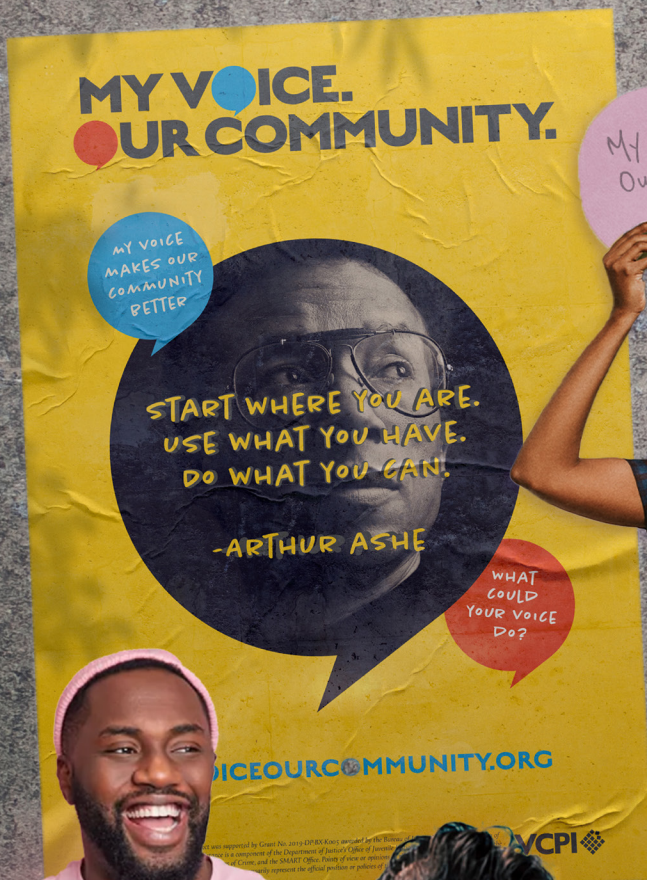


COMMUNITY
CAMPAIGN
GUIDE

MY VOICE. OUR COMMUNITY.



My Voice Makes
Our Community
Better

What
Could Your
Voice Do?

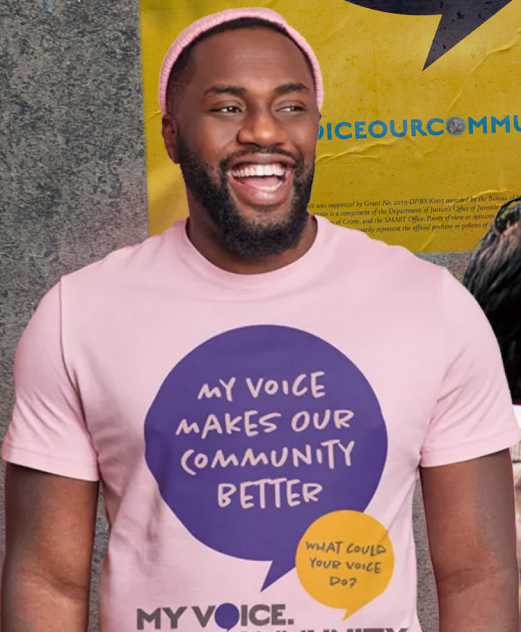


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Overview

This document is intended to be an informational resource for anyone interested in learning about the *My Voice. Our Community.* campaign and/or implementing the campaign in their community. It provides community leaders—such as public safety professionals, church and nonprofit leaders, business owners, or other interested community voices—with information, strategic advice, and inspiration to help them implement a campaign that meets the specific needs, challenges, and desired outcomes of their communities.

Because every community is different, the content of this guide does not offer a step-by-step implementation plan to follow, nor does it provide explicit instructions on things such as how to make a social media post, print a t-shirt, or record a video. Instead, it includes high level concepts, strategic suggestions, and other important things to consider while planning and implementing your own version of a campaign. Additionally, it provides helpful information about the program's background, funding, research, available resources, and more.

Funding & Support

This program is made possible through a partnership between the U.S. Department of Justice (USDJO), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and NCPI, a nonprofit organization providing public safety training and resources nationwide and based in Richmond, Virginia. Additionally, *My Voice. Our Community.* was enhanced by the guidance of community leaders, activists, law enforcement professionals, policymakers, and academics from around the country who provided critical insight and feedback throughout the development of the campaign's resources.

My Voice. Our Community. is a component of NCPI's *Violent Crime Reduction: Information, Messaging, and Engagement* program funded under the BJA's *Officer Robert Wilson III Preventing Violence Against Law Enforcement Officers and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability (VALOR)* Initiative, which seeks to improve the immediate and long-term safety, wellness, and resilience of our nation's law enforcement officers.

Campaign Objectives

My Voice. Our Community. is designed to empower communities with tools that bring people together and raise awareness about the roles we share in reducing the violence traumatizing our communities. The campaign is intended to help community leaders:

- 1. Build stronger community relationships and get people talking about how they can work together to increase safety and decrease violence.**
- 2. Connect with community members who aren't engaged in the conversation, and provide them with a clear path toward taking positive action.**
- 3. Inspire people to action through collaboration, conversation and outreach, and by showing them what is possible through the impact others are having on their community.**

About the Campaign

My Voice. Our Community. is a national awareness campaign focused on spreading a simple message: *we all have a role to play in reducing the violence that traumatizes our communities.* While you've probably seen public awareness campaigns before, you haven't seen one quite like this.

Other campaigns often rely on distributing public service announcements (PSAs) throughout the country without changing the message or outreach strategies to meet the unique needs of each community and without providing people a way to engage with the campaign beyond simply being aware of the message.



My Voice. Our Community. relies on trusted voices within a community to spread messages the community needs, when they need them, and in ways that make the most sense for the people living in that community.

