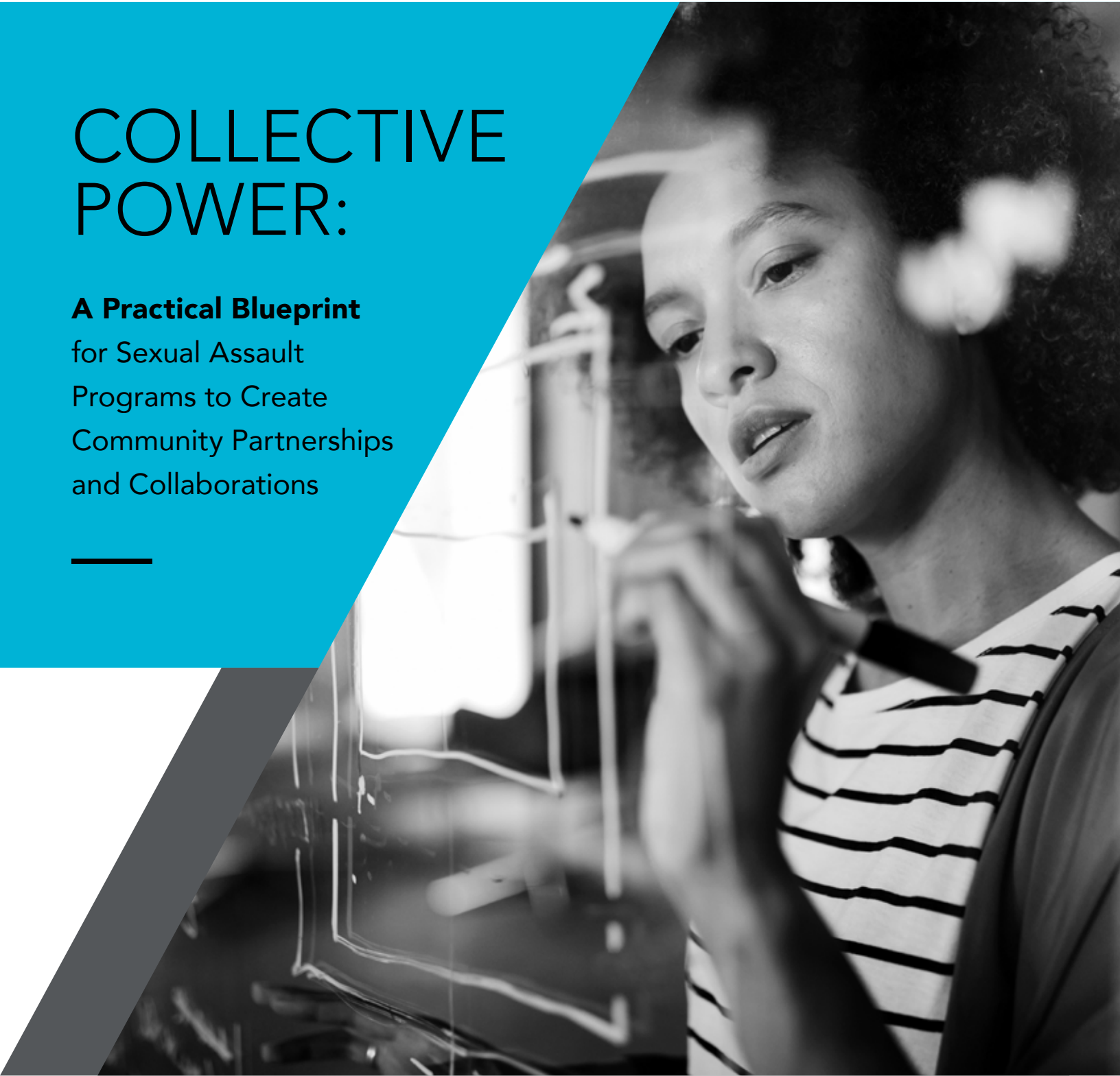


COLLECTIVE POWER:


A Practical Blueprint
for Sexual Assault
Programs to Create
Community Partnerships
and Collaborations







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A LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Members and Community Partners,

Community organizing and fostering partnerships with sectors and agencies beyond our anti-sexual violence movement is a familiar practice for rape crisis centers. There have been decades and generations of community organizing and solidarity led by movement leaders, with complex interventions made by Black, brown, and indigenous movement-makers whose wisdom and legacy inspires us.

If the twin global pandemics of 2020 of racism and COVID have taught us anything, it is that transformative change and support is possible if we stand up for each other, uplift and amplify each other's voices, and collaborate and partner together with agencies within and beyond the anti-sexual violence movement. We have the collective power to create social change, shift cultural norms, and create survivor-centered spaces and programs throughout our diverse communities.

In order to expand our local sexual assault response efforts, ValorUS (VALOR) announces the release of "Collective Power: A Practical Blueprint for Sexual Assault Programs to Create Community Partnerships and Collaborations." This blueprint provides a nonprescriptive roadmap to how we can build collaborative relationships with community partners within and outside the anti-sexual violence movement. It identifies best practices, models, and resources for creating, encouraging, and preserving community collaborations both in conventional and innovative ways, hence strengthening the capacity of our sexual assault programs and bridging the gaps with other social service organizations and institutions.

As Lilla Watson, an Aboriginal elder, activist, and educator from Queensland, Australia, captures our vision of collective power, "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." VALOR strongly believes that we are all a part of the solution to end sexual violence and when we collaborate, we can collectively strengthen our statewide safety net and support the incredible and invaluable education and advocacy provided by our sexual assault programs. We really hope this practical blueprint helps strengthen and mobilize sexual assault awareness among your local service providers beyond the sexual assault field.

Sincerely,

Sandra Henriquez, MBA
CEO

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

COLLECTIVE POWER is truly the product of the collective wisdom and energy of the anti-sexual violence field. We offer thanks to those who came before us – those visionary leaders who realized we could not do this work alone and invited others from the community to join in creating solutions.

The sexual assault field and movement was generated from the power of people rising up from the community to decry injustice and work toward ending sexual violence. By speaking out against rape and other forms of sexual assault, we began to determine where we could find allies and where we needed to confront those who obstructed efforts at reform. We were able to distinguish our own voice within the chorus of community voices, choosing those which best harmonized with our mission, values, and practices to join in collective work.

In creating this blueprint for community action, partnership, and collaboration, we are returning to our roots. Our hope is that sexual assault programs, particularly those in the state of California, will find clear guidance and practical assistance in these pages. We are grateful to the people working in California sexual assault programs who shared their experiences and ideas with us as we developed this guide. You will find their tips and wisdom in their own voices throughout this document.

The writing team at VALOR included Leah Aldridge, Meghna Bhat, Sarah Orton, and Jennifer Y. Levy-Peck.

We are grateful to the survivors who have told us their stories, shared feedback about their experiences in the community, and helped shape the movement throughout the years. We would like to thank our readers for bringing this work forward.





PURPOSE OF THIS BLUEPRINT

Purpose of this Blueprint

What is this Blueprint?

Sexual assault programs in California must be embedded in their communities to provide effective services. Traditionally, these programs have developed cooperative working relationships with other service providers (such as law enforcement and healthcare providers) and have led efforts to coordinate services, address gaps, and overcome obstacles for survivors. Additionally, these programs challenge many social factors that contribute to sexual assault and serve as a valuable community resource with expertise on these issues.

Most sexual assault programs began as grassroots efforts and have developed into stand-alone agencies, or operate under the umbrella of multi-service organizations. As a field, sexual assault services have become more sophisticated, professionalized, and structured over the years.

As with any field, sector, and movement, we are at a point in history where we must reimagine our work as we move into the future. Our overarching goal is to end sexual violence, which means addressing root causes and the intersections with other forms of oppression. In the meantime, we strive to constantly reaffirm our value, to increase our reach, and to embrace innovation as the path to meeting the needs of survivors and our communities.

The purpose of this Community Blueprint is to offer California's sexual assault programs a framework for thinking about how we can work most effectively with community partners in both traditional and inventive ways. It is not a prescription for how to do the work – you are the expert on your own agency and your own community. Rather, we offer a series of considerations and questions to reimagine your work as essential to your community's needs. To support your efforts, we provide a compilation of resources and activities along with practical tools.



Why is This Work Important?

You may wonder why it is worth the effort to reimagine some of your work. Consider the fact that only a very small percentage of sexual abuse and assault survivors ever walk through the doors of an advocacy agency. While referrals from medical professionals and law enforcement are now common, the community is much broader and should feel encouraged to access our advocacy services in broadly accessible spaces. This is particularly true for survivors from communities that have reasons to distrust traditional service providers, such as people of color, immigrants, and LGBTQIA+ individuals. When we approach community activism in a fresh way, *we may reach a greater diversity of survivors.*

In reimagining relationships and reaching out to entities with whom we may not traditionally or consistently work, we have the opportunity to connect with those outside of formal services, which will allow for *more equitable input into our work.* For example, a traditional coalition of service providers might not include people who are homeless, disability activists, and alternative medicine practitioners, all of whom may have valuable contributions to make when formulating policies and practices to serve survivors and increase community safety.

It is also true that we cannot end sexual violence on our own, nor is it reasonable to try. Sexual violence is deeply embedded in other social issues, so we must share the responsibility for this matter. This means working with others to increase funding streams and share the work of preventing and addressing sexual violence.

As we do our day-to-day work, it is also vital that sexual assault programs take their place in the public consciousness. Successful community partnerships and collaborations will *amplify your leadership in the community at large.*

These efforts also enhance communication and cooperation so our agencies *become recognized as a vital part of the California safety net.* Safety net issues may be defined as “hunger/food security, shelter/housing, domestic and family violence, and economic security” (Y&H Soda Foundation, n.d.). A strong, tough safety net for the purpose of providing access to these basic needs should be woven of stakeholders from nonprofits, government agencies, the business community, grassroots organizers, and community members. Grassroots organizers and community members are frequently overlooked in partnerships, but they often have greater access within the community, a history of working for change, and the trust of survivors who might not approach traditional service providers.

A robust community presence allows California sexual assault programs opportunities to learn community needs firsthand, and affords them a more centralized role within the safety net. In addition, as we work to strengthen all elements of the social safety net, this increases protective factors that function to prevent sexual violence. As an example, when affordable housing options are increased, fewer people remain vulnerable to sexual assault because they must live on the streets or in shelters.

When all stakeholders work together in powerful collaboration, they enhance their reach and effectiveness.

