust, people also raised challenges such as an overemphasis on quantitative data, tensions around data they are expected to collect, and gaps between researchers and people doing the work.

During the convening in the South, people highlighted the need to go beyond data to use research to tell a richer story. As one person put it, “We haven’t been intentional about helping people take data and turn it into research.” Another person

said, “Research is important. Data is often the only thing we hear about.” More is needed to help organizations use the data they collect to gain insights and tell a larger story. As one person said, “We need some standardization and training to get us there. We are capturing a lot of data that we don’t use, and there are probably gaps, but we don’t know what those gaps are.”

An attendee in the Southwest raised a similar concern with the limitations of data collection. For instance, they said they use data to identify who should be considered as high risk, “But it doesn’t always line up.” The attendee went on to share that research and data can inform the work, but “it should not take away from other forms like street intel, participatory research, and the voice of the community.”

In the conversation in the Southwest, people also raised challenges with timelines and disagreements with data requirements imposed by funders. One person shared a challenge when researchers used quantitative data to evaluate a new program, and another said they were expected to make changes to their program based on preliminary findings rather than waiting for the full results of a study. Others shared that there have been disagreements within their organization around what to include in a survey because of concerns about what funders want. In line with this, one attendee shared that the data the federal government wants them to collect goes over the heads of the youth they serve. Youth cross out the questions that do not make sense to them, and they won’t answer the survey.

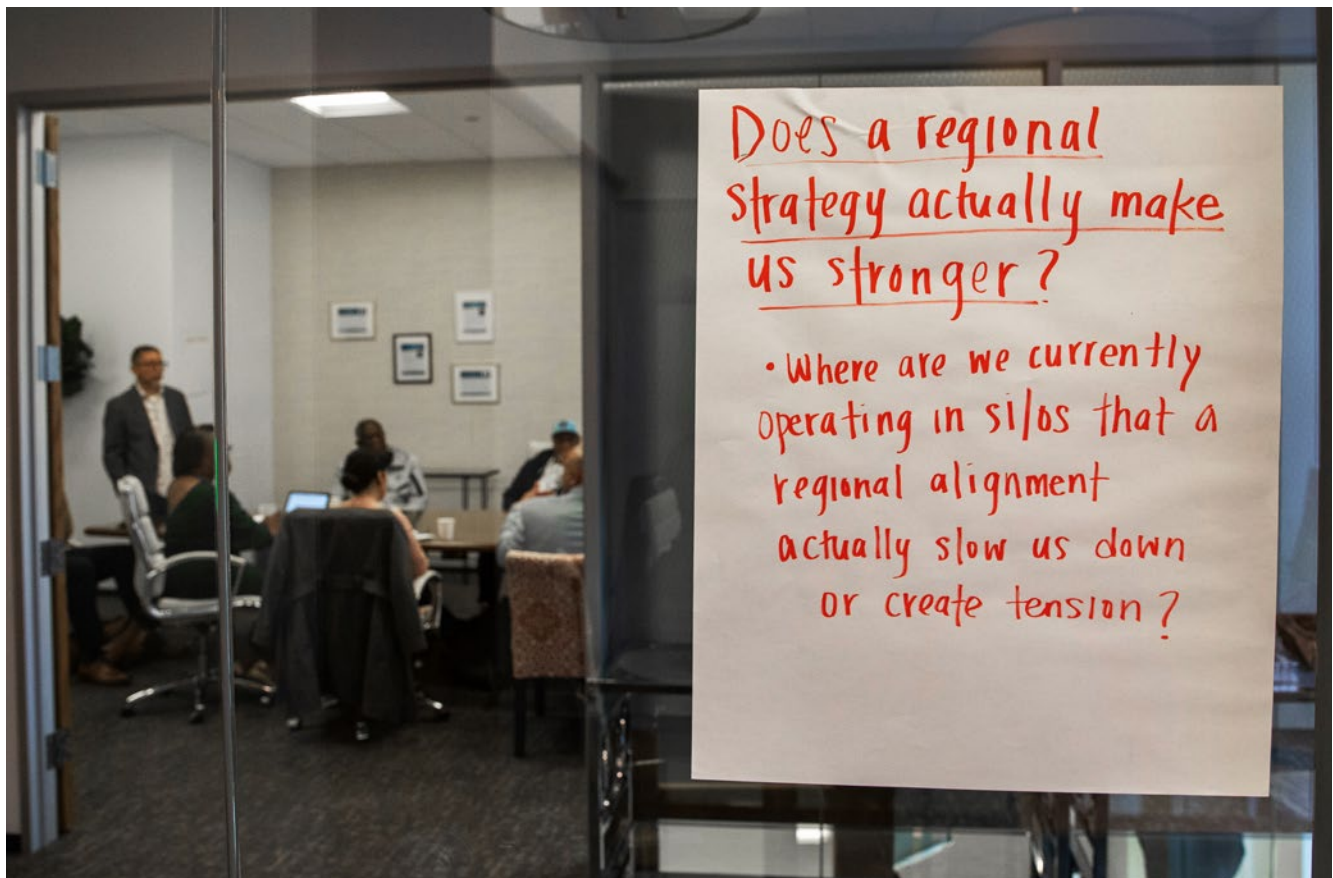
The person said they invited the researchers to come in to understand these challenges, but by not complying with these requirements, they will not get funded again.

In both convenings, many attendees experienced research as “the last thing to get funded.” Participants from both convenings said that receiving federal grants allowed them to collect data and conduct research for the first time. One person in the South shared that, after twelve years, their program is only recently being evaluated for the first time.

For many people working on the frontlines, research is not a priority because they are focused on saving lives and serving their communities. One person said that when they first started, they did not care about research—a sentiment that was shared by others. An attendee from Texas said they collect data, but they do not have systems in place for research. A person who attended the convening in Atlanta summarized this challenge well: “I think a lot of people don’t know and think about the importance of research. And those who only focus on research and numbers decide who to report on and how things are reported. This is a huge gap.”