The campaign provides people like you—community organizers, public safety professionals, nonprofit leaders, business owners, pastors, local media personalities, engaged college students, or anyone else who feels compelled to make their voice heard—with a downloadable toolkit of resources and information you can use to build partnerships, support existing violence reduction efforts, start conversations, and generate long-term progress in your community. Everything you need to get started can be accessed at www.myvoiceourcommunity.org.

The Community Engagement Toolkit is the heart of the *My Voice. Our Community.* campaign. Available in English and Spanish, it includes video and audio PSAs, logos, t-shirt designs, customizable posters, shareable images, and much more, all of which have been designed for you to use in whatever way you desire to spread the campaign's unifying message. The toolkit provides virtually unlimited flexibility for ways that people can join the movement, engage with the campaign, and take action. Imagination is the only limitation:

- Host a *My Voice. Our Community.* potluck to bring people together;
- Print a poster and hang it in your store window;
- Get the logo printed on some basketballs and use them in an after-school violence reduction sports program;
- Make your voice heard by sharing a social media post with your thoughts on how

- violence is hurting the community using the #MyVoiceOurCommunity hashtag; or
- Try something entirely different. No action is too small, and every voice matters, so whatever is within your power to do to make a difference: *do it*.

To maximize the campaign's impact throughout the country, we encourage community leaders to gain a clear understanding of its powerful message and to develop an outreach strategy that brings community partners together, leverages everyone's abilities, and ensures the message is spread effectively throughout the community.

This guide provides information about the program's funding and background, the multi-faceted research that went into crafting this initiative, and ideas and advice to inspire you to effectively implement a *My Voice. Our Community.* campaign in your community.

Background

Violent crime affects everyone in a community, and just as it affects everyone, everyone must also be involved in the solution.

In 2018, NCPI conducted a review of existing public resources and found that although some guidance was available for communities and citizens on violent crime reduction, there wasn't a unified, national campaign that promoted the need for collaboration between communities and law enforcement in their efforts to reduce violence. Community members and public safety professionals alike have been pleading for more assistance in encouraging community engagement in this effort. In fact, NCPI industry analysis showed that 60-80% of public safety practitioners surveyed nationwide in 2019 identified community outreach and engagement, communication strategies, and homicide and violence reduction as priority areas in which they require assistance and resources.

My Voice. Our Community. is a direct response to this critical need.

In the fall of 2019, NCPI began working on its *Violent Crime Reduction: Information, Messaging, and Engagement* program with the goal of creating a campaign that "raised awareness about the shared responsibility between communities and law enforcement in the reduction of violent crime" (in urban, rural, tribal, and territorial communities across the U.S. and in U.S. territories). It began with an extensive research program that leveraged advice and input from public safety experts, community leaders, scholars, and communications professionals across the nation and in-depth public polling to understand the needs, concerns, and challenges facing our nation's communities (more information available in the Research section of this document).

At the beginning of 2020, NCPI created and began developing the *My Voice. Our Community.* campaign based on the findings from the research program. Intended to empower community leaders to take action in whatever way worked best for them and their community, this campaign was designed to raise awareness about the roles we all share in reducing violence.

A few months later, the nation was shaken by the tragic death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN on May 25, 2020.

While the emotional response and physical backlash that followed highlighted the challenges facing public safety awareness programs at large, in many ways the shifting cultural dialogue also reaffirmed that *My Voice. Our Community.* was on the right track. The guiding themes identified during the research were playing out on a national stage in public conversations.

Much of the language that had already been incorporated into the campaign's content began showing up organically on social media, in commercials, speeches, and on TV. Because the content and strategies being developed were specifically crafted to address the concerns, desired outcomes, and challenges bubbling beneath the surface of communities nationwide, it seemed that *My Voice. Our Community.* would be able to thrive in this new environment and could provide people with a needed outlet for taking positive action, making their voices heard, and building stronger community relationships.

Subsequent events straining police and community relations, new public safety crises, an intensified political landscape, and the complex effects of the global pandemic contextualized the campaign in ways and added new meaning behind the campaign's underlying message that everyone has a voice, every voice matters, and together our voices can make our communities safer.

Research

The information, messaging, and outreach strategies included in *My Voice. Our Community.* are founded in NCPI's extensive research of the realities within the communities the program is designed to support. The research spanned many months between 2019 and 2020 and leveraged a variety of tools to gather qualitative and quantitative information and feedback including the development of a national advisory board, the dissemination of a nationwide public safety poll among key constituencies, and in-depth market research on target audience behaviors and preferences.

What follows is an abbreviated summary of the program's full Research Summary Report, which is available upon request at info@ncpi.us.

Research Phase I: Community Safety Collaborative (Qualitative Research)

Because violent crime affects each community and individual differently, NCPI began its research seeking insights from a wide range of engaged experts, community leaders, and advocates on how issues associated with violence impact the various communities they serve, and learning about what motivated them to become engaged in these issues professionally.



NCPI brought together 33 community leaders, public safety subject matter experts, public health professionals, and academics from rural, urban, tribal, and territorial communities to participate in a national advisory board, the *Community Safety Collaborative* (CSC). Each CSC

member was selected for their experience in dealing with some aspect of violent crime in a professional capacity and for their representation within one of the program's target communities. Additional consideration was given to each CSC candidate's age, socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic heritage, sexual orientation, etc., to ensure that broad demographic diversity was represented.

Through an extensive interview and group discussion process, NCPI gained insights into many different communities and how they internalize violent crime; the effect it has on people's hopes and desires for their communities; what types of messaging and outreach strategies have and have not worked in the past; the challenges a campaign like this is likely to face; and what motivates community members to participate in roles and initiatives that would help alleviate violence.