What Your Agency Will Gain

Engaging deeply at the community level can seem daunting, but it offers many rewards. Here are some of the valuable outcomes:

Develop Skills and Capacities

Sexual assault program staff learn how to “speak the language” of partners from other fields, ensuring better communication and mutual understanding. They hone their negotiation skills. They learn how to talk about sexual assault within a broader landscape, becoming savvy about addressing relevant issues and using terms that resonate in different settings, such as healthcare, parenting, or incarceration. Your agency’s staff members will learn how to start with the upfront concerns of a particular group or population and then help people reframe the issues of sexual violence within a larger context (including concerns about health, political, social, and cultural factors).

Reach More Survivors

Many survivors are unaware of advocacy services or are reluctant to engage with our programs because of personal trauma or negative community experiences with established systems. Our working relationships offer the opportunity for people from diverse communities to see us as trusted partners, and to be able to vouch for us with individuals who might otherwise feel a lack of trust. For example, when a sexual assault program partnered with a needle exchange program, they began to get a steady stream of referrals that allowed them to serve survivors who otherwise would not have sought services.

Incorporate Collaborative Work as Part of Your Normal Functioning

Because sexual assault programs are highly mission-driven, we must incorporate community interaction and feedback to accomplish our mission. Elizabeth Castillo, who writes about stakeholder involvement, makes this point:

In past decades, nonprofit organizations generally focused on developing relationships with those with whom they directly interacted, such as the people they served and funders. Now, organizations increasingly recognize that mission delivery requires a more holistic approach, since the complex problems nonprofits deal with cut across sectors and transcend geographic boundaries... Complex problems require the input and cooperation of numerous stakeholders with multiple points of view to create solutions (Castillo, 2020, para 5).

Diversify Funding

Because each funder has distinct requirements, funding often drives programming, instead of the other way around. Government funding, while incredibly valuable, is often quite “siloe,” in the sense that there are separate funding pots for separate issues. This division may drive our perception that those issues are, in fact, distinct from each other. When sexual assault programs work with other entities and are able to access nontraditional funding sources, this can allow us to do more innovative work and to reach out to previously unserved or underserved populations.



Discover Effective Ways to Evaluate Our Work

Maintaining sustainable services means being able to demonstrate the effectiveness of what we do. As we embark upon transformative efforts, we must incorporate feedback and evaluation throughout the change process. Once we have outlined our goals and objectives, how do we know whether we have met them? How do we include the relevant stakeholders in our evaluation processes? What methods of evaluation do we deem as valid – for example, what is the value we place on qualitative measures such as narratives, along with quantitative forms of evaluation? Through conversations with partners, we may discover new resources and methods to assess community needs and to evaluate how well we are meeting those needs.

Be Proactive in Seeking Opportunities for Innovative and Inclusive Work

As we think about alternative ways to reach survivors and address sexual violence, we may be able to break the mold of traditional work and connect with those who have not historically had a seat at the table. Castillo (2020) says that connecting with those outside of the formal hierarchy “...ensures those with the least power have a meaningful voice and equitable opportunities to advance their interests.” Since we know that those with the least power are often the most vulnerable to sexual violence, our mission drives us to find new ways to work in our communities.

Engage with Diverse Stakeholders

It can become comfortable to work within established partnerships rather than challenging ourselves to move outside our comfort zones. As sexual assault programs work diligently in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion, we must begin to have conversations that reveal where we have fallen short in the past with community members and organizations that may see things very differently. Answering questions about our goals and methods with an open mind and being willing to seek diverse perspectives, even when we are challenged, is a necessary part of our continued growth as a field.

Maintain Our Focus

Even as we work enthusiastically on joint projects, sexual assault programs find a way to continue to prioritize the need to confront sexual violence and respond with appropriate services. In joining with those working on related concerns, such as housing needs, we are able to help community partners understand how sexual violence is connected to the issue under consideration, and how sexual assault services might be integrated into any proposed solutions.



WHAT TYPE OF WORKING RELATIONSHIP SUITS YOUR AGENCY'S PURPOSE?

What Type of Working Relationship Suits Your Agency's Purpose?

Partnerships vs. Collaborations

We often speak of “collaborating” with other organizations and service providers, but sometimes we are describing partnerships rather than a true collaboration. In a partnership, the more traditional way of working together, agencies cooperate, but each organization retains its own way of doing things. In a partnership, organizations may formalize a working relationship in order to provide more seamless services or to marshal their resources. In a collaboration, which is often a more long-lasting relationship, organizations may change their structure or how they function as a result of the relationship.

The Spectrum of Working Relationships

Michael Winer and Karen Ray (1994) have developed what they call the “3C Model” – cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. They describe this as “a spectrum of organizational effort that increases in intensity. The first two options, cooperation and coordination, would fall under the heading of “partnerships.” The last, collaboration, is quite different.

Cooperation

When organizations join for a short time in an informal way to share information, resources, and ideas, this would be considered cooperation. For example, a sexual assault program might participate in an annual health fair in the community sponsored by a local hospital or clinic.



Coordination

Coordination involves a more formal relationship that requires more commitment and results in a shared project or program. For example, a sexual assault program may have an agreement with law enforcement that they will make referrals in sexual assault cases or the program may have a Memorandum of Understanding with a hospital that specifies the Emergency Department will call them to provide support during forensic examinations.

Collaboration

When organizations truly collaborate, they develop a durable relationship that involves shared decision-making and common, mutually agreed upon goals where:

... partners pool or jointly secure resources and share the results and rewards of their joint efforts. Often, objectives and outcomes are specifically defined and measured. Compared to cooperation and coordination, collaboration is less transactional and more transformational...Partners are focused on change beyond their organizational boundaries, in the hope that by collaborating they can create greater social and systems change than would be possible by any individual organization working alone (Samali, Laidler-Kylander, Simoin, & Zohdy, 2016, para 10).

An example of this would be a sexual assault program and a gang outreach agency working together on reducing community violence. In a collaboration that did just that, the organizations blended their expertise to generate new strategies and interventions that were new to each type of work. This was a transformational effort. Sexual assault and domestic violence advocates became more knowledgeable and skilled in working with youth and their families, and the gang agency was able to spread information about gender-based violence to populations that were not accessible to the sexual and domestic violence organization.

Acknowledging Power Dynamics

As you begin to develop partnerships or collaborations, it is critical to consider how power dynamics may play out in these relationships. How is power shared? Is it balanced? Is there a collective approach to power? Is power more heavily weighted toward the organizations that have more money or resources? How does this align with your mission and goals? While the ideal may be to have consensus-based power within a working relationship, this may not be practical for a variety of reasons. For example, if one organization is the lead on a grant-funded project, they may have to serve in a monitor role, which increases their power.

As you move through the “3Cs” of working relationships, you can see that power may change depending on the type of relationship. Regardless of the level of power each partner wields in the relationship, all partners should intentionally focus on internalizing and displaying respect for what each participant brings to the work. In other words, having greater or lesser responsibility should not diminish the value and voices of collaboration parties and their commensurate contributions to the work.

Matching the Relationship to Your Goals

Your organization may have a variety of different relationships for different purposes.



ACTIVITY

List three working relationships your organization has with other entities. Decide which type of relationship (partnership or collaboration) each represents, and where the relationship falls on the spectrum of cooperation, coordination, and collaboration.

RELATIONSHIP:

Partnership or cooperation? _____

Where is it on the spectrum? _____

RELATIONSHIP:

Partnership or coordination? _____

Where is it on the spectrum? _____

RELATIONSHIP:

Partnership or collaboration? _____

Where is it on the spectrum? _____



WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

Do you want to increase your organizational effectiveness and efficiency? For example, do you want to coordinate services to reduce barriers for survivors?

What is your goal? _____

Who are the ideal community partners? _____

How formal do you want this relationship to be? Do you need a Memorandum of Understanding, are you seeking a grant together, or do you simply need a series of meetings? _____

How will you measure effectiveness? _____

*Are you seeking to solve a specific social problem with key partners?
For example, are you focused on housing?*

How can you “think outside the box” about who should be invited to the table? _____

Can you work together to clarify the overarching goal of this working relationship, and how can this be broken down into realistic, time-bound objectives? _____

What is each partner willing to bring to this project? _____

How will decision-making be shared? _____

How will you measure effectiveness? _____

What sustainability steps will you take? _____

*Do you want to drive broader social or systems change?
For example, do you want to tackle rape culture?*

Are you willing to engage in a long-term, challenging collaborative process? _____

Are you prepared to invest substantial time up front to work on defining the nature and scope of this change? _____

What will help you to be as inclusive as possible when gathering participants? _____

Are you considering all the levels of change necessary to achieve your goals? _____

Can you incorporate outcome evaluation and sustainability measures from the beginning? _____

Have you considered working with a local community college or university for this portion of your collaboration? _____



SPECIFIC GOALS OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

Specific Goals of Community Partnerships and Collaborations

Expand Access to Survivors: A Double-Pronged Approach

As we move beyond working with traditional populations and service partners (while still maintaining those relationships that are of value to survivors and the community), we will want to identify entities with constituents who benefit from sexual assault interventions, but have not had prior access to these resources. A good example of this would be the work that sexual assault programs do in detention facilities and prisons with incarcerated survivors via PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) programs, while simultaneously working with activists creating innovative approaches and policies to reform the system that incarcerates and detains people.

This approach advances our social justice goals and brings us closer to eliminating (or at least alleviating) some of the root causes of sexual violence, while at the same time connecting more directly to survivors who are less likely to access our services. Sexual violence occurs in context; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021) outline risk and protective factors at the individual, community, and societal level. When we develop collaborative relationships with people and organizations that address these factors such as poverty, bias in the criminal legal system, and community violence, we strengthen the safety net and reduce risks for sexual violence. This connects directly to our efforts to prevent sexual violence.

Returning to the PREA example, this double-pronged approach to our work allows us to have an impact at the grassroots level and at the institutional level. But before we enter into formal collaborations, many times we have to build relationships, develop trust, and demonstrate how our work can be enormously beneficial to the work in other sectors. Sometimes this will mean “showing up” and providing support for other sector efforts in ways that may not immediately appear to be connected to what traditional sexual assault work looks like. But it is all related and necessary for solidarity that leads to long-term change.

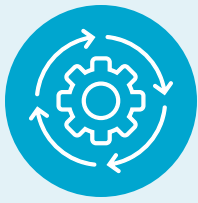


Here are some more examples of this type of double-pronged work:

- Working with people who are experiencing housing instability while also working with those who are seeking innovative solutions to homelessness or trying to head off homelessness. We know that living without permanent housing is a risk factor for sexual violence.
- Reaching out to people in work situations at high risk for abuse, such as farmworkers or service workers, while also partnering or collaborating with activist organizations that support safer working conditions and economic reform.
- Offering robust legal advocacy to survivors who choose to engage with the criminal legal system while also connecting with activists who are working to develop alternatives to incarceration and criminalization.
- Providing on-site services in places that survivors regularly access, such as health clinics, schools, and community services. This reaches people who may not have time off or may face transportation barriers. It also may provide a margin of safety for those experiencing intimate partner sexual violence or sexual abuse in the home, because they can access sexual assault advocacy services as they go about their regular routine.