Distinctive Regional Challenges

While both the South and Southwest regions shared many things in common in their experiences with research and evaluation, there were also some key differences. In the South, many people shared that, even when programs partner with universities and produce research that shows their effectiveness, policymakers still do not care. A New Orleans attendee said, “Grant deliverables ask us to capture



certain metrics, and we were able to reduce recidivism and harm. They then shut down the program, and violence came back up.” Another person shared that, even when they used a report by the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform to show the cost of violence in their city and how CVI can help save the city money, legislators and the police in their city did not care. People shared that many policymakers listen to the people who are profiting from the status quo. As one person put it, “They don’t want to deal with the larger issues. It interrupts the system and it’s not what they want.”

In the Southwest convening, a Native American attendee from South Dakota discussed the unique challenges around data and research faced by his community. He said they often have to look to other groups, such as African American communities, to see how they use data and research in their work. He went on to say, “There is very little research done on our people. Data is a barrier, how we capture it. Non-Natives use data to exclude us. [...] I’m not sure if we pique the interest of researchers. It seems like part of a bigger design to not see us. Seven out of ten Indigenous males where I live will experience incarceration. We have similar experiences to our African American relatives. In many parts of the country, if you are not white, you are systematically oppressed and excluded.”

Communications and Narrative Change

Participants were asked about how they talk about their work and what communications strategies have been successful. They also discussed communication challenges, dominant narratives that harm the work, and narratives that need to be reframed and uplifted.

Creating Effective Communications

In conversations about how people have been able to effectively communicate about their work, an attendee from the South immediately uplifted the importance of a unified communications strategy. She described an incident that happened after a CVI-related event that involved many organizations. In this case, the CVI organizations and allies were able to come together and unite around a shared message and communications strategy, and this successfully changed the narrative about the incident and stopped people from blaming CVI for what happened. Another person from the South shared the value of engaging hyper-local reporters and publicists to find opportunities to capture the stories behind CVI, and specifically “what it takes to get a dangerous man to put a gun down.” The attendee went on to say, “Stories stick with people.” In the Southwest convening, two participants also uplifted the importance of building relationships with local reporters and media outlets.

Across both convenings, people emphasized the importance of getting policymakers and the general public to understand what CVI is and how it is effective. To do this, attendees suggested strategies such as better documenting their work to show its effectiveness, keeping track of success stories, and promoting videos that show the people behind the work and the positive change it is making. In Albuquerque, an attendee highlighted how educating the police department in this way allowed them to get over initial skepticism. One South attendee emphasized the need to show the cost-savings of preventing shootings and the return on investment for funding CVI programs and conflict mediation. Another South attendee uplifted the need to have a special focus of educating policymakers and leaning on people with experience in government relations to do this. He stated, “We need a team of individuals that specialize in talking to policymakers. Our number one enemy is ignorance. But we don’t know how to educate those who we need to get to. We need to communicate to them ‘What’s in it for me,’ and know their ‘Why.’”

In the Southwest, people also uplifted the need to understand and adapt to different audiences. One person emphasized the need to find shared values with a more conservative audience. Another highlighted the importance of speaking “the language of the people.”

Southwest attendees also uplifted ways they think dominant narratives around safety need to be reframed. One person suggested that, rather than simply responding to bad narratives, “we are going to create the frame, get people to think about when they feel safe. Not when we are with the police, but when we’re in community and getting your needs met. Show people to decouple safety from punishment and the belief that we need to be kept safe from bad people.” Another attendee said the emphasis needs to be on accountability rather than punishment. And another said that we need to uplift the narrative that all communities want to be safe.

“ **I struggle when I talk about CVI. Ask everyone in this room what it is, and we will all have a different answer.** ”

Ways National Partners Can Provide Support

In both of the regional convenings, attendees raised an issue that has come up in many other national conversations about CVI: The need for a clear definition and unified messaging about the work. One South attendee stated, “I struggle when I talk about CVI. Ask everyone in this room what it is, and we will all have a different answer.” Another shared, “In the government in Georgia, most people don’t know about it. The challenge is talking about CVI and getting it into the lexicon.” A Southwest attendee highlighted a solution to this problem, stating that the field needs to bring together credible organizations, both national and local, “to create concise and aligned messaging and a plan to communicate it.”

The need for a strong, national messaging and narrative campaign was a prominent theme in the South convening. One person said, “Coca-Cola kills more people than gun violence, but they have good branding. What if we had one solid message that we could use across all states and places?” Another person said, “There is a lack of mobilization for sound messaging across the field. We need to amplify from coast to coast, streamlined messaging. We all need to know how to talk about it.” South attendees said the CVI field can learn from other industries, like studies of consumer behavior, to inform the strategy and change public perceptions. One person said, “We need propaganda. It’s become a dirty word, but we need to fight fire with fire.”

“**There is a lack of mobilization for sound messaging across the field. We need to amplify from coast to coast, streamlined messaging. We all need to know how to talk about it.**”

Challenges

One tension named in both the Southwest and South convening was differentiating CVI from other critical services in the larger violence reduction ecosystem. While this is not exclusively a communications challenge, it points to the need to clearly communicate about what CVI is, and how it is both connected but distinct from other critical resources. One Tucson attendee said, “When CVI first came to Tucson, they said DV [domestic violence prevention] is not CVI. We think about how all violence is connected. [...] The policy piece made us ‘show that it works,’ and build things in isolation. This is an example of how systems and institutions pit us against each other. We need to see that we are part of each other. The young men in the streets are the children of the women living in the shelters.” A South attendee expressed a similar sentiment. “I struggle framing CVI in terms of other prevention services. If people don’t have housing, they will experience violence. What about people in the ecosystem—housing, jobs, etc.—are they CVI? They are not violence interrupters, but they provide the services that are needed.”

Attendees in the South emphasized how narrative is tied to political challenges for the CVI field, and that we need to change the narrative so CVI can be credited for reductions in violence. One South attendee said, “Their narrative is about gun control. We tell them that this is not about gun access. It’s a challenge because people think we are trying to take away their guns.” Another person in the South spoke to the need to claim the narrative about the success of the work. They said, “We are elevated, but when crime comes down, the credit just goes to the police. Schools can invest \$10 million in metal detectors that don’t work, but there’s no money for CVI. It’s our fault when things happen, but no credit for the success.”