This process was broken into three phases:

- **Individual Feedback:** CSC members participated in a series of virtual surveys, storytelling activities, and word association exercises designed to build profiles of each member based on initial insights into their motivations, challenges, and desired outcomes as they relate to violent crime reduction.
- **Group Discussions (Fields of Expertise):** Building on profiles and themes identified in the first phase, members were then paired into groups of approximately 5-6 individuals based on similar professional and experiential backgrounds where they participated in moderated group discussions. The purpose of these discussions was to gauge how people from similar viewpoints discussed issues surrounding public safety and the reduction of violent crime, as well as to identify shared experiences and themes that could then be tested against other disciplines and backgrounds.
- **Group Discussions (Cross-Disciplinary):** A final round of in-depth virtual meetings featuring 4-5 CSC members from different viewpoints and disciplines was then conducted. Using participant provided questions and commentary, the meetings served as test-cases for the cross-disciplinary exchange of ideas and messaging themes that would be tested in the following quantitative research phase.

This structure helped to establish a deep understanding of each CSC member's point of view and how those views related to others within the board. From these discussions, NCPI identified many themes that were shared across professions and demographics, including but not limited to:

- the importance of getting different sides to listen to one another;
- the value of having messaging come from community leaders rather than directly from law enforcement agencies;
- the effect violence has on the most vulnerable people in a community; and
- the desire all people share for safer and better communities.

Research Phase 2: National Polling (Quantitative Research)

The expertise CSC members provided was invaluable, but it only offered part of the picture. In order to understand public sentiment surrounding the themes that were identified in the first phase of research and in order to test some of the messaging hypotheses developed following the discussions with CSC members, NCPI conducted a National Public Safety Poll. Objectives of the survey included: clearly identifying key target mindsets, strengthening and

checking the broad resonance of conceptual language, and testing grass roots media strategies.

The National Public Safety Poll was fielded across the U.S. and U.S. territories through social media, paid advertising, and direct outreach by CSC members to their respective communities, achieving wide geographic coverage and gathering feedback from participants from a broad diversity of cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Approximately 52% of participants identified as White, while 48% of participants identified as a member of a racial or ethnic minority, which represents a successful over-index when compared to the US population (nationally, 61% of US residents identify as White, Non-Hispanic). Participant household income ranged from below \$15,000 per year to above \$150,000 per year, and participant ages ranged from 18 to 65.

Research Findings:

Taken together, the qualitative and quantitative research enabled NCPI to develop a clear understanding of the motivations, desired outcomes, and challenges associated with this program and its target audiences. The extensive feedback and nuanced learnings that came from this research were invaluable as they confirmed certain assumptions, dispelled others, and brought to light previously unknown insights that informed the team's strategy moving forward.

The findings that facilitated the development of the campaign's messaging and outreach strategies are broken into the following three categories: motivations, desired outcomes and challenges.

Motivations:

Much of the research focused on understanding what motivates an individual to become active in their community.

- First-hand experiences with violent crime or experiences with a broken justice system are significant catalysts for a deep commitment to violent crime reduction.

Desired Outcomes:

The research also focused on what people desire for their communities, specifically as it relates to violent crime reduction, what outcomes they believe are even possible, and how they feel those outcomes could be achieved.

- Audiences expressed a desire for a more informed and engaged public, as well as a higher level of community involvement and transparency from law enforcement agencies at the local level.
- Audiences felt that community members, public health professionals, and law enforcement all share roles in violence reduction, though community members were more often identified as having a more important role to play than the other groups.
- While experts or people who have dedicated their professional career to public service (specifically as it relates to violent crime) are hopeful that a reduction in violent crime is possible if multiple constituencies join forces, this hopeful outlook is not shared by the public at large.

Challenges:

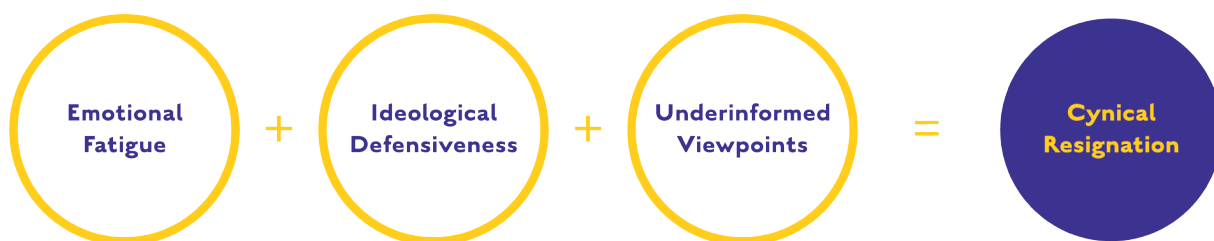
Finally, the research sought to understand what challenges exist in violent crime reduction efforts at the community level.

- Audiences identified a lack of trust between key constituencies that prevents necessary collaboration.
- Audiences noted that important constituencies are disengaged on the issue of violence reduction because some feel it is “not their problem.”
- Audiences displayed or noted a trend in pervasive dissonance between key constituencies on a variety of matters related to violence reduction.

Research Takeaway: Widespread Cynical Resignation

Throughout the research process, a clear takeaway emerged: there exists a fundamental cultural mindset that must be overcome in order to ensure the *My Voice. Our Community.* campaign resonates with audiences and makes a lasting, positive impact on our nation’s communities.

Three widespread mentalities were identified as contributors to a pervasive public mindset of “**cynical resignation**”, which represents the most immediate and significant hurdle to this initiative.