One program saw the need to provide coordinated services that include reentry support:

“Just as each person needs help to achieve success, so do agencies. The Stand Up Placer approach to collaborations is to focus on what we do best – advocacy – and to utilize the many government and nonprofit agencies in our community to work together as a team to provide additional help to survivors. We have been fortunate to have met and worked with amazing people in our community, who do passionate and effective social service work for the people of Placer County. We have been able to forge effective partnerships with PREP (Placer County Re-entry Program), Placer County Sheriff, Placer County Probation and Parole, Adult System of Care, Progress House, Cirby Hills and AMI Housing, among others. These relationships and collaborations are crucial to the success of each client, as they receive ongoing advocacy and support from each agency in a comprehensive, well-organized and structured format.” (Omar Johnson, Detention Advocacy Coordinator, Stand Up Placer)



ACTIVITY

Brainstorm a double-prong approach that would be relevant to your community and feasible for your organization to sustain long term.

Who are the survivors you are trying to reach? _____

What kind of impact are you wanting to see? _____

What are the systemic issues that affect those survivors? _____

Who are the activists and reformers in your community who are addressing those issues? _____

Where have you wanted to expand and for whatever reason have not been able to in the past? _____

After thinking this through, narrow your focus to avoid feeling overwhelmed, overextended, or any sense of being taken off mission. Refine your analysis by having conversations with representatives of those areas you think are in alignment with your purpose to more effectively determine the road to collaboration where you might be able to impact both survivors and the sector/system they occupy.

Part of how we show up for the community is helping shelter staff know what to do when a disclosure happens, how to develop procedures and a trauma-informed process.

We're just really trying to create these inroads to let people know we are here. Especially people who are often disrespected by law enforcement and the police like drug users, sex workers, and people who live outside. Because of that, we find ourselves sometimes having to operate outside of the conventional framework. (Bay Area Sexual Assault Crisis Counselor)

See the Big Picture More Clearly

Perhaps it seems daunting to consider tackling big social problems on the way to creating safer, more just communities with lower levels of sexual violence and better responses to survivors. That is actually a great argument for community collaborations. It makes sense for sexual assault programs to share this work, which touches on so many aspects of community life.

"It's been good to see people let go of what isn't helpful and work to build things that are, and watch people place their trust in different, less conventional, places. We can watch people say "I did this. I set this up for myself." It's so refreshing to be working with grassroots organizers outside of the system when we can shed everything that wasn't serving us."" (Bay Area Sexual Assault Crisis Counselor)

In moving beyond individual interventions and to include work on systemic issues, we may be entering the territory of transformative change. In his article "What is Transformational Change," Robert Gass (2010) describes it as:

- Holistic
- Involves breakthroughs in paradigms, beliefs, and behavior
- Must create a change process that includes the target values and mirrors what it seeks to create
- Accentuates the positive
- Balances control with letting go – participants must be humble, willing to share power, and open to change
- Relies on collaboration
- Engages the heart
- Happens at all levels – individual, organizational, coalitions and networks, social change movements, and society

What we are talking about here is on the collaboration end of the working relationship spectrum. True collaboration is difficult.

Chavis (Community Science, 2021, para 2-3) states that

The basic notion that collaborative efforts addressing social issues should be one big “group hug” needs to be challenged. That is not the experience of coalitions and other community collaborations, nor necessarily the best way to approach sustainable progressive change...Conflict transformation is the process whereby the resolution of a conflict builds the overall capacity of the coalition and actually makes it stronger.

In other words, true collaborative work is not for the faint of heart, although this effort often yields great rewards and can help us share the work to address sexual violence. Sexual assault programs that choose this path will need to be brave and resilient. Fortunately, that's who we are!

Increase Resources

Sexual assault programs are always looking for ways to increase resources to serve survivors and their communities. Partnerships and collaborations offer the possibility of building resources in the following ways:

Joint Grant-Seeking

It has become very common in the grant making world to require some sort of partnership with other organizations. For example, a typical Office on Violence Against Women grant solicitation has a section entitled “Required Partnerships.” It is nearly always helpful to be able to demonstrate that your program has strong working relationships with other proposed partners.

Direct Funding from Other Agencies

Other agencies or governmental entities may have the resources to fund your work. For example, an institution of higher education may pay the salary for an advocate who is employed by the sexual assault program or may pay for administrative support and office space on campus.

Enhanced Knowledge of Possible Funding Sources

Partner organizations can be on the lookout for funding opportunities that will benefit the community and include your program. They may have existing connections in the business community, knowledge of grant sources, or other information and connections that will benefit your program.

More Hands on Deck

*“Partnerships are about getting rid of our savior complex and sharing the work.”
(Bay Area Sexual Assault Crisis Counselor)*

As we keep emphasizing, sexual assault programs neither can nor should have to shoulder the entire responsibility for addressing sexual violence in their communities. You may have a greater impact on a particular population by working through service providers and activists who are already connected to that community. Another organization may already have a pipeline to local political powerhouses and may be better positioned to get their attention.

Warmer Referrals

As you get to know community partners through your work together, your program’s knowledge about their services and personnel will grow, and vice versa. This translates into better “warm referrals” for survivors, because you will know the capabilities and limits of various resources, and you’ll have a real person to call when you need information. This helps you provide trauma-informed services because it lessens the burden on the survivor to coordinate everyone in their support system.

Sharing Others’ Resources

You may be able to use office space, supplies, meeting rooms, or administrative support from your partners. They may have technology resources that your agency lacks.

Greater Community Impact

When awareness efforts come from multiple organizations and sectors, they will reach more people and may have a greater impact. Diverse organizations can amplify each other’s voices.





ACTION STEPS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Action Steps for Community Involvement

Convene Internal Discussions

Before beginning any work with partners, you will want to have internal discussions within your agency. Clarify your own goals, but be aware they may change, either as a result of gaining more information, because of obstacles, or because of input from your partners. Consider the following concerns:

- What is the purpose of developing this partnership or collaboration? (Some examples might be: to increase the visibility of your services; to change culture within other sectors; to address significant gaps in services, particularly for underserved communities; or to build sustainable funding resources.)
- Do you have values that align with the prospective partner? If so, what are they? Are there any values that are mis-matched?
- What kind of investment or commitment is your agency willing to make? What do you expect from your partners?
- What are the current partnerships you may be able to enhance or build upon?
- Have you thought “outside the box” about nontraditional partners to approach?
- What has worked for your organization in the past with partnerships, and what has been problematic?
- Are you prepared to take input from others, even if it challenges the way you do things or your perception of your own services?
- Have you created a clear process and protocol about which individuals at your organization can explore and commit to partnerships, and have you made sure that every single staff member knows that process?
- What other questions or issues should you discuss before proceeding?
- What form of partnership or collaboration best suits the goals you are pursuing?



Pay Attention to Timing

Planning has a crucial time element.

- Be aware and think about whether you may get too far ahead in your planning before bringing on partners. While you want to have enough discussion that your agency is unified, you don't want to present such a completely wrapped and tied-up package that your partners feel excluded from goal-setting and brainstorming.
- This may seem paradoxical, but while you generally want to have a deliberate, intentional planning process, you also want to be ready to jump into projects in unconventional ways. You may be approached by others on short notice, or you may become aware of a great opportunity at the eleventh hour. If you have already had some internal discussions about your desire and capacity for partnerships, and you maintain excellent data about issues of concern, you will be better prepared to take advantage of these opportunities when they match your agency's and community's needs.
- If other organizations want you to work with them, check where they are in their own planning process. They may have made assumptions about the nature of your work that are not accurate or may have overestimated your resources. You may need to either decline or to ask them to backtrack and work with you on redefining those expectations.

Set Your Framework

An important starting point is to think about the issues that intersect with sexual violence and how you can engage with people who are doing the work to address those issues. The VALOR 2021 SAAM Toolkit provides a clear guide to the connections between the anti-sexual violence movement and various other social justice issues. The summaries below are drawn from the SAAM Toolkit to demonstrate how these issues overlap with our concerns about preventing and addressing sexual violence. We strongly recommend that you read the more extensive descriptions of the issues in the Toolkit, which also contains action items for enhancing your agency's capacity and community awareness as well as specific suggestions on increasing partnerships and collaborations working in each of these realms.

- **LGBTQ+ EQUALITY**
 - » Heterosexism dehumanizes LGBTQ+ persons and condones homophobia and transphobia.
 - » It perpetuates a hostile environment that increases opportunities for sexual abuse and violence against LGBTQ+ persons.
- **RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE**
 - » In the US, racism springs from European expansion, white settler colonialism, domination, subjugation, and exploitation of non-white people, facilitated by dehumanization and denial of human rights.
 - » Denial of human rights of non-white people in the Americas, was and continues to be embedded in societal structures (legal, economic, political, etc.), and enforced through violence.

- » Dehumanization explicitly characterized people of color as hyper-violent, sexually deviant, dangerous, insatiable, etc., which created the conditions for sexual violence and abuse, overcriminalization, and extrajudicial killings of people of color.
- **IMMIGRANT JUSTICE**
 - » The discrimination, xenophobia, oppression and hate violence experienced by immigrant communities originate from white supremacy.
 - » Immigrant survivors fear reporting or seeking help due to threats of immigration and law enforcement, especially if they are undocumented.
 - » Oppressive policies and punitive practices imposed on non-white immigrant groups are often compounded with racism, sexism, and xenophobia.
- **ALTERNATIVES TO CRIMINALIZATION**
 - » Relying on the state to intervene or depend on the criminal justice system for justice has often failed to protect the rights of those affected by sexual violence, nor is it a deterrent from sexual violence.
 - » Prisons, jails, youth and immigration detention facilities are systems of power and social control that perpetuate sexual violence and violate the rights of prisoners on multiple levels.
 - » People from communities of color are at a heightened risk of being criminalized and detained than their white counterparts, which is fueled by racism, sexism, xenophobia, ableism etc.
 - » Criminalization will not end sexual violence because detaining and caging people in prisons does not tackle the deeply embedded root causes resulting in sexual violence.
 - » Promoting incarceration perpetuates an endless cycle of sexual violence and oppression.
- **HEALTH EQUITY AND WELLNESS**
 - » Health inequities create conditions that allow sexual violence to occur and create barriers to seeking support in the aftermath of violence and trauma.
 - » Using a health equity framework can prevent sexual violence by addressing root causes of violence and inequity, expanding partnerships, and addressing systems that exacerbate inequities.
 - » Health equity challenges old paradigms of public health with a history of oppression to instead use anti-oppression frameworks and organizing to create conditions where everyone can survive, thrive, and live without violence.
- **DISABILITY JUSTICE**
 - » Ableism constructs the world for the benefit of able bodied people; not considering the needs of persons with disabilities to access the world around them, causes marginalization, and further reduces their ability to be full participants in society.
 - » Prejudice, stereotyping, and ignorance lead to lack of access and opportunities for people with disabilities including denial of employment, education, housing, and emotional/social well being.