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Harmful Narratives

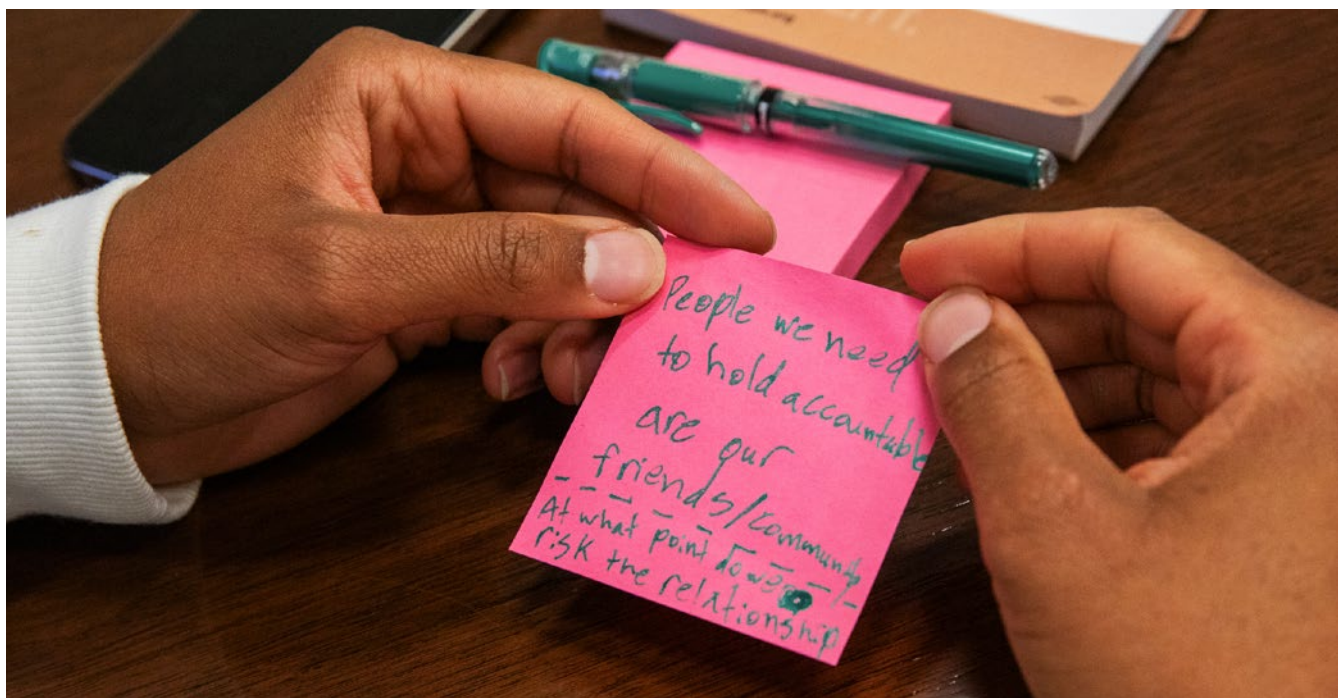
In both convenings, attendees explored the dominant narratives that pose the greatest challenges to gaining support for their work.

- **Anti-Police:** A major narrative that poses challenges to CVI work in the South and Southwest is that “CVI is anti-police.” Multiple attendees from both convenings shared this and said it causes friction with law enforcement. One South attendee said, “People view us as wanting to ‘defund the police,’ and there is misalignment among CVI orgs. If we can’t be on the same page, how can we have a shared message?”

- **Views on who is responsible for violence:** Across both convenings, people also raised problematic narratives and misperceptions around who is responsible for violence. A New Mexico attendee said the narrative there is that “Latinos are dangerous.” And, in the South, one person said the narrative is that “the crimes and shootings are perpetuated by gang members. This is not the case.”

In the Southwest, people were asked to write problematic narratives that they face in their work on sticky notes. The following themes emerged:

- **People are not redeemable:** People highlighted narratives such as, “They don’t want to change.” “You won’t change these people. They were raised this way.” “Violent people are hopeless and cannot change.” And “High risk individuals don’t deserve services and support.”
- **Normalization of violence:** In the domestic violence space, people raised harmful narratives such as, “Abuse and violence is normal for men to use.” “DV survivors choose abusive relationships.” “DV is an individual issue, not a community problem.” And “Victims don’t actually want help.”
- **The problem of gun violence cannot be fixed:** “Gun violence is inevitable.” And “New Mexico will always have high rates of gun violence.”
- **Change is not viewed as fast enough or big enough:** People raised challenging narratives such as “The change isn’t big enough. He should be doing more.” And “The change isn’t quick enough.” If any incident does happen, “People say we are not doing anything meaningful against youth gun violence.” And, even with working with someone for only a short time and they get in trouble, then “it didn’t work.”



Difference in the Southwest

A notable finding from the Southwest convening is, when participants were asked “What communications strategies have proved effective regarding CVI,” many attendees shared responses that were more focused on communicating within a program, such as improving communication across stakeholders to reduce violence and communicating more effectively with clients. While it is possible that more clarity was needed in framing the question, this suggests that many attendees are more focused on service delivery and coordination with immediate stakeholders, and that they likely have less experience working with broader communications and narrative strategies. This points to a need to better equip organizations and CVI leaders with communications tools and training.

Policy Advocacy

In conversations about policy advocacy, convening attendees in the South and Southwest shared their challenges and successes, goals for this area of CVI work, and ways national CVI partners can assist their efforts.

Challenges

The South and Southwest attendees face major funding challenges that relate to policy and advocacy work. In Miami, one organization received \$2 million from the Department of Justice’s CVIPI grant several years ago and, for the first time, they were receiving significant federal, state, and local support. However, this organization lost all of its momentum with the federal funding cuts last year. Similarly, the state of Colorado rescinded \$2.4 million dollars for CVI, and Tennessee lawmakers recently cut \$30 million from the state budget dedicated to workforce development and community crime prevention in areas with the highest levels of violence.

Other individuals described more general opposition they face and, South attendees stated that some policymakers are point-blank “anti-CVI.” An Atlanta attendee explained that when a state-level community health bill was introduced, “legislators pulled it the minute they learned it involved CVI.” In Louisiana, the governor’s and mayor’s seats flipped from Democrat to Republican, mirroring what happened at the federal level. The new governor has since divested from CVI and invested in the penal system, building a 36-bed juvenile detention center with plans to build another 72-bed unit.