The mentalities identified by research participants or displayed by research participants themselves are:

- **Ideological defensiveness:**
Public audiences have assumed rigid standpoints on issues surrounding violent crime based on their political affiliation and often are not willing to listen to ideas that fall outside of those ideologies.
- **Emotional fatigue:**
Public audiences are less likely to spend time and energy trying to understand the intent behind messaging they receive, and are instead quick to assume ill-intent, often internalizing messaging that was meant to be inspiring as manipulative instead.
- **Underinformed viewpoints:**
Public audiences often rely on filtering information through their own personal experiences, rather than relying on facts which they may not even be aware of.

These three mentalities come together to create an incredibly challenging, nationwide culture of **Cynical Resignation**. In today’s climate, emotional messaging or messaging specific to violence reduction is likely to be tuned out, or worse, rebuked. However, by leveraging trusted

community voices to promote pragmatic, localized solutions that don't overpromise on outcomes or overcommit the participants, progress can be made toward encouraging public audiences to accept a role in the safety of their communities.

Intended Audiences

Violent crime affects every community differently, and because of this, the ones who will be most effective at raising awareness about reducing that violence are those closest to the people it affects. Part of what makes *My Voice. Our Community.* unique is that rather than one organization or federal agency spreading the message across the nation on their own, this campaign relies on community leaders, partnerships, and voices to spread the word in ways that make the most sense for them.

The campaign is designed to be flexible so that it can reach and resonate with everyone in our nation's diverse communities that has been affected by violent crime. However, for a wide variety of reasons, not everyone is willing or able to take an active role in promoting the campaign. As such, this grassroots initiative relies on three distinct groups of people to raise awareness among their friends, neighbors, families, and communities. They are community catalysts, public safety professionals and conversation amplifiers—all of whom have an invested interest in making their neighborhoods safer.

- **Community Catalysts**

Community catalysts are the primary movers and shakers for this campaign. They are pastors, teachers, non-profit founders, business owners, medical professionals, and other leaders within a community who have the reach, capacity, and dedication to empower others to make a difference. They are trusted voices who have a desire to leverage their networks and resources to raise awareness and inspire others to take action in reducing violence.

Often, community catalysts are motivated by personal experiences with violent crime in their own lives, which increases their capacity for empathy and drives their desire for change. Sometimes, they might not have a direct experience with violence, but they see it in their community and have a desire to take action. No matter how an individual becomes active in their community, their voice and their influence can make a real, tangible difference.

- **Public Safety Professionals**

For the purposes of this campaign, “public safety professionals” are defined as sworn and civilian law enforcement practitioners working within a community. These professionals play a significant role in society as guardians of safety and security, especially in our nation's most vulnerable communities. There are an incredible number of responsibilities that come with that role, particularly relating to violent crime, but taking the lead in implementing and promoting the *My Voice. Our Community.* message doesn't have to be one of them.

A critical finding from the campaign research was that, due to a variety of compounding factors, if this message were to come directly and solely from law enforcement agencies, it risks being tuned out or possibly even rejected by the

community it's intended to reach. However, by working alongside their established partnerships with trusted community organizations and voices, public safety professionals can use the campaign in a way that strategically supports their existing community engagement efforts while ensuring a successful delivery of the message.

Therefore, public safety professionals play a vital, yet supportive role in this initiative by serving as a bridge between the community catalysts and the campaign. *My Voice. Our Community.* can be a tool in their ongoing efforts to reduce violent crime and strengthen community partnerships. By sharing this program with their partners (community catalysts), providing them with support and resources, and working with them to spread awareness, they can leverage the catalysts' established, trusted voices.

- **Conversation Amplifiers**

In many communities, there may be people who want to be involved, who want to share the message, but don't have the ability, resources, or energy to take up a significant role in the campaign. That's where conversation amplifiers come in.

Conversation amplifiers are those who thrive on spreading messages they believe in through social sharing and conversation, but who may be less likely to take large-scale action or leadership roles. They have established relationships of trust within a community and they have the potential to reach friends, colleagues, family members, and other acquaintances organically and authentically, which can lead to the type of grassroots traction *My Voice. Our Community.* is designed to facilitate. Conversation amplifiers play an important role in raising general awareness within a community and in supporting/sharing the efforts of community catalysts near them.

Community Engagement Toolkit

The Community Engagement Toolkit includes everything you need to get started with *My Voice. Our Community.* Whether you're looking for an off-the-shelf image, a customizable poster, or the design files to make your own *My Voice. Our Community.* content, the tools are available at no cost at myvoiceourcommunity.org.



Strategic Guidance

My Voice. Our Community. is designed to be flexible. It may be implemented either as a standalone awareness campaign for communities looking to begin a new violent crime reduction effort or as a supporting resource to be used alongside existing outreach and engagement efforts by community organizations and public safety agencies.

The guidance included in this document is not prescriptive. Every community is different; what resonates with your community may not be relevant in the next, and the strategies that work where you are may be ineffective elsewhere. As such, there is no one-size-fits-all, step-by-step guide on how to implement *My Voice. Our Community.* Rather, this information seeks to spark ideas and inspiration as you consider strategies for effectively engaging audiences in ways that make the most sense for you and your community.

A key consideration to keep in mind is that this campaign is meant to be used as a tool to bring communities together. So, if you have an exciting idea on how to use the campaign, but don't have the skills or resources to do the work yourself, that is an opportunity to reach out and find additional community catalysts and partners who can assist you, support the campaign, and join the initiative.

Although time and budget are certainly limiting factors, the only other real limitation is your creativity. The designs, files, language, and imagery in the toolkit have been developed to allow you the flexibility to launch a campaign that will connect in meaningful ways with those in your community.

In the following sections, you will find guidance on developing a campaign plan, choosing outreach strategies, using the campaign materials creatively, and other important things to consider along the way.