- » Dehumanization of people with disabilities happens when the ableist world assumes this population to be without agency, including that of sexual health, well being, and desire. This creates the conditions for increased risk of sexual violence among this population.
- **ECONOMIC JUSTICE**
 - » Money and wealth is tied to power and various forms of oppression; the correlation between wealth and quality of life is undeniable as those with less access to capital are at greater risk for negative health outcomes.
 - » Vulnerable communities facing poverty and economic hardships whose ability to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves and their families experience sexual violence are compounded with the layering of burdens that impact basic needs.
 - » As sexual violence is a power-based issue, it is inextricably linked with the inherent power associated with economic status and access to survival resources.

Other sectors working within social justice movements that intersect with sexual violence include those engaged with environmental, labor, homeless, food insecurity, poverty, reproductive, faith and human rights movements, just to name a few. Consider reaching out to local programs and organizations to initiate conversations on how to approach a reciprocal relationship between their work and that of the sexual assault field.

Connect with Potential Partners

In this Community Blueprint, we are focusing on the opportunity that sexual assault programs have to create working relationships with nontraditional organizations and activists. We are not suggesting that you turn away from the system partners with whom you traditionally work, such as hospitals, especially if your existing relationships serve the survivors with whom you work. But if, for example, your goal is to provide more comprehensive support to survivors whose sexual trauma affects their ability to engage with health care, you might reach out to doulas and educators who provide childbirth support, nurse-midwives in private practice, nutritionists, health equity activism groups, and patient advocacy organizations.

EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD:

- *We partner with youth-serving organizations and groups who share our values.*
- *We communicate regularly with the local Promotores chapter to look for opportunities for collaboration.*
- *We have a really close relationship with Pride Center.*
- *We co-sponsored a Virtual Queer Prom.*
- *We have a partnership with the Teen Wellness Program at a local nonprofit. They do comprehensive sex education and prevention work.*

- *We partner with a grassroots social group serving the Queer community that is involved in anti-racism and transformative justice.*
- *We connect regularly with the local BLMCA group to check in about opportunities for partnership or assistance.*
- *We work with a grassroots media project.*
- *We partner with several local businesses, reaching out to some and finding others through information from community volunteers who connect us to the businesses they know and regularly patronize.*

How do you find grassroots entities in your community? Many of them are affiliated with regional or national networks. Review the “Sectors” section of this document for a listing of organizations that may be able to help you identify who is working on those issues in your area. Questions to help you decide include:

- What organizations share similar missions, visions, and values?
- What programs promote the kind of work you would like for your organization to achieve?
- What problems are you and your potential partners both working to overcome?
- What goals might you have in common?

As an example, your agency and youth organizers with an interest in social justice both want to create increased safety for youth in your community. Develop a common vision by familiarizing yourself with shared concerns such as those covered by the VALOR 2021 SAAM Toolkit. Strategize about mobilizing people to create a particular type of change. Think big, and then bring your goals closer to what is possible. Can you keep every young person safe all the time? Of course not. But working together, you and your partners may create innovative programs and strategies that enhance the safety net for youth in your community, addressing the ultimate goal of reducing sexual violence by offering more options for safe activities and greater access to peer support, for example.

*“Our sexual assault program created partnerships that included a local tobacco cessation team, the Unitarian Universalist Church, and the local food bank.”
(Laura Sunday, Executive Director at Center for a Nonviolent Community)*

“I identified the need for a partnership when the city council attempted to pass an ordinance criminalizing homelessness. This ordinance makes it so our unhoused neighbors have to pack up and move every single day and cannot camp past certain hours. There is a map that shows where camping is legal, and it’s nowhere near services. This ordinance will make it increasingly difficult to connect with unhoused survivors as it displaces them further from services. I wanted to stay connected to vulnerable community members who may not be able to access us for support now that they have to keep packing up and moving further and further away or who may not trust us because we are an “institution,” so I reached out to the Harm Reduction Coalition because we share a commitment to community safety and public health.” (Nic Laflin, DV and Youth Advocate)

Think through what kind of formalized relationship you are seeking, if any. Do you want to become partners in applying for a grant? Do you hope to develop one or more Memoranda of Understanding or other interagency agreements to specify each party's commitment? There is a value in having agreements in writing so that working relationships can continue even if there are personnel changes at one or both organizations.

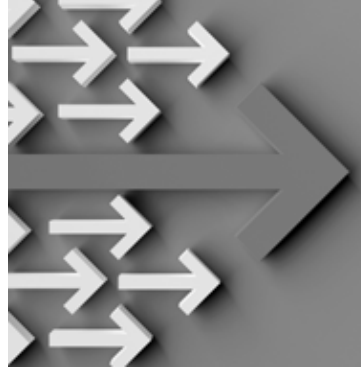
It is okay if you do not yet know precisely what framework will suit your purposes. Just think through your questions and considerations so you can work this out with your partners.

Clarify who in your agency has the authority to form working relationships and make commitments on the part of the agency. Those decision-makers should be heavily involved in the initial negotiations with potential partners, so that you avoid the scenario in which a staff person enthusiastically suggests a course of action, only to discover that the agency is unable or unwilling to follow up.

Do Your Homework and Check Your Own Biases

The article *20 Ways Majority-White Nonprofits Can Build Authentic Partnerships with Organizations Led by Communities of Color* (listed under "Sectors – Community Organizing" below) has some practical suggestions for working with grassroots organizations. While it is aimed at majority-white organizations, many of the points it makes will apply to any working relationship in which one organization holds more power or has more resources. The authors emphasize examining our own biases and assumptions, making yourself visible in the community on an ongoing basis (not just when you are wanting to start working together), providing resources and equitable funding, and several other strategies to create "strong, authentic partnerships."

Learn all you can about the issues you are taking on, the population or community you are targeting, the potential partners in the community, and the history of any interactions with your agency. If you can learn some of the lingo of the other sector, you will establish more credibility. Approach potential partners with humility; you are going into "other people's homes" when you work outside of your specific field. Learn how your partner organizations operate and be respectful. Of course, it is vital not to tokenize people. Don't ask people to participate just to ask them. If they are at the table, they deserve full respect and inclusion. For example, be prepared to defer to their expertise if they represent a particular population whose needs you are discussing. Remember that listening is your superpower.



Create a Compelling Invitation

You have identified the issue or issues you would like to address and one or more potential community partners. How do you invite them to the table?

Typically, entry-level staff are out in the community most often, interacting with various groups. They will need explicit guidance so they can establish the foundation for a positive working relationship.

On a very practical level, for example, how does a sexual assault program staff member invite partners to participate with your agency? Here are some tips.

- If you are going to send an email, make sure you are addressing the appropriate person in the agency and make sure you have their name right.
- Consider inviting someone for coffee or another informal meeting to develop your relationship.
- Focus on relationship-building – don't rush into your "ask."
- Take a mutual aid approach – "what can we do to help?"

"You don't need to start big! Start with coffee dates (virtual or in-person) and treat other orgs/groups/people as the experts they are. Say that you want to talk about how your program or agency can better meet the needs of the community and you're interested in their honest opinion and feedback. Valuable partnerships need to start with relationships. Schedule in one a week or one a month to have that connection and when things come up, lean on them. It will naturally grow over time." (RISE, San Luis Obispo)

If you are the person establishing the relationship, make sure you know what your authority is to enter into any agreements. Think about when you may need to hand the project off to someone higher in your organization. It is important that sexual assault agencies don't let the person who makes initial contact get cut out of subsequent conversations, because so much of developing a good working relationship depends on building trust, especially with organizations representing those who have good historical reason to distrust.

Early on in the process, you will want to find out what is feasible. What resources does your agency have to invest in this partnership or collaboration? Do you have a grant writer available, and if so, can you consult with that person? Don't promise anything to a potential partner until you are sure that your agency can and will deliver.

Begin with a Series of Conversations

Once you have made initial contact, you will need to be persuasive with potential community partners and collaborators as to 1) why they should take up the sexual assault issue, and 2) why they should make any effort to share resources with your sexual assault agency. This will most likely take the form of discussing the connections and intersections between the issues they care about and those you address, so they can see why it is necessary to collaborate. For example, the majority of unsheltered youth have been sexually abused in their homes. This risk factor can lead to collaboration with organizations focused on housing and also those who seek to increase youth safety.

“Identify projects that your agency can unite on for a common goal. Get people involved in drawing the map and identifying assets. Then ask who might know one of the assets who could make a personal introduction.” (Laura Sunday, Executive Director at Center for a Nonviolent Community)

Be patient and allow sufficient time for the process of building working relationships. It will indeed take a series of conversations to hammer out your mutual goals, what each organization brings to the table, and how you want to proceed together.

Plan Evaluation Strategies and Use Assessment Tools as Appropriate

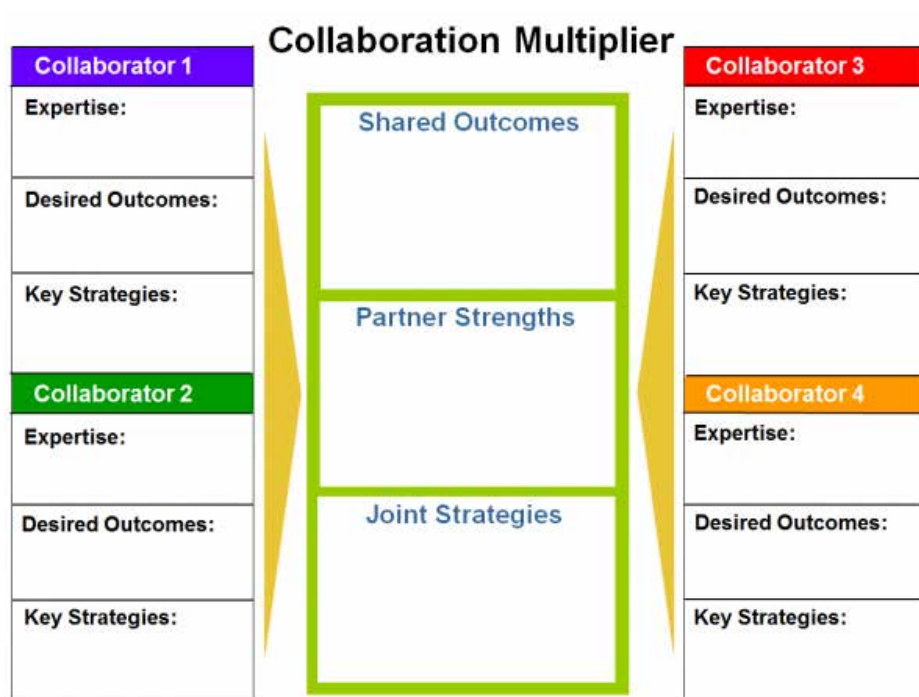
It can be challenging to assess community needs and evaluate your efforts in community outreach. You do want to know whether your action steps are really what the community wants and needs, and you will also want to determine whether your work is effective. One of the values of developing collaborations and partnerships is that your agency can participate in projects that promote your values and goals, even if they don't fit neatly into existing funding structures. To make that work sustainable, you will want to demonstrate that it is needed and effective. That's where assessment and evaluation enter the picture. The assessment process is how you gather data to identify problems you want to tackle and to see how different groups and organizations within the community view common problems. The evaluation process is the way in which you determine whether your partnership or collaboration is achieving the objectives it set out to address.