According to a New Mexico attendee, “people are scared of the CVI label.” Attendees in both regions noted that this stigma is inextricable from the pro-law enforcement and pro-gun sentiments that are





deeply rooted in the culture of these areas. As one attendee simply put, “People in the South love the police.” Another person explained that the police union has even more power than government officials, and traditional law enforcement gets the bulk of all public safety funds. In regard to guns, an individual from the Southwest said, “You cannot mention firearms in any bill because it will be shut down by the NRA.” An Atlanta attendee believes that there is a direct correlation between the lack of CVI traction in Georgia and the state’s new open carry law.

Successes

Despite these obstacles, attendees described significant policy advocacy successes they have achieved. In response to losing the state money mentioned above, seven community programs in Denver banded together and created a unified strategy to raise awareness and money. They were awarded \$10 million from the City of Denver. Additionally, in 2021, a New Mexico attendee helped co-write a violence intervention bill at the state level and received \$3 million dollars for Albuquerque and Santa Fe that recurred for two years. In Austin, a wide breadth of organizations formed a group called Dream Together 2030. Together, they regularly attended city council meetings and successfully advocated for money in the city budget.

Several attendees in the South had success with their respective Office of Violence Prevention (OVP). In North Carolina, an Office of Community Safety was established, and CVI is one of the office's pillars. Someone from Mississippi explained that those in their OVP are some of their few staunch supporters. However, not everyone has had the same success with OVPs. An Atlanta attendee said, "We have an OVP that is not gaining much traction, and it is not a line item in the mayor's budget."

Goals

Due to pushback, some Southern attendees are primarily focused on having conversations and building relationships with their public officials. According to someone in Atlanta, "Getting people to listen and trust the work is the foreground that we are trying to do right now."

Other attendees are focused on learning more about policy. One person shared, "We need to be educated enough to advocate for ourselves. We have to respect and understand the importance of policy." Their goal is to eliminate the disconnect between frontline practitioners and those pushing for policy change. Almost all attendees agreed that CVI needs to be permanently inserted into their city, county, or state's public safety and/or public health budgets. As one attendee stated, "CVI dollars should never be threatened, just like the police budget is never threatened."



CVI dollars should never be threatened, just like the police budget is never threatened.



Members from both regions also noted the interconnectedness of policy advocacy and standardization. They discussed the importance of agreeing upon a shared framework so that everyone is aligned with what they should be advocating for. Attendees, particularly in the South, also agreed that they must have coordination amongst themselves and convene regularly. As one attendee asserted, "What the deep south needs looks different than the rest of the country."

Ways National Partners Can Provide Support

The South and Southwest attendees had many ideas for ways the CVI national partners can support them. They said it would be helpful for national partners to provide local organizations with more resources and tools, including CVI research and data that they can use to advocate for CVI; short story vignettes that lift up the work being done around the country; factsheets, including ones that summarize the Action Plan for different audiences; and more mentorship and training opportunities, specifically on policy and organizing. An attendee in the South said that the national team should "train folks to educate the community about what organizations are doing and inform them that there are alternatives to the police." Another person said she would also like to see the movement "usher in the next generation of young people and create a track for them to get involved."

Additionally, national partners should "use their leverage in the field to bridge gaps and get smaller organizations into decision-making rooms." Attendees also desire continuous networking opportunities, similar to these regional convenings. South and Southwest attendees expressed how gratified they were to meet others in their region, and they quickly began to develop community and solidarity with one another. In fact, one attendee from South Dakota asked the breakout group if

anyone would be open to him and his team travelling to their jurisdictions to learn how they do CVI. Several individuals immediately invited him to their cities and exchanged contact information.

Lastly, attendees would like national partners to inform them of ways they can assist one another. As someone from Miami stated, “We are missing opportunities to support each other and mobilize if we do not all go into one city when there is a particular problem. We need to move collectively.”



Overall Takeaways of the Regional Listening Sessions

The regional listening sessions showed the importance of including diverse perspectives from across the country to envision the next phase of the CVI Action Plan. One cultural and political factor that was evident in both convenings is how the Southwest and the South have cultures that more openly embrace guns than other parts of the U.S.—especially cities and states where CVI is prominent. When CVI is viewed as part of gun safety restrictions or gun violence prevention, it politicizes the work in these regions and draws skepticism from community members and elected officials. While this was a unifying factor, each region’s unique culture and history shape the challenges and opportunities for advancing the work in the future.

In the Southwest convening, one theme that differentiated it from other parts of the country is that the nature of violence seems to be more linked to drug conflicts and dynamics of being on the border, such as drug trafficking. One Southwest attendee highlighted how relying too much on CVI national models can limit their work. “Models are based on groups and gangs. But ours is around drugs. PD

[the police department] is trying to create groups, but it's really around drug dealers. We started engaging the drug dealers and things started calming down." Other differences that distinguished the Southwest from the South—at least in Tucson—is that the Southwest seemed to have greater buy-in and support from local policymakers, whereas the South seemed to have stronger relationships with research institutions. Lastly, many attendees from the Southwest come from Native American, Latino, and/or Indigenous backgrounds, and these differences were highlighted both in challenges faced—particularly by Indigenous communities that face erasure—as well as solutions that were uplifted, such as healing practices and fostering connections to the land.

In the South, the region's deep history of resilience and organizing, as well as its history of systemic racism, shaped conversations around the challenges people face and a readiness to organize toward solutions. One person shared, "The work is often from California and New York, but we need to talk about how racial terror in the South is still harming our communities. The field needs to factor this into the conditions we are experiencing now." Southern attendees described a deep resistance among policymakers to embrace CVI work—even when they have relationships with research institutions to show that CVI is working—presumably because of systemic racism, since CVI is led by and in service of Black and Brown communities. In conversations about how to move the work forward, people uplifted the need to include the lens of racial incidents and structural racism in talking about what the work looks like, why there is violence in the communities in the first place, and the need to mend these harms. They also uplifted needing a budget to organize across the region, including supporting existing efforts—such as Southern Ground and Circle of Safety—as well as ensuring that there are dedicated staff to keep everyone connected as the work moves forward.



04 SECTION 04 RECOMMENDATIONS

Through national webinars, in-person convenings, and regional listening sessions, the CVI Action Plan Committee united the CVI field nationally to envision the next phase of advancing the CVI Action Plan's domains. Even in a time of scarce resources, CVI leaders have come together to build unity and long-term relationships, which will be necessary for elevating the field and strategically capturing political opportunities as they arise.