Planning an Effective Campaign Strategy

Taking time to plan your campaign, events, or activities early in the process—including what you hope to accomplish—is an important step to ensure you have everything you need to make a difference. While plans may evolve, kicking things off with a vision, clear objectives, and tasks will allow you to anticipate roadblocks, avoid deadline crunches, and prevent confusion among your partners and audiences.

As you begin the planning process, it's important to keep the campaign's main objectives in mind and consider how your plans will help you:

1. **Build stronger community relationships and get people talking about how they can work together to increase safety and decrease violence.**
2. **Connect with community members who aren't engaged in the conversation, and provide them with a clear path toward taking positive action.**
3. **Inspire people to action through collaboration, conversation and outreach, and by showing them what is possible through the impact others are having on their community.**

It is important to consider what your role will be in this effort and how you can engage partners throughout the community in your initiative. For instance, if you're a community

catalyst who's organizing an event or sharing the campaign with your congregation, it can be helpful to ask yourself, "How can we involve local public safety professionals and conversation amplifiers in our efforts?" If you're a public safety professional, consider asking yourself, "who do I know in the community that has a trusted voice and the capacity to get the word out about this initiative?" Working together and leveraging each group's strengths, passions, and capacities from the start will set your campaign up for success as it progresses.

As you move through your planning process, you'll begin to form ideas for how to use the materials provided in the *My Voice. Our Community.* toolkit to reach the people in your community. They are designed to be flexible and can be adapted to fit into almost any promotional scenario. It may be easy to get carried away with an idea that feels cool, but keep in mind that it might not be the best fit for your audience or situation.

As a starting point, here are some questions you may want to consider. Documenting your responses to these questions can be helpful as you develop a strategy that will most efficiently and effectively meet your needs.

- What do we want to accomplish by sharing this message?
- How do we want to use the *My Voice. Our Community.* toolkit?
- Is this going to be a standalone campaign, or are we going to incorporate it into other existing events or efforts?
- What skills or resources can we provide to implement it?
- What skills and resources might we need help with?
- Who are others in our community that can help or who might be interested in collaborating with us as a partner to achieve our goals?
- How can we all work together to build a consistent message and outreach strategy?
- Who is the audience?
- What will resonate with them?
- What will make them ignore or disregard the message?
- What is the best place to reach them (social media, flyers and posters at a school, church, or business, billboards, sporting events, etc.)?
- How will make it clear to our audience what we are trying to accomplish and what our message is?
- How will we measure the impact our work is having?

Fill-in worksheets are available at the end of this document.

Choosing Campaign Delivery Methods

The possibilities are endless when it comes to options for delivering the *My Voice. Our Community.* campaign. Depending on the details you've solidified during your planning process, you may decide to pursue a single delivery mechanism, or you may choose to incorporate a multi-faceted engagement approach using a variety of methods.

Regardless of the route you choose, there are some essential and proven strategies and tactics you may want to consider as you are getting started. These may include, but are not limited to partnerships, community events, social media outreach, local media opportunities, paid advertising, and government relations. Please use the following information as a baseline to guide your own strategy development, and always feel free to direct your audiences to the *My Voice. Our Community.* website (www.myvoiceourcommunity.org) for additional program

resources and content.

Civic and Public Safety Community Partnerships

Strong partnerships between local community catalysts, public safety professionals, businesses, and nonprofits are critical for the successful implementation of *My Voice. Our Community*. The more voices in a community supporting the initiative, spreading the word, and volunteering their time, the more likely it is that the message will reach its intended audience and create positive impact.

When looking to build new relationships or strengthen existing partnerships, here are a few things to consider:

- **Who are other trusted voices in your community that want to see violent crime reduced?**
This could be business leaders or associations, public safety organizations, local nonprofits, children's advocates, domestic abuse shelters, pastors, teachers, or others.
- **What skillsets or resources do you need assistance with?**
Finding partners to assist you and supplement your own efforts, skills, and resources is an excellent way to expand your reach and impact.
- **Are there any conflicts of interest between partners that need to be addressed before getting started?**
Establishing transparent communications among the partners from the beginning of your effort will lead to more collaborative work and stronger outcomes.
- **What events do other organizations have planned that would be a good fit for *My Voice. Our Community*?**
Leveraging existing events that already have their logistics, funding, and planning laid out can be a quick and effective way to build partnerships and raise awareness.

Community Events

Whether you are hosting an event based solely on *My Voice. Our Community*, or whether you're incorporating the campaign into an existing event, community events offer an excellent way to bring people together, build relationships, start conversations, and get people engaged and excited about your initiative. They also offer a blank canvas for a wide variety of potential activities, some of which could include:

- Organize sport events using the t-shirt designs as jerseys;
- Host public safety workshops facilitated by community catalysts and police officers;
- Work with local artists to create public artwork using the campaign's designs;
- Hand out flyers and hang posters to generate awareness; or
- Hold a *My Voice. Our Community*. themed potluck after a faith-based service.

No matter what sort of event(s) you decide to conduct, keep in mind that for maximum effectiveness, you may want to address the following:

- Garner support for the event from a variety of community partners and voices to ensure it effectively reaches community members.
- Establish clarity around how you are using the *My Voice. Our Community*. campaign at

the event, so that people aren't caught off guard and aren't uncertain of what's going on.

- Communicate through word of mouth, social media, flyers, bulletin boards, etc. about the event date(s) and location(s) ahead of time.
- Get people involved at the event in ways that are exciting to you and your community and encourage people to take action. This can be done in countless ways, such as:
 - Asking them to write what they are doing or will do to make the community better on one of the campaign's blank poster designs;
 - Asking them to make a Facebook post using a *My Voice. Our Community.* hashtag (either #MyVoiceOurCommunity or a local version such as #MyVoiceOurCommunityNYC; or
 - Entering participants in a raffle to win a *My Voice. Our Community.* t-shirt.

Social Media Outreach

Social media can be a powerful tool for raising awareness in a community, but to see results it takes more than simply posting an image on your Facebook page one time.

When thinking about how you might use social media to support your outreach, here are a few preliminary considerations to make sure your efforts are as effective as possible:

- Do you have existing community partners or organizations who could all work together to share and engage with each other's content to generate more awareness?
- If you aren't familiar with running a social media campaign, can you get in touch with a local partner who could offer some guidance?
- Do you know any local voices or influencers that have a large following and who would like to be involved? Can you reach out to them and discuss the initiative?

If you are unsure where to start, the following are some ideas of how you can use *My Voice. Our Community.* toolkit content along with social media as part of your engagement efforts:

- **Make your voice heard** by posting one of the social media images from the toolkit and sharing how violence has affected you, what you are doing to make your community better, or how you support others working to reduce violence. Encourage your friends, family members, and allies to do the same.
- **Host a contest** with people in your organization, congregation, online community, or friend group. Contests are generally fun, and if you are awarding a prize, you might get people involved who might be hesitant otherwise. Make sure to check the social platform's terms of service to be sure you are not breaking any of their rules. Some examples:
 - Ask people to make a post sharing their voice and using a specific hashtag;
 - Ask people to create and share a piece of digital art using the designs provided in the toolkit; or
 - If you have an event where you are making shirts or posters (or other content), you can continue the engagement after the event by having a contest. For instance, ask people to take pictures of themselves wearing those t-shirts or holding those signs in public and share them while tagging your group or using a hashtag.
- **Keep it regular** by making posts on a consistent schedule. This can be once a week,

once a month, or whatever is appropriate for you and your community partners.

- **Feature community members** who are doing great work to reduce violence and build strong partnerships. This type of post could be effective as a monthly series that features people in the community that others will feel proud to share and engage with. Make sure to obtain the person's approval before hand, include photos when you can, and tag them.
- **Stream a live video** from your phone. Platforms that offer live streaming such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter often prioritize this content to show up in people's feeds ahead of other content. If you have an event going on or have something you want to share about reducing violence in your community, using live streams can be an effective way to get in front of an audience.
- **Use hashtags** like #MyVoiceOurCommunity to join the nationwide conversation, or make a local hashtag that you and your community partners can all use to follow and track the conversation (e.g. #MyVoiceOurCommunityNYC).

Also, please keep in mind that social media can stir up very strong emotions, so remember to treat everyone kindly, with respect, and without judgement, and ask your followers and audiences to do the same. To avoid unnecessary conflict, remember to be honest, open, and transparent.

Local Media

Your local print, radio, and tv outlets can be an excellent ally in your efforts to raise awareness about the campaign.

The following may be helpful to consider before attempting to gain coverage by a local media outlet:

- Does the outlet or local personality have a good relationship with the community? If not, you might want to consider alternative partnerships.
- Do you know anyone who works at one of these outlets who could help you? If not, does one of your community partners know someone there?
- If you don't know someone personally who can help at the outlet, do you know which show, host, producer, or writer would be interested in covering your efforts? If not, you'll need to identify the most appropriate person at an organization. Consider looking on the outlet's website for reporters or personalities who cover community issues, crime, police, or public safety. If all else fails, you can call the operator at an outlet and ask for assistance.

Reporters, editors, producers, etc. are being pitched a many stories every day, so in addition to being clear about who you are, what you're doing, what the campaign is about, and what event or activities you'd like to get some local coverage on, you'll want to consider what would make for an interesting story and then try to get that person excited about covering it. Sell them on the importance of the work, the innovative approach, the message, and the impact that your efforts could have.

Finally, in certain situations, for instance if you're hosting an event, you might find that drafting and sending a press release to a list of reporters is most appropriate, rather than an email or phone call. Below is a press release template (and some notes) you can use to get started.

Press Release Template Structure:

[Your organization's logo at the top, if you have one. It can be centered or on the left-hand side]

[Bold, catchy, informative headline – do not use clickbait language]

[City, State], [Month, Date, Year]—[introduction where you describe what is going on and explain why people should be interested. Keep this short at 1-2 tight paragraphs. The goal here is to provide enough information that reporters, editors and producers are aware of what's going on and can determine if it's something they want to follow up with you about.]

[Include a bullet list of 2-5 important things your audience needs to know]

[Add a quote from the event/activity's chief organizer or person of note]

[Wrap up your release with any final details and add links to any related event pages or relevant information]

[Add your contact information]

[If you or your organization or event have a short "about us" description, place it here]

[End your release with three number symbols (###), centered on the page]

Press Release Example:

(Note: the following events, dates, locations, and activities are fictional and purely for the purposes of providing an example.)



Local Nonprofit Partners with Police Department to Help Community Heal After September Tragedy

Anytown, USA, November 1, 2001—In an effort to help the city heal following the tragic events of September 1, local nonprofit ACME Organization is hosting a community potluck in partnership with the Anytown Police Department and 50 other sponsoring organizations on December 1st. The potluck will provide community members with a free meal, a chance to come together for a day of positive activities, as well as access to free physical and mental health services that are desperately needed at this time.

Key things to note:

- The **My Voice. Our Community. Potluck** will take place on December 1, 2001 from 12:00pm-4:00pm at the Community Center Park at 1000 Johnston Street.
- Activities will include basketball games, public safety workshops, vaccination clinics, coffee with a cop, live music, and free mental health services.
- Members of 50 supporting organizations will be in attendance, providing a strong voice for community support and offering those in attendance an excellent opportunity to meet other new friends who are passionate about reducing violence.

“After last month’s tragedy, we are proud to be taking a step forward toward healing our community with this event,” said ACME president Susan Snow. “The support we’ve received from organizations and citizens across the city has been overwhelming and humbling, and it shows that we are ready to bring our voices together as one community to move forward. We hope everyone joins us on December 1 for a truly special event of togetherness, community, and hope.”

Everyone from the community is invited to participate, and no registration is required. Those interested in sponsoring the event, providing additional support, volunteering, or looking for additional information should visit the event’s Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pressreleaseevent.

Media Contact:

Jason Smith
Community Leader
ACME Organization
555-555-5555
jason.smith@acmeorg.com

ACME Organization is an organization dedicated to improving the lives of community members living in Anytown, USA through a commitment to programs that effectively reduce violent crime and build community partnerships throughout the city.

###

Advertising

Paid advertising can add a significant boost to your awareness efforts. If you think advertising could help your campaign, below are a few types of advertising to consider when planning.

While some of the toolkit content can be provided directly to advertising outlets for use in their ad space, it is recommended that you seek professional assistance from a local organization or campaign partner to ensure the successful use of the campaign's assets in your advertising efforts. As always, use the campaign as an opportunity to build and strengthen relationships with local businesses and organizations (including advertising outlets)—you never know where low cost or even free assistance might come from.

Regardless of which platforms you choose, make sure your audience is active on or with those platforms.

Social Media:

This approach is the easiest to accomplish on your own and is also the most affordable because the budget can be set at whatever you're willing and able to pay. Because the *My Voice. Our Community.* campaign is designed to be organic, grass roots and viral, social media will often make the most sense for partnerships looking to start an advertising effort. Additionally, with the ability to target age groups, interests, and locations, audience targeting is far more specific than other platforms.

Print & Broadcast Media:

Local or statewide newspapers, tv and radio stations, magazines, and other publications can be an excellent way to reach audiences. Full or partial page ads, "advertorials", and other options are likely available. However, this can get pricey quickly and targeting isn't as specific as social media.

Out-of-Home Advertising:

This refers to advertisements you see on things like billboards, the sides of buses or taxis, on posters in airports or stadiums, in shopping malls and phone kiosks, on public benches, and more. Every locality has different offerings with out-of-home advertising, and these are often more expensive options, but some providers have specific set-asides for public awareness campaign support, so be sure to ask. This approach is only recommended if you are working with a team of partners and it is supplementary to other outreach efforts, as this tactic reaches broad audiences and offers little chance for engagement. It's effective at raising general awareness, but is only appropriate for larger-scale efforts.

Government Relations

Although the campaign's message is designed to come from trusted community catalysts (see Intended Audiences section for more information), government organizations and local/statewide political leaders can provide valuable support to your outreach efforts. However, there are a few important considerations to address before going down that path:

- As noted in the research section, political ideology can prevent people from hearing the campaign's message clearly, so it's important to steer clear of any partnerships that would tie the campaign to any political events, campaigns, or messages.
- The campaign should come first. Any assistance from a legislator, leader, or organization should be provided purely in a supporting capacity and purely for the

sake of helping the community.

- If community members have a strained relationship with local/statewide politicians already, use discretion when deciding to involve the politicians in the campaign. However, if they are beloved by your community members, then involving them can be a positive addition to your efforts.
- Be sure to talk through this tactic thoroughly with your community partners to ensure it is a strategy that will benefit your initiative.

With those considerations addressed, there are a wide variety of ways you can lean on government agencies and personnel for support. A few ideas include:

- Working with your state's Attorney General Office for coordination and assistance in bringing awareness among public safety departments;
- Working with your city's chamber of commerce to engage local business owners in participating and supporting the campaign;
- Working with the local school board for development and approval of a school-based program using elements of the campaign; or
- Asking your community and public safety partnerships for assistance in developing and implementing these collaborations.

Checklist for Community Catalysts & Public Safety Professionals

- What is our vision for this campaign?
- What is our mission?
- Who are our partners?
- What resources/skills do we have available to us?
- What resources/skills do we still need?
- What specific activities are part of our plan to engage the community?
- What is the timeline for these activities?
- What is the promotional strategy for getting the word out?
- Who is responsible for each part of that strategy?
- Has each partner received clear communication about what their role is, what they are responsible for, and when they are responsible for it?
- Has each partner confirmed that their organization is on board to participate in our campaign?
- Have partnering organizations received clear communication about when things are happening, what the promotion plan is, and how their names and branding may or may not be used?
- Are the logistics finalized? (e.g. have we coordinated any necessary location hosts, vendors, city permits, etc.?)
- How will we measure our success?
- Have we scheduled a time to discuss how the plan went, what we learned, what went well, what and we can do better next time?

Fill-in worksheets are available at the end of this document.

Creative Ways to Use My Voice. Our Community.

Organize a Social Media Challenge

Do you have an active following on social media? You can leverage the trust you've built with your networks by sharing a video or series of videos challenging and encouraging people to get involved. For instance, encourage them to make *their own* voices heard by making posts about their concerns over violence in the community and what they are doing to make their communities better using a customized, local #MyVoiceOurCommunity[cityname] hashtag.

Create an Inspirational Art Installation

Art can be a powerful, locally relevant tool for engaging a community. Using the designs, colors, logos and language found in the toolkit as inspiration, you could team up with local artists to create a collaborative public art installation, either a static piece or something interactive where people can contribute to the art in meaningful ways.

Launch a Poster Awareness Campaign

Local businesses can be valuable partners when it comes to spreading messages. You could work with small businesses by asking them to display the *My Voice. Our Community.* posters on their doors, store windows and bulletin boards, or near the registers to provide a continuous source of awareness around the unifying campaign message throughout the community.