“Keep things in perspective. Building community partnerships is the work of community organizing. Even just being on people's radar is building a partnership, because you are laying that foundation for when it comes time to plan events or work together. Reaching the goal of creating a community where violence is not the norm is a slow and steady process.” (RISE, San Luis Obispo)

While you don't want to rush the process of working with your partners to determine desired outcomes, it is important to figure that out relatively early in the process so you know where to focus your resources. You can always revisit and revise those outcomes periodically. By incorporating evaluation and sustainability measures at the outset, you can ensure that they will not be overlooked or under-resourced.

“We did an assessment of our community to identify youth serving organizations in nontraditional settings. We looked for organizations who served marginalized populations. The Food Bank serves the most vulnerable in our community. There are 3 schools that are identified as having children from families living in extreme poverty; we looked to see what groups support the schools (such as local businesses, after school programs, and non-school faith-based mentoring programs).”
(Laura Sunday, Executive Director at Center for a Nonviolent Community)

The Prevention Institute (www.preventioninstitute.org) has a number of assessment and evaluation tools that are free to download and use. Their Collaboration Multiplier “guides organizations through a collaborative discussion to identify activities that accomplish a common goal, delineate each partner’s perspective and potential contributions, and leverage expertise and resources.” The website contains information on how to use this tool (see resource list), which can be helpful in various stages of the collaborative process.



There are many other useful assessment and evaluation resources on the Prevention Institute’s website, including THRIVE: Tool for Health & Resilience in Vulnerable Environments (see “Assessment” under Resources). THRIVE is notable because it includes structural factors such as racism that underlie community wellbeing. It may be particularly helpful in identifying community factors such as how people know, trust and support each other that can connect a variety of different causes. For example, research shows that this type of support is “associated with higher rates of homicide, suicide, and alcohol and drug abuse.” Of course, it also underlies the type of support that survivors receive and the factors that help survivors connect to and trust advocacy services. Highlighting this community factor may help you to make a case to organizations that champion violence and substance abuse and misuse prevention, youth wellbeing, health equity, suicide prevention, racial justice, and more. The THRIVE Community Assessment Worksheet (see “Assessment” under Resources) offers a simple way to see if there is consensus about community needs.



An example of how assessment and evaluation was incorporated into a community project to improve sexual assault services may be helpful. A group in Canada identified a problem: “after a recent sexual assault, clients in rural and remote communities do not typically receive comprehensive services” (Carter-Snell, Jkubec, & Hagen, 2020). A project to address this service gap was initiated by sexual assault agencies and they received funding to conduct a two-year project. They began with community development and participatory processes, including focus groups of stakeholders who participated in semi-structured interviews about strengths in the community, challenges or limitations, and opportunities for change. The focus groups met before the project and then again two months after the interventions to ask about the impact of the program and next steps. In addition, electronic before-and-after surveys were sent to community leaders and service providers.

The focus groups were used to “brainstorm problems and solutions, and to obtain a baseline of community perceptions.” Based on the focus groups and the surveys, the project coordinator facilitated team building and working relationships among institutional and community-based organizations. Educational content was presented in a manner consistent with the preferences of the community. While the researchers found that post-education surveys were often not returned, the repeated focus groups provided information on what changes had worked, what challenges remained, and what steps stakeholders wished to take in the future. A major finding was that the project strengthened working relationships within the community and helped to fill some of the gaps in services. The researchers acknowledged that a major limitation of the study was the lack of input from survivors, which certainly should be included in evaluation of the effectiveness of changes made through community partnerships.

This project shows that assessment and evaluation does not have to be overly complex and can yield important information that guides innovative services. The researchers in this case were affiliated with a nursing and midwifery program at a university.

This does not mean that every community project needs to have a formal research project attached. Think more holistically and comprehensively. For example, narrative is an important tool, and may be a more culturally relevant way to explore the value of your community work. Encourage partners to talk to participants and record their words about community needs and changes that are being made as a result of your efforts. Written statements and quotes from conversations are a great way to liven up reports and show a vital picture of progress to stakeholders. With the permission of those who make these statements, you can include excerpts in presentations, requests for funding, and progress reports.

If you want a more formal program evaluation but are concerned about finding a way to do this, consider partnering with a college or university for program evaluation. If you go this route, you will need to be clear about what you are requesting and set up a clear written agreement with a timeline so there is no misunderstanding about roles and outcomes.

The Kansas University Community Tool Box has an excellent section on Community-Based Participatory Evaluation (<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/model-for-community-change-and-improvement/participatory-evaluation/main>). They describe the process this way:

When most people think of evaluation, they think of something that happens at the end of a project - that looks at the project after it's over and decides whether it was any good or not. Evaluation actually needs to be an integral part of any project from the beginning. Participatory evaluation involves all the stakeholders in a project - those directly affected by it or by carrying it out - in contributing to the understanding of it, and in applying that understanding to the improvement of the work.

Participatory evaluation, as we shall see, isn't simply a matter of asking stakeholders to take part. Involving everyone affected changes the whole nature of a project from something done for a group of people or a community to a partnership between the beneficiaries and the project implementers. Rather than powerless people who are acted on, beneficiaries become the copilots of a project, making sure that their real needs and those of the community are recognized and addressed. Professional evaluators, project staff, project beneficiaries or participants, and other community members all become colleagues in an effort to improve the community's quality of life.

The Community Tool Box article explains in detail how to conduct this type of evaluation, including practical tools and a handy PowerPoint presentation for explaining the process to others.

Cross Train

Cross-training is a valuable and enjoyable way to build your working relationships. Because community projects involve organizations with different cultures and lingo, it is useful to start with some collaborative training so everyone is on the same page. Here are some tips for that initial training:

- Include practical issues about how to work in each other's space.
- Set a tone of mutual respect and humility.
- Be alert to how other service providers describe their own services and clientele and respect their framing.
- Value the contributions of all the collaborative partners – it is the coming together that will make the work more comprehensive and solid.

Continued cross-training is especially effective in building common ground and a shared understanding of issues. The more you understand about how your partners work, the better you will know where you can integrate your work into their work and the other way around. As you learn the terms and concepts that apply to other organizations, you can show your understanding by incorporating them into your communication. For example, do your partner organizations call those they serve clients, consumers, patients, victims, survivors, participants, or some other term? If you use your own terminology (for example, "clients") you may unwittingly be transgressing the norms of your partner organization –

for example, a grassroots agency that does not want to create a hierarchical relationship with those it serves. We need to be able to translate terms and concepts across groups and disciplines and use them interchangeably as necessary.

"The most innovative thing we've done is cross-training with the Harm Reduction Coalition, which is a community-based organization that provides clean needles/syringes and other harm reduction supplies. They are front-line public health care workers who have continued to provide first aid and hot food to primarily unhoused community members. I think making sure every level of our nonprofit has a harm reduction lens will help folks feel safer and more supported in seeking support."
(Nic Laflin, DV and Youth Advocate)

Another training strategy that can work both ways between your program and other organizations is to create training modules or work to enhance each other's training programs with multidisciplinary information. For example, you could help infuse anti-sexual assault language and information into partners' existing training programs or provide them with a module they can use. You might invite a housing activist to your in-house staff training series to describe community responses to homelessness and the real-life situations that survivors face when they live on the streets. Archived webinars are a great way to ensure that your training efforts can be widely utilized and will be sustainable.

Develop Materials Together

Together, you and your community partners can develop innovative resource and outreach materials that reflect your shared expertise. For example, in Washington State, the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Disability Rights Washington, and the Washington State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program formed an Alliance to End Sexual Violence in Long-Term Care. They produced a resource titled [*Understanding Sexual Rights and Sexual Assault in Resident Advocacy*](#) that explained the various types of advocates in the fields of long-term care, disability rights, and sexual assault. The guide went on to describe the various types of long-term facilities and who lives in them, the nature of sexual assault against residence, and system responses to abuse. Then it provided practical strategies for responding appropriately and building local partnerships to address this intersection of issues. This guide has proven helpful to advocates in all three fields.

You might develop materials to train workers or you may focus on creating helpful documents for survivors and community members. Working in partnership, you can infuse these materials with a rich array of information and resources. You may be able to provide appropriate material that each organization can share on its website or contribute to each other's social media accounts. Do develop a communications plan that includes social media to ensure that you are coordinating the release of information. This should include a plan for messaging, a process for agreement before messages are sent out, and the identity of the spokespeople for your joint ventures.

Consider Communities of Practice

The ideas in this section come from Creating Communities of Practice (www.communityofpractice.ca), a website developed by the Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium (ERLC) in Canada. While they are aimed at educators, the concepts work well for any group of professionals who want to share their learning process.

A community of practice is “a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a topic and who come together to fulfill both individual and group needs.” They share best practices and seek to advance knowledge for their fields by regularly interacting and working together.

The ERLC identifies several types of communities of practice (examples added):

- **Helping Communities** provide a forum for community members to help each other with everyday work needs. Example: A local resource community of practice that shares information about practical supports such as food, emergency housing, and immediate financial assistance.
- **Best Practice Communities** develop and disseminate best practices, guidelines, and strategies for their members’ use. Example: A group works together to develop a set of best practice strategies for working with people who have been trafficked or with trans people. Include representative voices from the community. Best practices include both evidence-based and community-based strategies.
- **Knowledge Stewarding Communities** organize, manage, and steward a body of knowledge from which community members can draw. Example: Develop a body of knowledge about trauma-informed services or about community collaborations for social justice.
- **Innovation Communities** create breakthrough ideas, new knowledge, and new practices. Example: Create a new model for addressing the challenges survivors may face in going through pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum. Work with sexual assault advocates, survivors, doulas, childbirth educators, nurse-midwives, and gynecologists to develop new ways of supporting people going through this phase of life.

