



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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## *WHY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS CRITICAL*

Engaging community members in and governmental stakeholders is essential to law enforcement's efforts to promote the co-production of public safety. It is essential to recognize that while police and communities' public safety goals are often shared, how they prioritize them or even describe them may differ. Effective community engagement efforts can help to bridge this gap. CS360 encourages police departments to invest time in developing relationships with their communities to define shared public safety priorities, success metrics, and strategies to institutionalize feedback loops to drive progress. CS360 provides a unique forum for diverse perspectives to be heard and to strengthen problem-solving efforts.

## *HOW CS360 ENHANCES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT*

CS360 engages community members through a collaborative, problem-solving process where the community works directly with law enforcement to identify, prioritize, analyze, and respond to the problems they care about most. The CS360 model encourages community partners to augment police data by sharing their perspectives, observations, sentiments, and data about public safety priorities to aid in understanding the causes of problems and identifying solutions. Convened into problem-solving teams (PST), police, community, and other government partners work together to identify clear and specific goals along with the metrics that will be used to measure success.

CS360 requires intentional outreach to stakeholders from as many groups as possible, aiming for diverse perspectives within the PST and a more comprehensive range of potential solutions. Identifying community partners to collaborate on problem-solving can be challenging. It can be particularly challenging to determine what "community" means for the agency because there are many types of communities in any jurisdiction. To overcome this challenge, CS360 utilizes a [Community Map](#) to help agencies identify a comprehensive overview of the community and government partners that may have a vested interest in public safety. This resource includes a worksheet and directions for identifying partners in community groups, national NGOs (chapters and affiliates), and government agencies and services in six areas: education and youth services, health, justice and crime, housing, labor and economic development, and public works and traffic. Each section of the Community Map includes examples of individuals, organizations, and agencies to consider. It is essential to recruit both supporters of the agency and its critics. These critics will likely bring a fresh perspective to the problems that matter to their constituents. Department staff can then identify organization representatives by networking with others in the police agency or existing external partners. Existing partners can also recommend other relevant organizations that may have been overlooked while producing the Community Map.

## **CASE EXAMPLE**

For a police department of a Division I university, engaging community members meant identifying and including groups and individuals representing the campus community (e.g., staff, students, and faculty) and the community surrounding the campus (e.g., business owners, community leaders, and residents).

This agency had additional complexities and challenges. There was some overlapping jurisdiction as the university and city have distinct police departments. This means additional coordination is required for public safety initiatives and there is mutual responsibility to the community to communicate the different roles of each agency. In addition, a large university has numerous student groups and active community organizations. Therefore, outreach across the various campus stakeholders can take time, but gathering perspectives from a diverse group is essential. Another challenge of working on community engagement in a university setting is the nearly constant change in student leadership. This meant that the department had to build and maintain relationships with many student organizations, not just with the student leaders of those organizations.

The police department's leadership utilized CS360's scanning phase to gain input about priority community concerns. This included attending staff and student senate meetings, calling community members individually, and hosting small focus groups. The department then convened the community members interviewed by the CS360 team to be part of an ongoing advisory team for the CS360 initiative. This group reviewed data collected through the scanning process and decided on public safety priorities. A police department data dashboard facilitated data-sharing and the data was also shared online to enhance transparency with the community.

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS »**

- » *COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PROBLEM-SOLVING REQUIRES PATIENCE, THOUGHTFUL PROJECT MANAGEMENT, AND COMMITMENT TO THE PROCESS OF OUTREACH TO MANY DIFFERENT COMMUNITY GROUPS.*
- » *MEMBERS WHO HAVE DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES REGARDING PUBLIC SAFETY ARE ESSENTIAL TO EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION.*
- » *POLICE DEPARTMENTS THAT LEVERAGE THEIR CAPACITY TO PRIORITIZE CS360 IMPLEMENTATION AND SEE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AS A KEY OBJECTIVE OF THE MODEL CAN SUCCESSFULLY COLLABORATE WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO CO-PRODUCE PUBLIC SAFETY IN A MEANINGFUL WAY.*