The following recommendations seek to lay the groundwork for the next phase of the CVI Action Plan. They recognize the need to continue to sustain and build up CVI organizations working on the ground, and back the work with research. Meanwhile, they also seek to build a foundation for a national movement with inclusive representation, clear standards, a unified narrative, and the capacity to pursue an ambitious policy agenda that will establish CVI as a permanent, well-resourced fixture of the public safety ecosystem.



1 | Sustain capacity-building, professionalization, and wellness

The CVI field has experienced rapid growth and is now fighting to sustain its wins. While CVI leaders are ready to unify nationally to push for a larger policy agenda, this is only possible if organizations have the infrastructure and support they need to sustain their life-saving work on the ground. Many CVI organizations are hanging on by a thread in the face of budget cuts and a hostile political environment.

For this reason, funders and philanthropists must remain steadfast in their commitment to building organizational capacity and promoting worker wellness. Through facilitated conversations in convenings such as Setting the Standard and Advancing CVI, participants emphasized the need to continue to invest in the capacity, wellness, and professionalization of the CVI field through the following strategies:

Develop Career Pipelines

The field must be equipped to recruit and develop a new generation of CVI workers. This includes investing in the leadership development of frontline staff so they can grow into more senior roles and supporting the older generation of CVI workers to transition into new roles and retire with dignity.

Invest In and Align Training

Consistent, quality training backed by national standards is essential for building and fortifying a professionalized CVI workforce. This includes establishing a nationally aligned training and certification infrastructure that preserves fidelity to foundational CVI standards while allowing for local adaptation, and creates tiered professional development tracks for frontline practitioners, managers, and executive leadership. Training should also include continued education for CVI workers, as well as communications and public relations training for organizations.

Promote and Institutionalize Wellness

Assist organizations to institutionalize work cultures that support frontline workers. CVI organizations need support to develop comprehensive wellness infrastructure that moves beyond individual self-care and institutionalizes trauma-informed supervision, equitable compensation, manageable caseloads, and sustainable staffing models. This includes promoting trauma-informed and culturally relevant best practices, and HR policies that encourage self-care for CVI staff through flexible time off, wellness benefits, and debriefing groups to prevent burnout and support well-being for the CVI workforce.

Invest in Infrastructure

Expand funding beyond programming and direct services to also include infrastructure support for CVI agencies including workforce development, data management, communications, grants, and administrative support such as HR and compliance. This is particularly important for smaller or emerging organizations.

Support Intermediaries

Intermediary organizations play a critical role in strengthening the CVI field by addressing the structural and operational gaps that limit frontline organizations' effectiveness. As the CVI Action Plan notes, many grassroots CVI organizations operate with limited administrative capacity due to

chronic underfunding and the demands of direct intervention work. Intermediaries can fill this gap by providing back-office support, grant administration, data infrastructure, and strategic planning assistance, allowing frontline workers to focus on saving lives and building relationships rather than navigating complex funding and compliance systems.

Intermediaries can prioritize and disseminate best practices for community-led public safety to inform and drive long-term investments in CVI organizations and regions. Intermediaries and collaboratives build capacity, reduce competition, and encourage greater collaboration in the field while supporting the growth of smaller organizations. They can also serve as a bridge to larger public and philanthropic funding streams by administering grants that smaller organizations cannot easily access on their own and reducing administrative burdens while preserving frontline organizations' operational focus.

Beyond funding and infrastructure, intermediaries strengthen the CVI field by supporting workforce sustainability and facilitating coalition-building and peer learning across organizations. Ultimately, intermediaries serve as connective infrastructure for the field, bridging the gap between large-scale funders and local CVI initiatives to ensure that investments are strategic, impactful, and sustainable.



2 | Fund multi-disciplinary, community-rooted research and evaluation

Generating knowledge and scholarship is essential to further establish and strengthen the CVI field. In the current landscape, research is not only important for building the evidence base for CVI, but also for strengthening the long-term legitimacy, visibility, and public investment needed for the field to grow and endure. This was highlighted in the regional listening sessions, and by the 226 registrants of the webinar on “Tackling Research Challenges and Opportunities.” Among webinar registrants, the number one issue identified as the most pressing gap in research was “demonstrating impact” for their work. The second biggest gap was collaboration with researchers. Registrants described challenges such as power dynamics with research partners, researchers not capturing the full story, a lack of cultural competency, and funding for research not being available or running out. Webinar registrants uplifted the need for culturally informed, trustworthy research partners.

For this reason, philanthropic and government partners must deepen their investment in community-rooted, culturally informed, and multidisciplinary research and evaluation by trusted researchers in the field, such as those in the [Black and Brown Collective for Community Solutions to Gun Violence](#). More rigorous process and implementation evaluations are needed to better understand not only whether CVI strategies are effective, but also the “how” and “why” behind successful implementation. Because CVI strategies rely on community relationships and local knowledge that change from place to place, the field needs more research to document, define, and describe CVI strategies that are indigenous to different communities to grow the body of CVI scholarship.

Key to this is funding research that diversifies analytical methods to focus beyond shootings and homicides. Much of the existing evaluation landscape relies heavily on publicly available administrative datasets, such as law enforcement or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data, which primarily capture violence after harm has already occurred. The field needs more multi-method research and mixed methods case studies that examine intermediate outcomes and community-level changes, such as increased trust among participants, stronger social cohesion, shifts in attitudes or behaviors, improved perceptions of safety, and the resolution of conflicts before violence occurs. The field also needs more implementation-focused research that examines how CVI strategies are funded, staffed, sustained, adapted, and integrated across different local contexts.

Lastly, the field needs to “build the bench” of culturally-informed and community-driven researchers. This includes investing in the leadership of Black and Brown researchers, whose lived, cultural, and professional experiences often position them to conduct research that is more contextually grounded, relationally accountable, and responsive to community realities. Efforts such as the Black and Brown Collective’s mentorship and training program create a pipeline for more researchers who can effectively support the CVI field. More information and recommendations on these efforts can be found at [the Black and Brown Collective resource page](#).