If you are interested in pursuing a community of practice, the ERLC website offers practical steps for getting started, ways to encourage participation, how to build knowledge together, methods for sharing results, and a sample planning template.

Keep Sustainability in Mind Throughout

As you work with your community partners, you will come up with some great ideas and projects. The last thing you want is for all your hard work to evaporate at the end of a grant or with the departure of key individuals from their positions. Paying attention to sustainability right from the beginning will help ensure that your work will survive. The chart below (Marek & Mancini, 2004) identified the elements in creating sustainable programs and projects.

Sustainability Elements Defined

Leadership Competence Leaders establish goals, develop clear and realistic plans regarding development, implementation, evaluation.	Effective Collaboration Stakeholders who understand and support program goals, have clear roles, and who are actively involved in program.	Understanding the Community Entails knowledge of community needs and assets, respect for community members, and involving them in meeting program goals.
Demonstrating Program Results The evaluation of program process and outcomes with acceptable methods, informing stakeholders of results.	Strategic Funding Plans and resources in place for present and future programming; ongoing mechanisms to secure funding.	Staff Involvement and Integration Staff committed to program goals, involved in important program decisions and activities.
	Program Responsivity Ability to adapt to changing community needs.	

To promote sustainability, build in measurement and evaluation so you can make the case for continued funding, whether from the same source or elsewhere. If you can show real progress and an impact on the issue you are addressing, you have a better chance of keeping the funding flowing.

Share the responsibility for preventing and intervening in sexual violence across sectors – this enhances sustainability. Our sexual assault programs cannot do everything that needs to be done to address sexual violence. A main motivation for creating community partnerships and collaborations is to convince other elements in the community that this is their cause, too. They can then shoulder some of the work of keeping your innovative programs and practices going. If you integrate the idea of community sharing into the culture of the organization (for example, writing into every job description that a small part of duties are about identifying and building new partnered relationships) then over time it won't be so daunting. As one advocate stated, "if done correctly, building partnerships is actually about distributing the labor, not about sexual assault programs taking on a ton more projects."

An example of distribution of labor that creates shared ownership was that of a local teen dating violence curriculum developed by a community coalition (including a domestic violence/sexual assault agency) that then linked with all local programs that served teens; as a result all of these participating programs had a shared goal of ensuring the continued success of the educational program.

Similarly, diversified resources (including contributions from the business community), work hand-in-hand with your goal of expanding anti-sexual violence work throughout the community.

Example of Partnership with the Business Community

"We began our relationship with the Sock Drawer somewhat randomly - we reached out to a lot of local businesses to see if anyone would be willing to host our DVAM art show that we put together in collaboration with Stand Strong, our local DV agency. The Sock Drawer's manager expressed a lot of interest and offered to host the art show. The success of the event coupled with the manager's passion for the work RISE does and the relationship we built with her while planning for and setting up the show led her to offer the space several more times and the Sock Drawer became a spot we could regularly count on to host our events."
(RISE, San Luis Obispo)

You can increase your resources by seeking unconventional funding sources related to broader topics such as community violence prevention or supporting youth. Don't forget the business sector as well. If you include local businesses and entrepreneurs in your work, they may be aware of funding sources outside of your usual avenues.





WORKING TOGETHER IN AN EQUITABLE MANNER (PROCESSES AND POWER)

Working Together in an Equitable Manner (Processes and Power)

Learn from the Past

Some of the challenges of collaborative work may arise from the historical issues in collaboration in your community. Here are some questions to ask yourselves and discuss with your community partners as you begin your journey together:

- What is the history of collaboration in your area?
- What barriers are there to working together? Are they historical, philosophical, economic, leadership or personality driven?
- Why haven't you worked together in the past? Has inequity been a factor?
- In what way has the past affected the ability to work together today?

Addressing these elements will facilitate trust building, and ameliorate any long standing tensions or conflicts that if unattended, will undermine your current efforts.

Build in Ways to Handle Conflict

Conflict is a normal part of working with others, particularly when your program is partnering with groups that have different cultures, norms, values, and perceptions. It helps to discuss how you will address conflict and to build in mechanisms for feedback early in the process. Ignoring the potential for conflict can ruin a partnership. The articles under "Community Organizing" in the section Sectors and Sector-Specific Resources can provide helpful guidance.



NOTE: In reality, differences in organizational culture, priorities, histories, funding, and approaches create ripe conditions for conflict. Large nonprofits with lots of stable funding or local corporations may operate in ways that diminish the functioning and practices of smaller community-based organizations. Alternatively, smaller organizations may suggest that better funded organizations, or ones that largely reflect dominant cultures, do not care about making the world more equitable. We cannot make assumptions about how other entities run their shops, and assume that their functionality should mirror our own. Issues around “professionalism” can be fraught and should be addressed with consideration to organizational capacity, staffing, growth, and wellbeing.

Develop Clear Roles and Responsibilities

There are two arenas in which you will want to develop clear roles and responsibilities. The first involves the internal workings of your partnership or collaboration, and the other relates to how you conduct your work together.

Different partnerships and collaborations have different governance and decision-making structures, ranging from casual to highly formalized. However you work together, you will want to keep diversity, equity, and inclusion in mind and you will want to make sure that there is a clear agreement on how decisions will be made, how resources will be allocated, and who can join with you. Written guidelines can prevent misunderstandings and establishes clear boundaries.

“It’s easy enough to set boundaries without passing up opportunities.” (SafeQuest)

These are some of the governance functions to consider, as discussed by Bolda and colleagues, 2006:

- The size and composition of the partnership
- How funds and other resources will be managed and allocated
- Leadership roles
- The scope of the work
- Accountability (justifying your existence and actions to the community)
- Connections to the participating organizations or other entities
- Logistical coordination
- Planning for sustainability

Once the work of your partnership or collaboration is underway, distinguishing roles and responsibilities can support smooth working relationships. It is worth taking the time to clarify who will do what, being careful to consider expertise, training, professional roles, and inclusion.

"Set strong boundaries and priorities. I feel like we are constantly imagining and reimagining the Prevention Department. We are always analyzing where the community is at and what we need to put on the backburner or lift up in order to show up. Know that in order to take something new, you have to let go of something else. Ya gotta Marie Kondo your job, otherwise you'll get burned out."
(RISE, San Luis Obispo)

Don't Scrimp on Logistical Resources

Partnerships and collaborations depend on clear communication and smart coordination. How will you coordinate the following tasks? (These recommendations are mostly adapted from the VALOR California Campus Sexual Assault Toolkit but apply to other working relationships as well.)

- Make sure there is a key person **managing the logistics of the project**. They will need to do the following tasks or make sure they are done: identify potential participants, notify people of meetings, schedule and set up the meetings, provide materials to participants, keep and disseminate minutes, and respond to inquiries.
- Create a clear **onboarding process**. Think through how you plan to support new folks in getting acclimated to how things work in your partnership or collaboration. It can be very confusing for a new member to try to jump in without context, history, and orientation. A shared understanding of the goals, structure, and processes of the group is vital to equitable contribution and true collaboration.
- Ensure that all essential **training** is provided, including attracting high-quality trainers, notifying the potential participants, making all the logistical arrangements, tracking attendance, and making contingency plans for retraining in case of participant turnover. If training is virtual or can be recorded, someone needs to find an appropriate place to house archived trainings online and let participants know they are available.
- Create a **centralized knowledge repository** of activities of program participants and others in the community, to avoid wasteful duplication of efforts and to maximize the use of resources.
- Coordinate **outreach efforts**, from awareness campaigns to social media, to get the biggest bang for your buck via consistent and targeted messaging.
- Track **outcome measures and all grant requirements**, including statistics and reporting, if you are working under a grant. Even if you do not yet have grant funding, maintaining accurate statistics and reports will position your program to apply for future funds by demonstrating your track record.

These tasks are vital to creating a sustainable and effective program, and sufficient resources need to be allocated to them. If you are applying for funding, consider incorporating designated resources into your grant application or identifying existing resources for in-kind contributions.

Planning for effective logistical support can also help minimize conflicts within your partnership or collaboration. Here are some thoughts based on real-life experiences:

Tending to day-to-day details of partnership implementation can be particularly challenging because activities are often spread across multiple member organizations...Individual member agencies generally view partnership tasks as discretionary activities that come after their “real” work...Communication is also more challenging, because it must span multiple organizations and individuals.

[One partnership] learned that conflict could best be prevented or managed by providing neutral staff resources to workgroups, rather than relying on in-kind staffing from member agencies (Bolda et. al, 2006, p. 395).

Make Sure Your Process Matches Your Values

As you work toward a more equitable community, you will want to ensure that your partnership or collaboration process reflects diversity, equity, and inclusion as core values. This cannot just be a matter of good “optics” and it is important to guard against tokenization.

As Bolda and colleagues (2006, p. 397) state,

Power imbalances exist in all partnerships and should be acknowledged and addressed. Being the fiscal agent for a partnership is one example of one member having greater potential influence than another, and the size and role of individual partners in the community affect the influence a member has in the partnership. Grantees have used relatively simple approaches in order to ensure that power imbalances do not get in the way of partnership activities. For example, providing dedicated partnership staff gives members some comfort that activities will not be dominated by in-kind staff from larger partners.

Make sure your partnerships are representational, as this is an important value in community work. This means including those who are or will receive services and other concerned community members, rather than simply assembling service providers. Your group will want to address an equitable distribution of resources, financial and otherwise. Tom Wolff reflects on these issues in an article titled *Ten Places Where Collective Impact Gets it Wrong*. The recommendations below are derived from his concepts:

- Those affected by the issues must be meaningfully engaged. Include grassroots voices.
- It is critical to engage both the most powerful and least powerful people in a community, “finding ways for them to talk and work together to address the community’s priorities for action and the impediments to change in institutions and organizations serving the community.”
- Include “policy change and system change as essential and intentional outcomes of the partnership’s work.”
- Address the “social justice core” and underlying issues such as “income inequality, systemic and structural racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.”

- Base your process on experience and research. Wolff suggests using the Community Tool Box, which is listed in the Community Organizing section of the Resources in this document.
- Address how to find funds.
- Address building leadership.

These action items are not simple but investing effort into an equitable process may be one of the most important aspects of your work.

Expect Challenges and Rewards

As we've described, different organizations and movements have different cultures, and it may be a challenge to work together. Some groups that espouse a particular cause, such as ending gun violence, may not want their message "muddied" – they may want to stay away from sexual violence issues. Strong preparation to make your case for the intersection of various issues will help with this obstacle.

It can be challenging to interact in an equitable manner, to be humble, to accept challenges to the status quo, and to think about how your own practices may have to change.

