Investing Public Funds in Community Safety Strategies

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This tool can help jurisdictions identify strategies for investing public resources in community-driven public safety work. In these approaches, community members close to the challenges at hand help direct public funds toward community-based solutions beyond law enforcement and corrections. Our research found three funding models: (1) generating new resource streams (up-front investment), (2) reinvesting savings from criminal justice reform (reinvestment), and (3) reallocating resources from corrections and law enforcement (invest/divest).

For additional information and examples of how communities around the country are using these strategies, see the Urban Institute's 2018 report *Public Investment in Community-Driven Safety Initiatives: Landscape Study and Key Considerations* (https://urbn.is/landscapestudy).

Which Investment Strategy Fits Your Community Best?

Although jurisdictions around the country use many strategies to channel public resources into community-driven safety work, those approaches generally fall under the three categories outlined below.

How can your community...

...create **up-front investment** by generating a new source of funding?

...use **reinvestment** by harnessing savings from reform?

...**invest/divest** by reallocating funding currently channeled to traditional strategies, such as law enforcement and corrections?
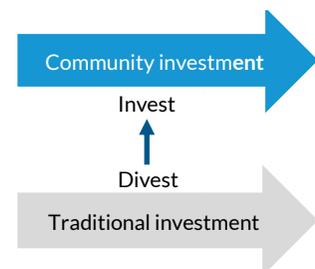

- Can you use legislative or executive budget allocations?
- Are there opportunities to get a new state/federal grant?
- Is it possible to levy a new tax?

- Can you direct savings to communities with prescriptive legislation?
- Can you allocate savings via the executive budget?

- How can you reallocate spending channels within a state or local budget?
- Are there spending proposals better aligned with community priorities?

💡 **Up-front investment spotlight:**
Measure Y/Z (*Oakland*, *CA*): Oakland voters passed ballot initiatives that created and sustained a parcel tax and parking surcharge, and the city uses some of these resources to fund violence prevention/intervention programs.

💡 **Reinvestment spotlight:**
Credible Messenger Program (*DC*): The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services significantly reduced out-of-home placements and used $3 million of those savings to support a youth credible messenger mentoring program.

💡 **Invest/divest spotlight:**
No Cop Academy (*Chicago, IL*): This youth-led campaign called on the Chicago City Council to redirect $95 million in planned spending on a new police training academy toward priorities such as housing, schools, healthcare, and jobs.

How Can Your Community Define Priorities and Develop Solutions?

The following considerations can help you identify community-driven public safety priorities and strategies.

- **Who needs to be at the table?** Because communities can be defined in many ways, clearly identifying the leadership for a specific initiative and inclusively defining key stakeholders are essential steps for ensuring that critical voices are not excluded.

- **What processes will you use to identify priorities?** These processes can include building a coalition, forming a steering committee, and bringing in an intermediary facilitator, and involve tools including focus groups, surveys, community meetings, and interviews.

- **Do community leaders have the information they need to drive solutions?** Community members' experiences are critical for diagnosing problems and developing solutions. Additional sources of information, such as administrative data, peer learning from other communities, or research support can also be helpful.

- **How will you engage decisionmakers and other key stakeholders?** Some strategies require formal engagement with policymakers, while others can take place entirely among neighbors and other community members, grassroots organizations, faith-based groups, and service providers.

How Can You Build Pathways to Fund Community-Driven Strategies?

Connecting resources with community-driven initiatives requires careful planning, but successful models can fund promising and innovative work, strengthen grassroots leadership, and build a constituency that can advocate for ongoing investment.

Community Priorities and Solutions

Invest sufficient funds in organizations and networks embedded in communities to leverage existing community resources, grow new organizations, and ensure that investments strengthen (rather than displace) the established community.

Build a supportive infrastructure to administer funds and support relationship-building between the sources and recipients of funds. This could include intermediaries, partner organizations, and designated agency divisions.

Document and communicate progress and results to foster funder buy-in and allow communities to assess and strengthen their work. This can include expanding data collection and reporting and crafting communications strategies.

Community-Driven Public Safety Investment

- Sustainable funding streams enhance recipients' capacity for community work.
- Communities can leverage public investment to diversify funding sources.
- Collaborative problem-solving processes can increase community safety and cohesion.