3 | Build structures for national participation and governance

The work of the CVI Action Plan Committee over the last year and a half has allowed key leaders from across the CVI field to build relationships that are essential to establishing the field nationally. It has shown that, when we are all resourced to do the work and to collaborate, we can better leverage each

other's strengths and build national relationships to form a unified movement rather than scrapping for territory.

In order to create a unified voice and strategies for advancement, the field must establish structures for representative decision-making in order to come to consensus about foundational definitions and strategies. This structure has started through the CVI Action Plan Committee but must be expanded to include more geographic representation and defined decision-making processes. Establishing more shared models for governance, decision-making, and accountability will prevent gatekeeping and create a more inclusive, national movement. For this reason, the committee proposes a regional organizing approach that feeds into a larger, national structure for strategy development and decision-making. Regional geographies could include areas such as the South, Southwest, New England, Midwest, etc. and can be built out in more detail with input from members of each region.

Regional Organizing Approach

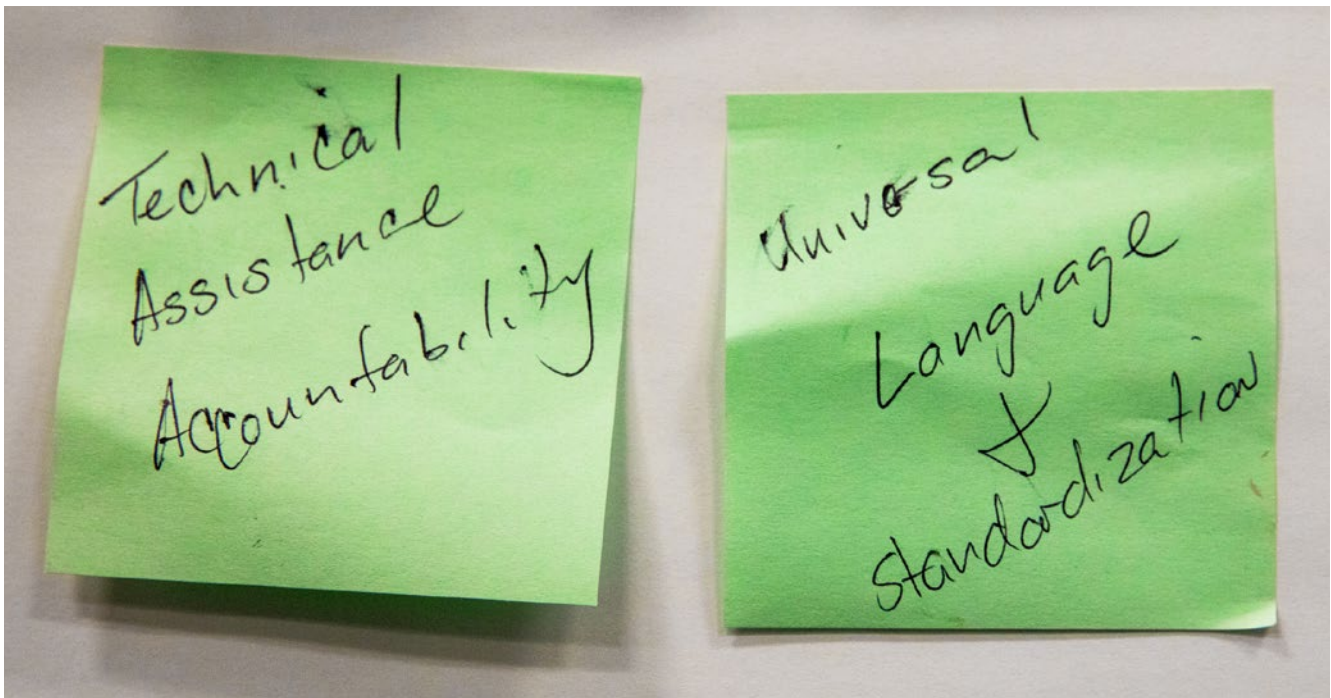
Organizing key stakeholders in the CVI ecosystem by region can create the building blocks for a national governing body that reflects the diverse perspectives of different parts of the United States. This approach would also support the development and implementation of CVI strategies in underrepresented areas. The CVI Action Plan Committee recommends creating regional convenings to share best practices, develop state and regional strategies, and fortify organizing, advocacy, and policy-change efforts at a more local level. Support for convenings of this nature was strongly echoed in the Southwest and South regional listening sessions.

Regions can start by convening twice a year. Convenings would be anchored by an organization or organizations from the region and supported by members of the CVI Action Plan Committee to help build out agendas and link these convenings to a larger national strategy. These gatherings can include CVI practitioners as well as funders, researchers, advocates, and organizers working to support the CVI field. More details on how to support local and regional organizing are discussed in Recommendation #6: Establish a national policy and advocacy infrastructure and agenda.

National Convening and Governing Body

Regional convenings can feed into an annual national convening that unites the field and allows for further advancement of the CVI Action Plan domains. The national convening could leverage existing conferences to reduce the travel burden and expenses for CVI organizations. Part of the regional convenings should be electing one to two representatives from each region to join a larger national governing body that can make foundational decisions to move the field into the next phase. Details such as terms, selection processes, internal systems for accountability, and conflict resolution processes can be further developed to ensure fair representation. For this body to function effectively, it will need dedicated staff from CVI Action Plan anchor organizations, and a project manager, to oversee planning, coordination, communication, and project management.

This recommendation is essential for moving the work forward. A national governing body with regional representation will serve as a critical backbone to support all of the larger efforts needed to advance the field such as fieldwide collaboration, standardization, narrative change, strategy development, organizing, and policy advocacy.



4 | Standardization of core CVI elements

A national governing body can support a critical domain for advancing the CVI field: standardization of core CVI elements and codifying key definitions. As uplifted in the Setting the Standard report, the CVI field needs a national CVI council to develop national definitions, standards, and codes of conduct for CVI, much like other professions. This could be a subcommittee or specialized focus of a national governing body and should center frontline practitioners.

A key part of this national council would be to finalize a national definition of community violence intervention. While some may believe that a definition is already established, as there is a definition shared in the CVI Action Plan report, national conversations have shown that more consensus is needed. For example, when surveying the 121 attendees prior to the Setting the Standard convening, “Defining what CVI is and what it is not” was identified as the most urgent topic for collective consensus by 53% of respondents. A lack of a clear definition for CVI also came up numerous times in other in-person and regional convenings. Finalizing a definition of CVI—as well as other key terms such as “high-risk” and “professional understanding” with law enforcement—can and must be achieved through a governing body that has national representation and clear decision-making processes in order to advance the field toward larger strategies such as narrative change.