"Ask for help. Say when something isn't working. Don't try to be perfect....Think of survivors only, all the time. Get rid of individualist thinking. Ask for help. Ask for Community. Admit it when you are overwhelmed and talk about it." (Bay Area Sexual Assault Crisis Counselor)

There may be power struggles in the group, or structured hierarchy may present challenges. For example, if one organization is the lead on a grant, how do you navigate the built-in hierarchical relationship with the group and ensure that all voices are heard? Doing your best to anticipate challenges, and bringing them out into the open as early as possible establishes the level of trust and respect that can be expected among all collaborative partners. And it will go a long way to ensure that these types of conflicts do not get in the way of your purpose - eliminating sexual violence.

Conclusion

With the constant demand for services in your everyday work life, why would a sexual assault program want to take on these challenges? Ultimately, community involvement is an essential and rewarding path to increasing social justice, building a stronger community safety net, meeting the needs of survivors, and distributing the responsibility for preventing and addressing sexual violence throughout the community. We cannot meet every need of survivors by ourselves; we cannot end sexual violence by ourselves; we cannot create healthier and more supportive communities by ourselves. Together with others in our communities, we can make substantial progress toward each of these goals.



SECTORS AND SECTOR-SPECIFIC RESOURCES

Sectors and Sector-Specific Resources

This listing of sectors to consider in forming partnerships and collaborations is by no means exhaustive. We have provided some national and statewide resources, along with a few regional resources, to get you started as you think about potential partners. These organizations may be able to direct you to local groups in your community.

As you read through the list, think about how partnering or collaborating with organizations in these sectors would expand the reach of your agency, enhance the referral process in both directions, create learning opportunities, lead to new funding paths, increase awareness of sexual violence, and expand the cultural understanding of your advocates. Consider signing up for newsletters or following certain organizations on social media to learn how these groups are working on issues related to your concerns. You may come across descriptions of projects that will inspire you.

A great agency-wide project would be to flesh out each of these categories with the local organizations in the areas you serve.

Aging

California Elder Justice Coalition

www.elderjusticecal.org

California Long-Term Care Ombudsman

aging.ca.gov/Programs_and_Services/Long-Term_Care_Ombudsman

Diverse Elders Coalition (advocating for elders of diverse ethnicities and LGBTQI elders)

www.diverseelders.org

National Center on Elder Abuse

ncea.acl.gov

National Center on Law and Elder Rights

ncler.acl.gov

Justice in Aging: Fighting Senior Poverty Through Law

justiceinaging.org/advancing-equity-in-law-and-policy



Anti-Trafficking

- California Against Slavery
californiaagainstsavery.org/connect
- Freedom Network
freedomnetworkusa.org
- Polaris Project
www.polarisproject.org

Business Sectors

- Chamber of Commerce Business Directory
advocacy.calchamber.com/resources/local-chambers
- How Nonprofits can Build Partnerships with Businesses
blog.candid.org/post/how-nonprofits-can-build-partnerships-with-businesses
- Real Money Moves Campaign (socially conscious investment)
www.realmoneymoves.org

Campus

- Blueprint for Campus Police
<https://utexas.app.box.com/v/blueprintforcampuspolice>
- Culture of Respect
cultureofrespect.org/programs-and-toolssignature-tools
- Core Evaluation (Assessment of institution's efforts to prevent and respond to campus sexual violence)
www.naspa.org/book/culture-of-respect-core-evaluation-5th-ed

Child and Family Agencies

- California Alliance of Child and Family Services
www.cacfs.org
- Young Minds Advocacy – Ally Organizations
www.ymadvocacy.org
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
www.missingkids.org
- Children's Advocacy Centers of California
www.cacc-online.org

Cultural and Language Resources

- Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence
www.api-gbv.org
- Community Centers and Cultural Organizations (this is for the San Jose area, but may give you an idea of some cultural associations that exist in your local area)
www.sjsu.edu/diversity/resources/community-resources/community-centers.php
- Esperanza United
esperanzaunited.org

Detention and Incarceration

- VALOR's PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) Resources
www.valor.us/category/publication/prea-publication
- Impact Justice
impactjustice.org
- Just Detention International
justdetention.org
- Survived and Punished
survivedandpunished.org
- Vera Institute of Justice
www.vera.org

Disability Rights and Justice

- The Arc of California (advocacy for intellectual and developmental disability rights)
www.thearca.org
- Disability Rights California
www.disabilityrightscalifornia.org
- Indiana Disability Justice & Violence Prevention
icadvinc.org/about-the-indiana-disability-justice-violence-prevention-task-force
- Vera Institute of Justice
www.vera.org

Domestic Violence Programs (if not a multiservice agency)

- California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
www.cpedv.org
- National Domestic Violence Hotline
www.thehotline.org
- National Network to End Domestic Violence
www.nnedv.org

Faith-Based Communities

- FaithTrust Institute
www.faithtrustinstitute.org
- Interfaith Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
www.jwi.org

Farmworkers

- Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
www.alianzanacionaldecampesinas.org
- Coalition of Immokalee Workers
ciw-online.org
- Farmworker Justice
www.farmworkerjustice.org
- Lideres Campesinas | a network of women farmworker leaders
www.liderescampesinas.org

- #NoMás
www.crla.org/farmworker-sexual-violence-technical-assistance
- United Farm Workers
ufw.org

Health Equity

Reproductive Health and Justice

- An Integrated Approach to Intimate Partner Violence and Reproductive & Sexual Coercion
www.pregnantsurvivors.org
- Black Mamas Matter Alliance
blackmamasmatter.org
- Doula Association of Southern California
dascdoulas.org
- Listening to Latina Mothers in California
www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/health-care/maternity/listening-to-latina-mothers-in-california.pdf
- Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence: Advocates and Home Visitors Go Great Together
wscadv.org/resources/advocates-and-home-visitors-go-great-together-building-partnerships

General Healthcare Services and Health Equity

- Black Women's Blueprint
www.blackwomensblueprint.org
- California Black Women's Health Project
www.cabwhp.org
- Center for the Study of Racism, Social Justice & Health
www.racialhealthequity.org
- Futures Without Violence
www.futureswithoutviolence.org

- A Health Equity Approach to Preventing Sexual Violence (2021)
National Sexual Violence Resource Center and Prevention Institute
www.nsvrc.org/resource/2500/health-equity-approach-preventing-sexual-violence
- Health Access: California's Health Consumer Advocacy Coalition
health-access.org/reform-coverage/health-equity-and-inclusion
- Center for Health Progress: Community Partnerships
centerforhealthprogress.org/the-work/community-partnerships
- Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
www.lchc.org
- National Partnership for Women & Families
www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/health

Homelessness

- California Coalition for Youth
calyouth.org
- Coalition on Homelessness
www.cohsf.org
- Covenant House California
covenanthousecalifornia.org
- HUD Exchange
www.hudexchange.info/housing-and-homeless-assistance
- National Alliance for Safe Housing
www.nationalallianceforsafehousing.org
- National Alliance to End Homelessness
endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-report/california
- PATH
epath.org
- Safe Housing Partnerships
safehousingpartnerships.org/partnerships

Immigrant Justice

- American Immigration Council
www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org
- California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice
ccijjustice.org
- California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance
ciyja.org
- National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project
www.wcl.american.edu/impact/initiatives-programs/niwap

Labor Unions, Guilds, and Associations

- California Labor Federation
calaborfed.org
- SEIU-USWW
www.seiu-usww.org
- SEIU-UHW
www.seiu-uhw.org
- One Fair Wage
onefairwage.site
- Screen Actors Guild
www.sagaftra.org

[see also Farmworkers Sector]

Legal Assistance to Victims

- California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.
www.crla.org/farmworker-sexual-violence-technical-assistance
- WomensLaw.org – State Resources: California
www.womenslaw.org/find-helpca
- Legal Aid Association of California
www.laaonline.org

LGBTQIA+ Agencies

- Equality California
www.eqca.org
- FORGE
www.forge-forward.org
- GLAAD - California
www.glaad.org/region/california
- TransLatin@ Coalition
www.translatinacoalition.org
- The Trevor Project
www.thetrevorproject.org

Mental Health

- Mad in America: Science, Psychiatry and Social Justice
www.madinamerica.com
- Rethinking Psychiatry
www.rethinkingpsychiatry.org
- MHA of California
arc.mhanational.org/user/mhacalifornia

Military and Veterans

- California Association of Veterans Services
californiaveterans.org
- California Department of Veterans Affairs
www.calvet.ca.gov
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center
 - » Military Sexual Trauma Resource List
www.nsvrc.org/blogs/military-sexual-trauma-resource-list
 - » Sexual Violence in the Military: A Guide for Civilian Advocates
www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-guides/sexual-violence-military-guide-civilian-advocates
- Service Women's Action Network (SWAN)
www.servicewomen.org

Racial Justice

- Asian Americans Advancing Justice
www.advancingjustice-aajc.org
- Audre Lorde Project
alp.org
- Black Women's Blueprint
www.blackwomensblueprint.org
- Incite!
incite-national.org
- National Indigenous Women's Resource Center
www.niwrc.org
- SAALT: South Asian Americans Leading Together
saalt.org

Reentry Service Providers

Coalitions Partnerships

- The Los Angeles Regional Reentry Partnership: LARRP
www.lareentry.org
- Anti Recidivism Coalition
antirecidivism.org

Community Based Organizations

- Root and Rebound
www.rootandrebond.org
- Essie Justice Group
essiejusticegroup.org
- Transitions Clinic Network
transitionsclinic.org

Directory of Reentry Services

- The National Reentry Resource Center
nationalreentryresourcecenter.org

Sex Workers

- Global Network of Sex Work Projects
www.nswp.org
- St. James Infirmary
www.stjamesinfirmary.org
- Sex Worker Outreach Program (SWOP)
swopusa.org/resources
- Sex Workers Project: Sexual Violence Against Sex Workers [fact sheet]
swp.urbanjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/08/Fact-Sheet-Sexual-Violence-Against-Sex-Workers-1-1-1.pdf

Sexual Violence

- RALIANCE – A National Partnership Dedicated to Ending Sexual Violence in One Generation
www.raliance.org
- National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
endsexualviolence.org
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center
www.nsvrc.org
- ValorUS (formerly CALCASA)
www.valor.us