Organize a Community Event

Events can be an excellent way to bring people together around something they have in common. You could host a *My Voice. Our Community.* event with any number of activities (music, food, entertainment, etc.), or simply incorporate a table, booth or other presence of the campaign into your already planned events. This could provide event-goers a chance to interact with each other and share ideas about ways to get involved. For instance, community members could engage with public safety professionals about how they can help each other reduce violence in the community.

Share the PSAs at a Community Gathering

Sometimes simple is better. You could share the video PSAs at your next faith-based gathering or meeting and use them as thought-provoking prompts for discussion about the faith community's role in local outreach to reduce violence.

Organize a Workshop

Do you work with kids in an after-school or extracurricular youth program? You could print t-shirts using the empty speech bubble design available in the toolkit and organize a workshop where you ask the kids to consider their role in keeping their community safe. They could then write on their shirts what they are doing to make their community better.

Getting Started

If you've read through this guide, you should have a clear understanding of what the campaign is, who it's for, how versatile it is, and the many ways it can be used. To get started, visit the website, download the toolkit, and launch your own *My Voice. Our Community.* campaign!

Download the Community Engagement Toolkit

The *My Voice. Our Community.* toolkit is available at:

www.myvoiceourcommunity.org/toolkit

Additional Resources:

This program is a component of the Bureau of Justice Assistance's VALOR Initiative.

Additional VALOR resources, programs, and information are available at:

<https://bja.ojp.gov/program/valor/overview>

Program Partners

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) strengthens the Nation's criminal justice system and helps America's state, local, and tribal jurisdictions reduce and prevent crime, reduce recidivism, and promote a fair and safe criminal justice system. BJA focuses its programmatic and policy efforts on providing a wide range of resources, including training and technical assistance, to law enforcement, courts, corrections, treatment, reentry, justice information sharing, and community-based partners to address chronic and emerging criminal justice challenges nationwide.

NCPI is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in Richmond, VA who for over 25 years has been committed to its mission of providing innovative learning opportunities and powerful resources that improve public safety one person at a time.

Disclaimer

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Campaign Worksheets

Every community is unique. What works to raise awareness in one community might not work in others. The following worksheets provide community catalysts and public safety professionals with a structured approach they can use as a starting point to implement a local campaign.

This packet contains the following My Voice. Our Community. campaign planning materials: a campaign roadmap, a community campaign checklist, and campaign planning worksheets.

1.

PLAN & ASSESS

Understand the situation, envision a desired future, & plan an effective strategy for bringing that future to life.

Goals &
Strategies

Partners &
Audiences

Resources &
Activities

Funding &
Logistics

Get others involved and use the worksheets in the toolkit to keep track of your progress.

2.

PREPARE & ASSESS

Work with community partners to ensure you have everything needed to launch a successful campaign.

Organize
Details

Create
Content

Generate
Support

Gather
Resources

Use the Community Engagement Toolkit and other resources to build a customized campaign.

3.

EXECUTE & ASSESS

Put the plan into action, leveraging resources, content, and support generated by community partners.

Community
Engagement

Events &
Activities

Programs &
Initiatives

Local
Awareness

Get out there and make your voices heard. Empower others to share their voices.

Always Assess:

Is what you're doing accomplishing a set task, creating a desired effect, or achieving an objective?



Community Campaign Checklist

- ☐ Do we have a vision and a mission for this campaign?
- ☐ Have we established who our target audiences are?
- ☐ Have we identified our partners?
- ☐ Have we established what resources/skills we have and what we need?
- ☐ Do we have a detailed plan to engage the community?
- ☐ Do we have a timeline for the plan's activities?
- ☐ Do we have a promotional strategy for getting the word out?
- ☐ Do we know who is responsible for each part of that strategy?
- ☐ Has each partner received clear communication about what their role is, what they are responsible for, and when they are responsible for it?
- ☐ Has each partner confirmed that their organization is on board to participate in the campaign?
- ☐ Have partnering organizations received clear communication about when things are happening, what the promotion plan is, and how their names and branding may or may not be used?
- ☐ Are any necessary logistics finalized?
- ☐ Do we know how we will measure our success?
- ☐ Have we scheduled a time to discuss how the plan went, what we learned, what went well, what and we can do better next time?



Campaign Planning Worksheet (page 1 of 4)

1. What are our vision, mission, and objectives for this campaign?

2. Who are our community partners in this effort?

3. Who are our target audiences?

4. What will resonate with our audiences? What would cause them to not hear our message?

5. What is the best place to reach our audiences (social media, school, church, local businesses, etc.)?



Campaign Planning Worksheet (page 2 of 4)

6. How can we make our intentions, goals, and messaging clear to our audiences?

7. Will this be a standalone campaign, or will we incorporate it into other existing events & efforts?

8. What resources and/or skills do we have? What do we need?

9. How can campaign partners work together to build a consistent message and outreach strategy?

10. How will we use the materials provided in the My Voice. Our Community. toolkit?



Campaign Planning Worksheet (page 3 of 4)

11. What is our plan for engaging the community?

12. What is our promotional strategy for getting the word out?

13. Who is responsible for each part of that strategy?

14. Has each partner received clear communication about what their role is, what they are responsible for, and when they are responsible for it?

15. What is the timeline for the campaign activities?



Campaign Planning Worksheet (page 4 of 4)

16. Has each partner confirmed that their organization is on board to participate in the campaign?

17. Are the logistics finalized?

18. How will we measure our success?

19. When and where will we regroup to discuss how the campaign is going, what we've learned, and what we can improve?

START WHERE YOU ARE. USE WHAT YOU HAVE. DO WHAT YOU CAN.
ARTHUR ASHE