5 | Narrative Change

Narrative change remains an urgent need and a critical domain to advance in the CVI Action Plan. Throughout national and regional convenings and webinars, people have uplifted the need to streamline language and build a clearer articulation of CVI, as well as a compelling narrative for what the work is and how it is effective.

As the CVI field solidifies national definitions and standards, this can lay the groundwork for clear messaging and a larger narrative campaign. Throughout the national engagement activities conducted over the last year and a half, people noted that, even in communities where CVI is working, people do not know what it is. There are also other existing harmful narratives that hinder the work, as described in the report, [“The Power of Narrative: Empowering Local CVI through National Strategy.”](#) A national messaging and narrative campaign will help the CVI field and allies articulate the value of CVI, which will build more supporters and champions for the work and support long-term investment and sustainability.

The next phase of a narrative-change strategy can include the following:

- Create a national CVI working group for narrative strategy. This working group will support collective decision-making, information flow, and narrative strategy development and dissemination.
- Build off of the streamlined definitions established by a national CVI governing body and [message testing from The HAVI](#), develop a living glossary of key terms and concepts to support consistency, prevent misinterpretation, and reduce the risk of narrative co-optation. This glossary can also be developed into a messaging toolkit with standardized language that acknowledges regional differences, similar to the [Annie E. Casey Foundation Juvenile Justice Messaging Toolkit](#).
- Leverage the CVI Narrative work led by the Ad Council in partnership with national and local CVI organizations to promote the work to a national audience.
- Fund more research to guide effective messaging.
- Invest in media training and public speaking opportunities for CVI leaders and on-the-ground practitioners, especially those involved in advocacy efforts.
- Coordinate annual day of action with joint press conferences and social media posts, such as the Protect CVI National Day of Action on May 7, 2025.
- Host regional media learning exchanges and/or tours that invite local reporters and influencers to learn about CVI at the community level, supported by the messaging guide.

6 | Establish a national policy and advocacy infrastructure and agenda

While the CVI field has advanced in the Policy Development and Advocacy domain in recent years, it has also been confronted with political challenges that ripple through all levels of government and translate to real impacts on the ground.

A coordinated national advocacy and organizing strategy that pushes toward broader systems change will allow the CVI field to establish itself as a permanent part of public safety. Philanthropy will always play an important role in fostering innovation and growth, but increased, long-term public investment is needed to sustain the field permanently. The following recommendations are meant to inform philanthropic partners, the CVI ecosystem, and the public about what must be implemented. More detailed recommendations can be found in a forthcoming report by Community Justice, to be posted at [cvi-actionplan.org](#).

Policy and Advocacy Infrastructure and Agenda

Power-building through policy advocacy will require a coordinated national infrastructure across the federal, state, and local levels. This entails establishing a national CVI policy table or coordinating body with representation from different regions across the country to develop a national CVI policy agenda, oversee its implementation, and support capacity building. Dedicated staff will be needed to convene, coordinate, and manage this infrastructure.

An immediate priority for this group is to create a CVI policy agenda, in collaboration with CVI leaders and frontline practitioners from different regions through structured engagement and shared governance models. A national CVI policy agenda should include actionable federal and state policy priorities, foundational principles and values, and clear measures for what progress looks like to support accountability.

To build on the policy agenda, the national CVI infrastructure must prepare a federal readiness strategy and legislative roadmap. This will require consistent, bipartisan advocacy and engagement through relationship-building, policy briefings, in-district meetings, and drafting policy proposals with trusted staff of elected offices and legislative committees. This will also require building a structure for national rapid response coordination. Additional efforts to build the CVI field's advocacy capacity and political power, outlined below, will be critical to supporting this goal.

Participatory Structures to Prevent Gatekeeping

Like the regional strategy outlined above in Recommendation 3, the national policy infrastructure should include representation from regions across the country and systems for collaborative decision-making. This includes formal participatory processes to integrate frontline practitioners, CBOs, directly-impacted leaders, youth leaders, and regional coalitions into internal governance structures, strategy development, and decision-making. If CVI workers, especially frontline practitioners, are absent or only engaged in policy work to tell their stories, that is a telltale sign that we are not power building.

A national CVI policy ecosystem must also include accountability standards to prevent and eliminate gatekeeping wherever possible. This includes shared models of governance and leadership, internal accountability policies, conflict resolution processes, and methods to better ensure equitable distribution and understanding of resources.

Invest in Long-term Policy Advocacy Capacity Building

The national infrastructure can support the policy and advocacy capacity of the CVI field through intentional leadership development, comprehensive training, tailored support, and hosting convenings. This could also include direct support for policy and government relations, campaigns and organizing, and communications to enhance the work of CBOs and regional coalitions. The following strategies have been identified to support the field:

- **Create a leadership pipeline:** There is a clear need to support professional development and build a leadership pipeline so that youth, CVI workers, and directly-impacted individuals are offered opportunities to engage directly in policy advocacy work, be integrated into the national infrastructure, develop foundational and transferable skills, and reinvest in their communities.

- **Develop tools:** The national CVI policy and advocacy infrastructure can support the field by creating and maintaining tools such as educational materials and advocacy toolkits; briefings on specific candidate races and their alignment with the CVI agenda; federal and state policy-tracking capabilities; and a centralized, accessible policy repository that includes data-driven analysis relevant to policy advocacy.
- **Training and Technical Assistance:** Offer a comprehensive policy advocacy training program that is tailored to the needs and demands of each region, along with providing direct technical assistance to CBOs to scale up internal policy advocacy efforts.
- **Convenings:** As part of the convenings described in Recommendation 3, regional convenings can support problem-solving on regional policy or political issues, update stakeholders on policy advocacy work, and provide training that supports the needs of each geographic region. National convenings can facilitate forums that are less accessible at the regional level, such as red-state and blue-state forums and rural community forums.