Substance Abuse

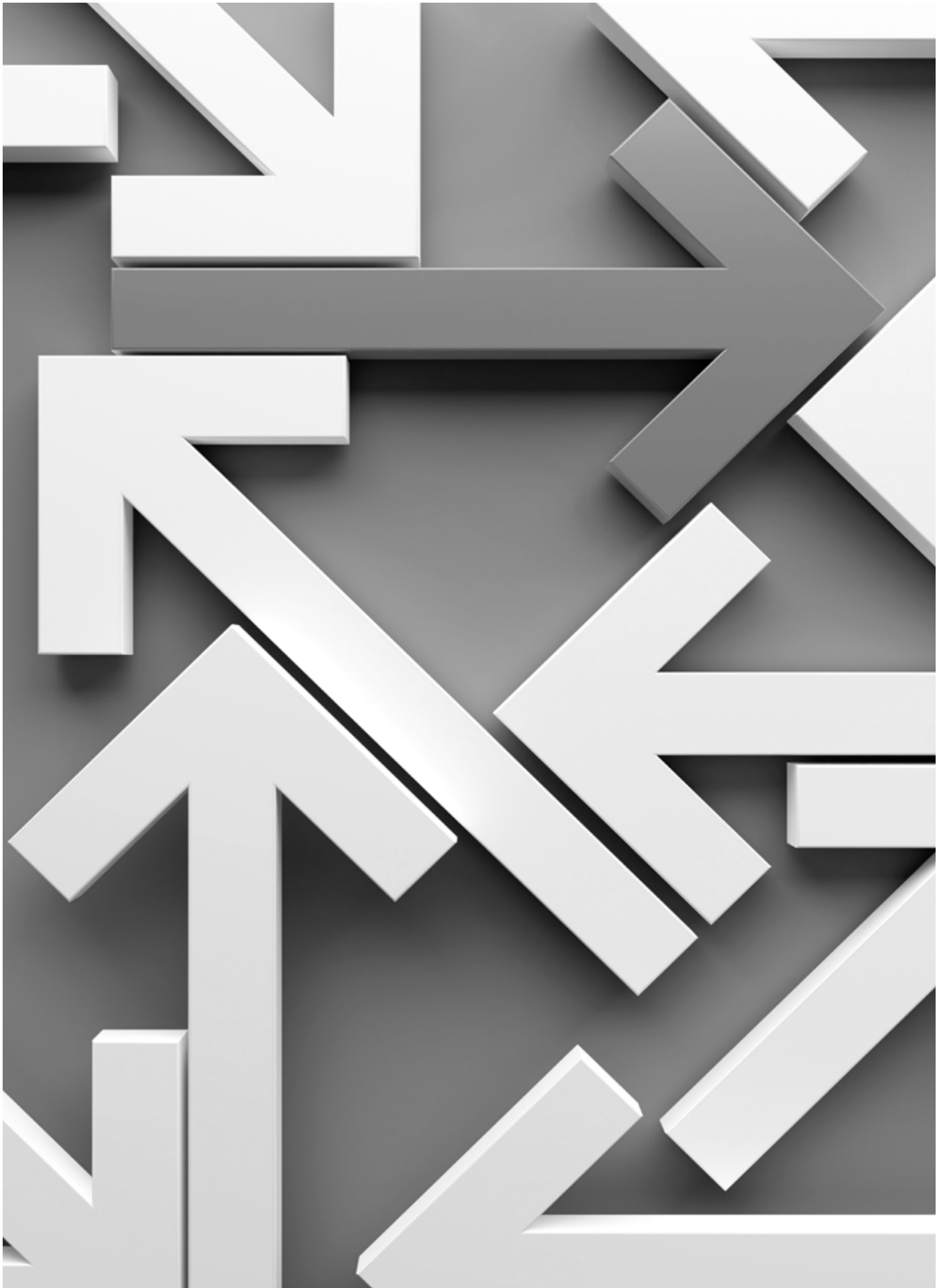
- Funding Opportunities from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
www.samhsa.gov/tloa/tap-development-resources/funding-opportunities
- National Harm Reduction Coalition
harmreduction.org

Violence Prevention

- Futures Without Violence
www.futureswithoutviolence.org
- PreventConnect
www.preventconnect.org
- Stop It Now!
www.stopitnow.org
- WHO Violence Prevention Alliance
www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/violence-prevention

Youth-Based Organizing

- Young Women's Empowerment Project
youarepriceless.org
- Youth Justice Coalition
youthjusticela.org





RESOURCES

Resources

Anti-Hate

- Anti-Defamation League
www.adl.org
- Southern Poverty Law Center
www.splcenter.org

Assessment

- THRIVE Community Assessment Worksheet
www.preventioninstitute.org/sites/default/files/uploads/THRIVE%20Community%20Assessment%20Worksheet.pdf
- THRIVE: Tool for Health & Resilience In Vulnerable Environments
www.preventioninstitute.org/tools/thrive-tool-health-resilience-vulnerable-environments

Community Organizing

- Building Community Safety: Practical Steps Toward Liberatory Transformation
truthout.org/articles/building-community-safety-practical-steps-toward-liberatory-transformation
- Checklist for Building Bilingual/Multilingual Spaces - Antena Los Angeles
drive.google.com/file/d/1TeFNL5ZFZR8DfZ8_cYSj_Fhf-hCUE8-m/view
- Collaboration Multiplier
preventioninstitute.org/tools/collaboration-multiplier

"Collaboration Multiplier is an interactive framework and tool for analyzing collaborative efforts across fields. It is designed to guide an organization to a better understanding of which partners it needs and how to engage them. It is also designed for organizations that already work together, so they may identify activities to achieve a common goal, identify missing sectors that can contribute to a solution, delineate partner perspectives and contributions, and leverage expertise and resources. Using Collaboration Multiplier can help lay the foundation for shared understanding and common ground across all partners."

Tools are free to use.

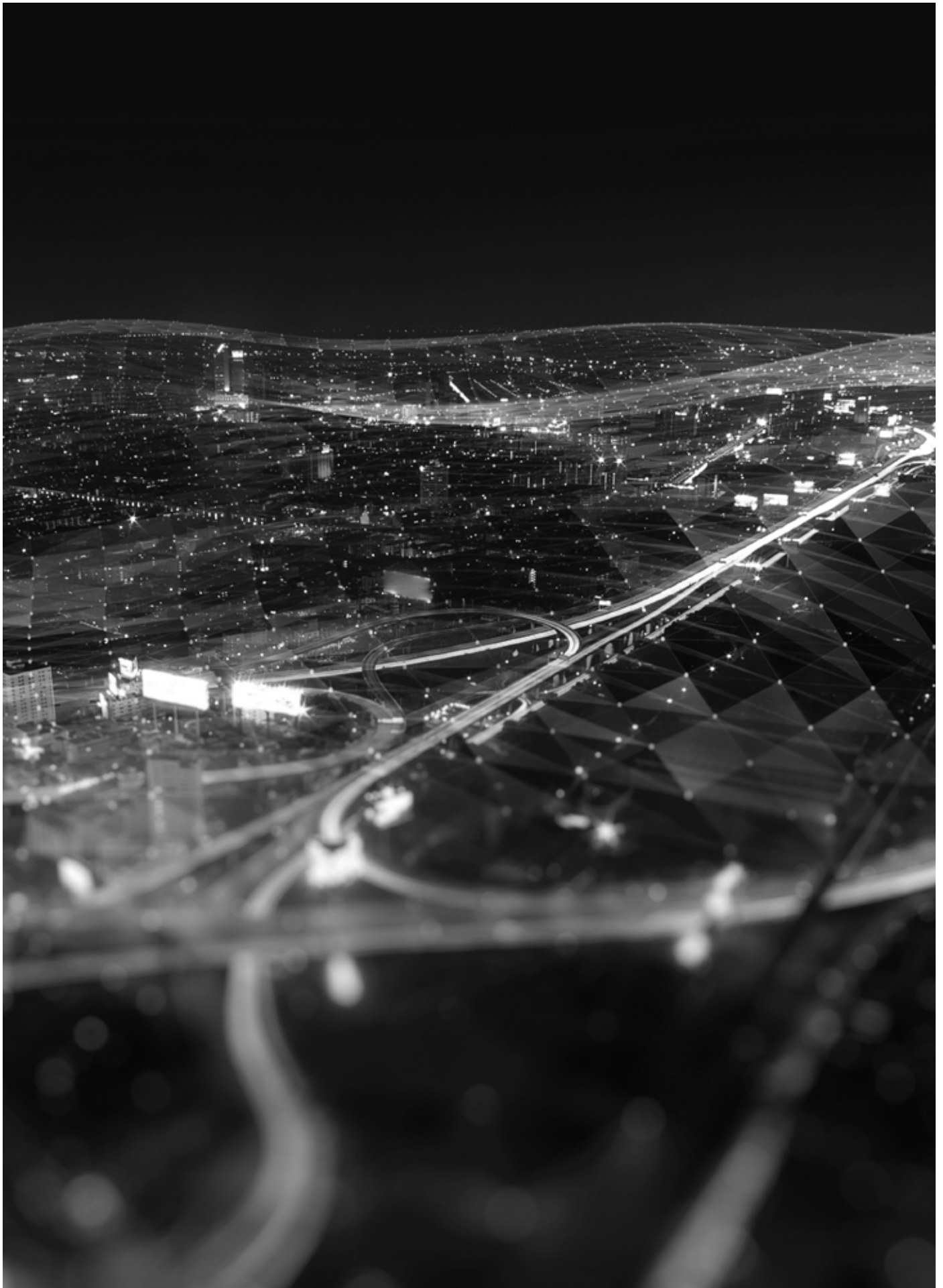
- Collective Impact Forum
www.collectiveimpactforum.org/resources/how-do-you-sustain-your-initiative-over-long-term
Sustainability resources – articles, podcasts, tools, and more
- Community Organizers Address Sexual Violence Without the Criminal Justice System
transformharm.org/community-organizers-address-sexual-violence-without-the-criminal-justice-system/
- Language Justice Toolkit: Multilingual Strategies for Community Organizing
www.thepraxisproject.org/resource/2012/communicating-for-health-justice-a-communications-strategy-curriculum-for-advancing-health-issues-pgmgh
- 20 Ways Majority-White Nonprofits Can Build Authentic Partnerships with Organizations Led by Communities of Color
Nonprofit AF
nonprofitaf.com/2018/08/20-ways-majority-white-nonprofits-can-build-authentic-partnerships-with-organizations-led-by-communities-of-color

Transformative Justice

- Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice
cssj.org

“Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice organizes through state and local chapters across the country to create healing communities, develop organizers and leaders, and advocate for public safety policies that work better to support our communities. We advocate for policies that reduce incarceration and increase investments into crime prevention, trauma recovery and rehabilitation.”

- It Is Time to Take a Look at Collaborating for Equity and Justice.
communityscience.com/blog/it-is-time-to-take-a-look-at-collaborating-for-equity-and-justice
Community Science.
- Leaving Evidence Blog - Mia Mingus
leavingevidence.wordpress.com/about-2/
[focus is on both Transformative Justice and Disability Justice]
- Project Nia
project-nia.org
- Reimagine Safety: A project of the Washington Post Editorial Board, in conversation with outside voices
www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/04/15/how-local-leaders-reimagine-safety
- TransformHarm.org
transformharm.org





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