Develop a National Power-Building and Mobilization Strategy

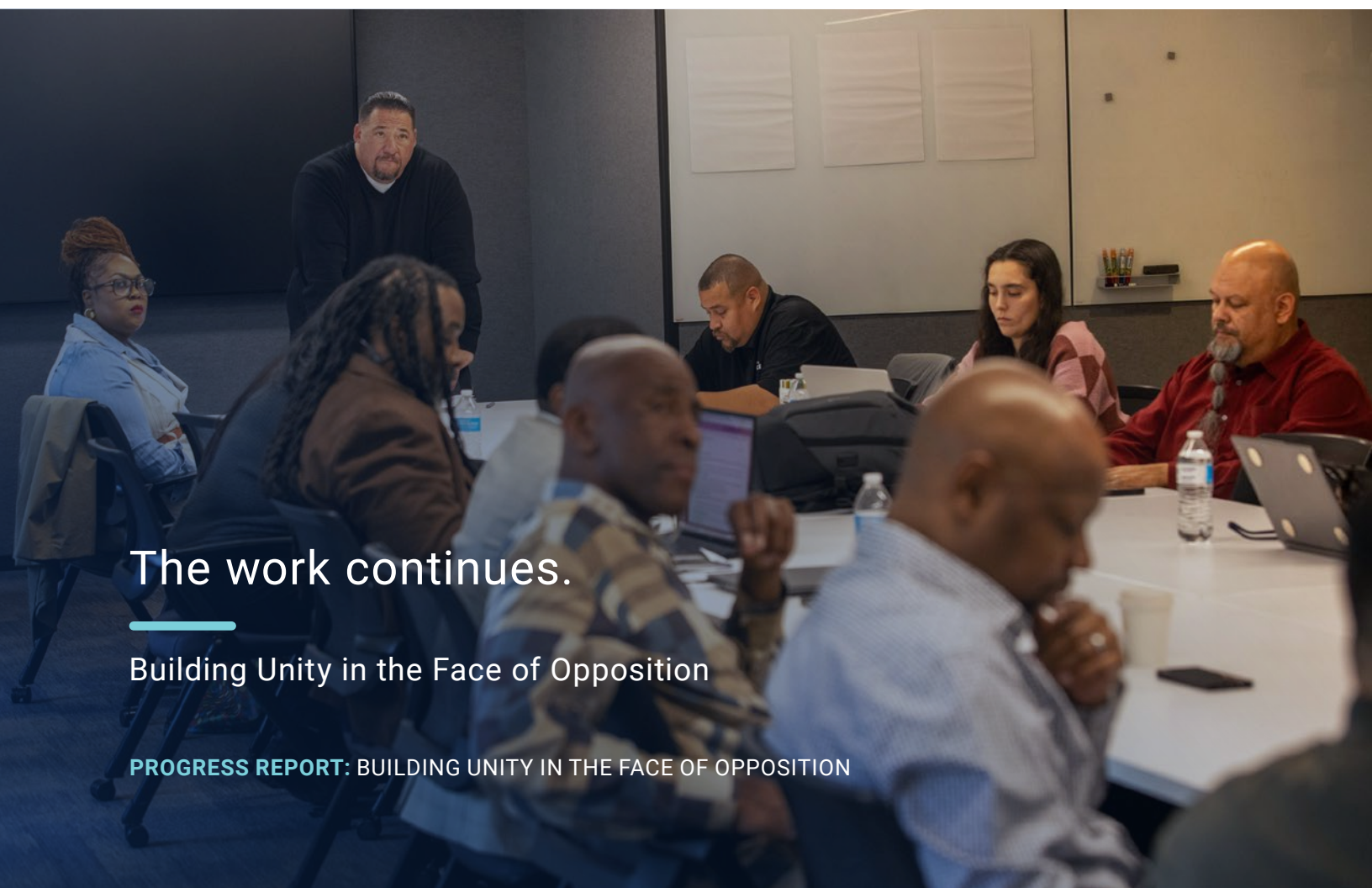
A CVI policy agenda will remain a concept unless the CVI movement creates a long-term strategy to build political power and expand support for CVI across multiple sectors and levels of government. The CVI Action Plan Committee recommends a robust strategy to strategically build power on the ground and engage elected officials and candidates.

- **Regional organizing:** Support the building of coalitions in each region that include diverse stakeholders, such as faith leaders, healthcare professionals, business leaders, survivors and families impacted by violence, youth organizers, local elected officials, and public health and research institutions.
- **Power-mapping:** Conduct a national power-mapping analysis to inventory the lawmakers and policy influencers active in CVI policy, assess the legislative landscape against the CVI policy agenda and advocacy capacities, and identify key federal and state lawmakers to engage and position as champions and supporters of the CVI policy agenda on both sides of the aisle.
- **Supporting consistent engagement:** As part of the national federal readiness strategy, support local CBOs and regional coalitions to consistently engage with elected officials from both sides of the aisle, including ongoing relationship-building, site visits, and in-district constituent meetings.
- **Accountability:** Work with CBOs and coalitions to launch coordinated constituency engagement campaigns to apply pressure on elected officials to ensure accountability. Tactics can include issuing scorecards and mobilizing for town hall meetings.
- **Candidate strategy:** The CVI field can build political power through electoral organizing and engaging with candidates. This includes activities such as creating an endorsement process for candidates; engaging in concerted voter registration and get out the vote (GOTV) efforts; building up more 501(c)(4) organizations in the CVI ecosystem; and possibly establishing a CVI PAC accompanied by standards that address gatekeeping and uphold the CVI movement's agreed-upon values and principles.

05 SECTION 05 CONCLUSION

The recommendations in this report are grounded in what we learned as a committee from the creation of the CVI Action Plan to its implementation. We know that we are stronger together, and the field must unify to be understood and recognized on the national stage. By working in relationship with one another, and listening to CVI leaders from across the country—both in cities where the work is long-established and areas where it is only getting started—we know that, through national unity and organizing, we can properly establish the field, take the Action Plan domains to the next level, shift narratives, and build toward a policy agenda that allows CVI to become a permanent part of public safety.

Through webinars, listening sessions, and in-person convenings, we have touched hundreds, if not thousands of people who have proven that the CVI ecosystem is ready and eager to be engaged. Now is the time for the CVI movement to unify nationally. The Action Plan—and our work to implement it over the last year and a half—have generated the momentum for us to do so.



The work continues.

Building Unity in the Face of Opposition

PROGRESS REPORT: BUILDING UNITY IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION