



NYU | WAGNER

CAPSTONE PROGRAM '23

Interrupting the Cycle of Violence with Trenton Community Street Team

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MEET THE TEAM



Hanna Johnson

Hanna brings a decade of communications and advocacy experience to the project. While at NYU Wagner, she received a Parke Fellowship to lead a research project tracking mis- and disinformation related to the 2022 midterm elections on social media at the Brennan Center for Justice. Prior to Wagner, she spent three years at the American Civil Liberties Union

as a Communications Strategist fighting to end mass incarceration, the death penalty, and immigration detention. She also spent four years at a strategic communications firm where she worked with a broad range of companies including Google and Code2040, a nonprofit seeking to increase racial diversity in tech. Hanna is originally from the Bay Area in California, and she graduated with a B.S. in journalism from the University of Colorado at Boulder.



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Nyell has several years of experience in program management, strategic planning, and evidenced-based policy and program initiatives. She has a proven track record designing and executing effective strategies that address the root causes of inequality and promote equity. During her time at Syracuse University where she double majored in Political Science and African

American Studies, she also found her passion in social justice and advocacy by interning at the New York Civil Liberties Union working on issues such as the school-to-prison pipeline, I-81 Viaduct, and the Raise the Age Act. Now, as a Policy/Program Manager at Girls for Gender Equity she is continuing the work to advance equity for marginalized communities by working at the intersection of race, gender, class and sexuality.

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Nathan has extensive experience in operations, policy, and compliance. Most recently, he worked with VoteRiders as a LEAD Democracy Fellow, organizing volunteers and helping citizens in obtaining their voter ID ahead of the 2022 midterm election. Nathan previously worked in policy at two DC-based healthcare nonprofits, assisting stakeholders and leading the implementation of new case management systems. Nathan began his career as a caseworker in Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's Manhattan office, helping New Yorkers resolve complications with the federal government. He is originally from Phoenix, AZ, and holds a B.A. in Economics and Public Policy from Sarah Lawrence College.

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Michelle is an experienced policy and research analyst, with a breadth of knowledge in the public safety, criminal justice, and drug reform spaces. In her five years at the Manhattan District Attorney's Office she spearheaded agency-wide efforts to improve accountability, transparency, and operational sustainability through the development of innovative reporting and management tools, including the launch of the office's public-facing data dashboard. While at NYU Wagner, Michelle served as the founding president of the school's first cannabis policy and advocacy organization, NYU CannaPolicy, collaborating with experts and advocates to promote the just and equitable legalization of cannabis in New York, and around the country. Michelle holds a B.A. in Political Science from Middlebury College and an M.A. in Political Science from UNC-Chapel Hill. She currently resides in Brooklyn.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a product of a partnership between The NYU Wagner School of Public Service Capstone Program and the Trenton Police Department (TPD). Our Capstone team was tasked with reviewing and analyzing the rollout of Trenton Community Street Team (TCST), a TPD-funded community-based violence interruption (CVI) program, and providing recommendations for continued program success.

The purpose of this report is to document the initial phases of program implementation and to identify key strengths and areas of improvement. Our hope is that these recommendations empower TCST to better provide essential services to constituents in Trenton and expand the impact of their operations. In preparing this report, our team conducted an extensive literature review to identify nationwide best practices for similar programs. We collaborated closely with the TPD, Isles, Street Team staff, program partners, and a participant to fully understand TCST's history, programming, and structure. Based on interviews with stakeholders and reviewing documentation, our team identified key operational findings.

These findings tell a story of a successful rollout and effective operations, with highlighted areas for improvement as the program continues to grow. Our team then created recommendations to address each finding. These recommendations encourage TCST to continue activities already in place as well as pursue opportunities to clarify organizational structure and boost employee morale to support the long-term and sustained success of the program. These recommendations were grounded in best practices identified from the literature review.

STAFFING

FINDINGS

01 Staff are thoughtfully chosen, well-trained, and dedicated to the work.

Frontline staff have a deep knowledge of and commitment to the community and are essential to TCST's success.

02 Maintaining staffing levels may prove challenging.

Outreach workers are at risk for burnout, but the candidate pool for workers is limited.

03 Compensation does not support the cost of living.

Staff member wages are competitive but do not provide financial security due to high cost of living in Trenton.

STAFFING

RECOMMENDATIONS

01 Cultivate a candidate pool.

Invest in a mentorship program and maintain relationships with past participants who may be interested in joining TCST in the future.

02 Evaluate staff compensation.

Aligning wages with cost of living requirements may reduce staff turnover and boost morale.

03 Pursue additional funding opportunities to expand available staffing resources.

Identify grants and funding sources that can be allocated toward ensuring the program is sufficiently staffed and supporting the above staff recommendations.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

FINDINGS

01 Organizational culture is aligned with staff identity.

Staff members highly value their colleagues and treat them like family. They trust each other when it comes to decision-making and feedback.

02 Personal relationships are foundational to the program.

Staff members know and trust Project Director Perry Shaw; his relationships help build staff cohesion.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

RECOMMENDATIONS

01 Expand the partnership network.

Partnerships are key to building a sustainable coalition with a singular goal of eliminating the cycle of violence in Trenton. Continue to work with and invest in other stakeholders, especially Black and Latinx-led organizations.

02 Develop a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategy.

Establish clear goals and plans for fostering a culture of inclusivity; develop a strategy for reaching out to the Latinx community.

ROUTINES & STRUCTURES

FINDINGS

01 Routines and supportive resources are essential to supporting staff in a trauma-inducing workplace.

Staff value and thrive on the morning/afternoon team meeting structure; staff appreciate wellness and development support.

02 Reporting structures are ambiguous.

The organizational chart is out of date and there are no clear process or service maps.

03 Commitment to rigorous data collection faces implementation challenges.

Staff members are collecting data, though there is a backlog of administrative data management work.

ROUTINES & STRUCTURES

RECOMMENDATIONS

01 Continue to build on routines and invest in staff support and development.

Continue holding regular, daily meetings; continue to bring Dr. York in and add other regular training or team-building where possible.

02 Maintain an up-to-date organizational chart and create process maps.

Updating and maintaining the organization chart will help with reporting structure; process maps can help clarify workflow and how information is shared.

03 Ensure data collection is operationalized as a routine organizational practice.

Encourage staff to take-up the electronic case management system; consider hiring an administrative data manager focused solely on data, not outreach.

LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

FINDINGS

- 01** Decision-making is centralized in TPD, but the program is operated like a community-based, grassroots organization.

Administrative decisions — budget, staffing, programming, and more — are made without clear mechanisms for staff feedback or input.

- 02** Uncertainty over partnerships overlays a history of racial tension and mistrust.

TPD and Isles both have reputational challenges in terms of healing the history of institutionalized racism, segregation, and divestment in Trenton.

LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

01 Create opportunities for bi-directional feedback.

Create regular, operationalized opportunities for TCST staff to share programmatic feedback, ideas, and input with program administrators; implement ideas where possible.

02 Embrace partnerships to strengthen credibility and ease historic tensions.

Invest in formal relationships with a variety of partners — particularly those which are Black and Latinx-led — to strengthen trust and legitimacy. Invite TCST staff to attend TPD roll call.

BACKGROUND

Trenton, New Jersey has recently been considered one of the most dangerous cities in America.¹ The violent crime rate in Trenton is uniquely high, with 1,169 violent crimes for every 100,000 people who live there.² This city in particular has a high concentration of poverty, violence, urban blight, and gang activity. As violence worsened, public health professionals and law enforcement officials pressed for answers for two central questions: “How can we prevent violence in our community?” and, “What preventative services/programs would best support this initiative?”

Interrupting the Cycle of Violence With Trenton Community Street Team, is a product of a collaboration between the Trenton Police Department, Trenton Community Street Team, and the NYU Capstone Team to begin to answer these important questions. It is the culmination of an extensive examination of historic and present-day cycles of violence in Trenton, best practices for violence interruption and opportunities for healing.

1. Trenton’s History of State Violence

The Hedgepeth and Williams Case Study

In Trenton, as across the United States, a history of state perpetrated violence has had a profound impact on cycles of violence and disadvantage in the present day. Segregation and institutionalized racism have produced vast disparities in access to services, resources, and opportunity in already marginalized communities. These systems of separation exacerbate feelings of mistrust and resentment between groups of people, contributing to conflict and violence.

¹ Demarco, Jerry. "America’s Most Dangerous Cities List Cities Paterson, Trenton, Camden." *DailyVoice.Com* (Apr. 24, 2022). [Source](#).

² "10 Most Dangerous Cities in NJ." (April 24, 2022). [Source](#).

The story of Gladys Hedgepeth and Berline Williams provides insight into the painful history of segregation and discrimination in Trenton and the ongoing fight for liberation, justice, and equity.³ Moreover, their story illustrates how the State has and continues to perpetuate and enforce systems of institutionalized discrimination.

In 1944, Gladys Hedgepeth and Berline Williams, two Black women, sought to enroll their children in a white-school that offered better resources and opportunities. They were met with resistance and pushback from the school authorities who refused to allow Black children to attend the school. Because the children were denied access to these all-white facilities, they had to endure two-mile walks to school.⁴

Hedgepeth and Williams filed a lawsuit against the Trenton Board of Education, claiming their policies were unlawful and discriminatory. The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in their favor, effectively outlawing segregation in public schools. Their quest for justice – and success in finding it – is considered a precursor to the landmark U.S. Supreme Court Case *Brown v. Board of Education*.⁵

The experience of Hedgepeth and Williams was not an isolated incident, but rather part of a broader system of segregation and discrimination that was enforced through both legal and social means in Trenton and many other cities across the United States. New Jersey schools remain some of the most segregated in the nation, and Trenton has one of the most segregated school districts within the state.⁶ But the actions of Hedgepeth and Williams and others like them helped to catalyze a growing movement for civil rights and social justice, of which Trenton Community Street Team is now a part.

³ Coin, Kevin. "62 Years Later, a Question of What Is Right." *New York Times* (Nov. 26, 2006). [Source](#).

⁴ Coin (2006).

⁵ Coin (2006).

⁶ Orfield, Gary, Jongyeong Ee, and Ryan Coughlin. "New Jersey's segregated schools: Trends and paths forward." (2017) at 17. [Source](#).

2. Trenton Demographics and Crime Statistics

According to recent Census data, over 80% of Trenton's population is Black and Latinx, while only 30% is white.⁷ Research shows that Black men and women are more likely to be victimized than other groups, which may partially explain the high rates of violence in Trenton. Importantly, this racial disparity is not unique to Trenton and is reflective of larger societal issues related to racial inequality and systemic oppression. In 2020, Black Americans represented less than 15% of the national population but accounted for over 50% of all homicide victims.⁸

Trenton is a predominantly low-income city, with over 27% of the population living below the poverty line.⁹ There is a causal link between poverty and crime, as well as poor health and instability. Individuals living in poverty are more likely to experience high levels of stress, have limited access to resources and opportunities, and be exposed to violence in their communities.¹⁰ Inequality and other factors such as unemployment, a lack of education, family structure, lack of resources and exclusion from the formal economy contribute to cycles of crime and incarceration. Each of these factors make it difficult for some of the poorest Americans to achieve social mobility and economic empowerment.

Ultimately, Trenton's demographics are shaped by historical and structural factors, such as redlining and discriminatory housing policies. These policies have contributed to the concentration of low-income and minority individuals in certain areas of the city, which may in turn contribute to higher rates of violent crime in these neighborhoods.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. "QuickFacts: Trenton city, New Jersey." *Census.gov* (2021). [Source.](#)

⁸ "Black Homicide Victimization in the United States: An Analysis of 2020 Homicide Data," Violence Policy Center (April 2023). [Source.](#)

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2021)

¹⁰ Love, Hanna. "Want to reduce violence? Invest in place." The Brookings Institute, (Nov. 16, 2021). [Source.](#)

3. A History of Violence Interruption Programs

The history of violence interruption programs dates back to the 1960s, with the creation of the first Ceasefire program in Chicago. The Ceasefire model, also known as the Cure Violence model, was created by epidemiologist Gary Slutkin. The model uses a public health approach to identify and intervene in violent conflicts and has been implemented in cities across the United States and around the world. The public health approach constitutes an important shift in thinking, suggesting that violence is a contagious phenomenon and threatens the health of populations.¹¹

Other violence interruption programs have since emerged, including the Boston Miracle program, which launched in the 1990s and focused on reducing gang-related violence in Boston. The program used a combination of community policing, youth programs, and job training to address the root causes of violence in the city. The messaging of this program was instilled in the community through formal meetings with gang members, meetings with individuals who were incarcerated and through outreach workers.¹²

In recent years, violence interruption programs have gained renewed attention as a strategy to address gun violence and other forms of violent crime. Cities like New York, Chicago, and Oakland have implemented violence interruption programs as part of their overall crime prevention strategies. While violence interruption programs have shown promise in reducing violence in some communities, their effectiveness can vary depending on a variety of factors, including community engagement, funding, and support from law enforcement and government agencies.

¹¹ Slutkin, G. "Violence as a Contagious Disease: The Cure Violence Model." *AMA Journal of Ethics* (2013). [Source.](#)

¹² U.S. DOJ Office of Justice Programs. "Reducing Gun Violence: The Boston Gun Project's Operation Ceasefire," National Institute of Justice Research Report, (Sept. 2021). [Source.](#)

4. The Founding of Trenton Community Street Team

TCST was created in response to a needs assessment which identified violent crime, which had reached historic highs in the early 2010, as among the top public health concerns facing the city. The initiative is administered through a partnership between the Trenton Police Department and Isles, Inc., a long-standing non-profit organization dedicated to improving access to resources and opportunity within the community and is funded through a NJ Department of Community Affairs grant awarded to TPD.

TCST is loosely modeled after Newark Community Street Team (NCST), and utilizes a community-centered, relationship-based, and trauma-informed approach, grounded in three pillars of success: self development, advocacy, and community engagement.¹³ TCST encompasses several programs, including high-risk intervention, safe passage, resource and service-referrals, case management, and community engagement. These programs have been operationalized on a rolling basis since fall 2022.

TCST's early efforts have already had an impact on Trenton: through its various services and programs, as well as its community engagement and outreach efforts, TCST has become recognized and well-respected in the community. The emergence of organizations like TCST demonstrates how communities can come together to address violence and build a path forward to more peaceful communities.

¹³ Trenton Community Street Teams: A Path Coordinated to Public Safety. Trenton Daily (2022). [Source](#).

METHODS

Our team utilized a variety of methods to gain insight into Trenton Community Street Team's operations, understand best practices, and finalize recommendations for future action.

Literature Review

Beginning in Fall 2022, our team conducted a deep analysis of case studies, evaluations, and policy research relating to previous and current violence interruption models and programs nationwide, spanning over the last six decades. Some examples include Operation Ceasefire in Boston, the TRUCE project in Phoenix, and the CURE Violence programs in Chicago and New York. One evaluation we paid close attention to was the narrative evaluation of the Newark Community Street Team (NCST)¹⁴ as it served as a model for TCST. Our team closely reviewed the research, identified key findings and themes, and compiled them into a literature review that discusses the evolution of violence reduction and community-based programs, highlighting best practices and pitfalls. These findings guided us in designing our interview questions and survey instrument, and provided a framework for our recommended actions for continued program success. High-level findings from our literature review are discussed in the next section of this report; the complete literature review is included in Appendix A.

Qualitative Interviews

Our team conducted interviews with a variety of TCST stakeholders, including four outreach workers, three high-risk interventionists, two managers, four program administrators, two program partners, and one participant. Conversations with staff were typically held in a group setting

¹⁴ Leap, Jorja et al. "NEWARK COMMUNITY STREET TEAM NARRATIVE EVALUATION," UCLA Social Justice Research Partnership. Dec. 2020. [Source](#).

to hear varying perspectives and to observe interaction between staff members. Interviews with administrators, partners, and the participant were held individually. With the exception of one staff interview conducted in person, all interviews were held virtually over Zoom.

Staff interviews typically consisted of questions relating to their personal and professional background, TCST operations, and interactions with the community. Other questions included how staff collected data, their experiences and feelings on regularly interacting with police, and how supported they felt by their peers and supervisors. We asked about how they became interested in joining TCST, their outlook on the program's future, and what improvements might be needed. Our team spoke with some staff members multiple times to further understand program operations and staff roles within TCST.

Interviews with program administrators focused on how they view the overall role of TCST in the community and the challenges associated with running this type of program. Our team asked about funding, supporting staff, racial dynamics, affiliation with police, measurement and data collection, and long-term program goals.

Interviews with partners focused on how partner organizations became involved with TCST and the evolution of the relationship. Participant interviews centered the experience of community members and the types of assistance they received from TCST, as well as their overall thoughts on the program and recommendations for the future.

A list of sample interview questions can be found in Appendix C.

Document Review

Another method for understanding TCST was to review documents related to the formation and operations of the program, including organizational charts, grant proposals, program descriptions, and more. This documentation assisted us in determining the efficacy of program operations, funding, and impact.

Survey Data Collection

Lastly, our team distributed a survey to TCST administrators and staff. The aim of the survey was to collect information about job descriptions, salaries, staffing, scheduling, programming, and other key pieces of information that would assist us in understanding the complete scope of TCST.

BEST PRACTICES

FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review played an important role in guiding our data collection process and served as a framework for aligning our findings and recommendations with established best practices. Below we provide a high-level discussion of these best practices; the full literature review can be found in the Appendix A.

1. A community-based approach, using trusted messengers, is crucial for effective violence intervention.

Over the past decade, there has been a shift away from police-focused, punitive violence reduction programs toward a community-based model that relies on trusted messengers for community outreach and violence intervention. Under this model, community members with lived experiences of violence, incarceration, and other trauma connect with high-risk individuals and direct them towards program services and other support systems.¹⁵ Trusted messengers undergo extensive training in areas such as restorative justice practices, violence interruption techniques, trauma-informed care, and medical training to become public safety professionals. This approach invests in a holistic community change process that prioritizes long-term healing and support over short-term crime reduction and punishment. The resulting programs are evidence-driven, culturally appropriate, and trauma-informed.

¹⁵ Lynch, Mathew, et al. "Arches transformative mentoring program: an Implementation and Impact Evaluation" Urban Institute (2018). [Source](#).

This model has established a proven track record that is achieving results. New York's Arches Transformative Mentoring Program, which follows a similar model, was successful in reducing one-year felony re-conviction rates among participants by 75 percent.

Participants interviewed emphasized the importance of having mentors "who they could see themselves in and who were available 24/7."¹⁶ Trusted messengers are also foundational to Newark Community Street Team, the initiative on which TCST was modeled. NCST reduced violence in the community, contributing to a 60-year low in community violence.¹⁷

2. Staff and their lived experience must be valued and rewarded appropriately.

The success of CVI programs is dependent on hiring the right people. The lived experiences of staff — particularly proximity to violence, trauma and systems of oppression — are key to their ability to do this work effectively. Community-led program staff face heightened risks of burnout and re-traumatization that contribute to high turnover rates. One study found violence interruption outreach workers regularly experienced stressors ranging from physical exposure to violence, harassment, false arrest by law enforcement, disrespect from other program stakeholders, and the indignity of low pay/low value for high-risk, intensive work.¹⁸

Staff members in Chicago and New York CURE Violence programs communicated that they had difficulty taking days off and disconnecting

¹⁶ Arches Evaluation at 48.

¹⁷ Hodge, J. "The Future of Public Safety Is Here in Newark," *The Nation* (Mar. 20, 2023). [Source.](#)

¹⁸ Bocanegra, K. et al. "BETWEEN A BULLET AND ITS TARGET: STREET INTERVENTION, TRAUMA EXPOSURE, AND PROFESSIONAL IMPLICATIONS," University of Illinois Chicago (January 2022). [Source.](#)

from their work because they were always “on-call.”¹⁹ Newark Community Street Team staff felt like they were personally responsible for the future of the youth in their community. Nearly all staff members interviewed described multiple traumatic experiences.²⁰ Given the essential nature of staff with lived experiences in doing this work, this burnout and resulting retention challenges present a real threat to the sustainability and long-term effectiveness of CVI programs.

Because these models are often grassroots in nature, funding instability and/or low pay also present a meaningful threat to the retention of staff who often live near the poverty line themselves. Staff from various programs we examined repeatedly identified job instability resulting from inconsistent program funding, contract-based employment (as opposed to full-time status), and weak organizational support structures repeatedly as a recurring occupational stressor. In Newark, more than half of all staff members indicated they needed financial stability and upward mobility at work.²¹

In order to mitigate the challenges and develop a sustainable pipeline of healthy, effective staff, programs must invest in tools and resources that uplift and support staff members as they engage in difficult work. Given the risk for re-traumatization, staff members should be provided regular access to mental health services and counselors with training and experience treating clients with traumatic histories.²² Program administrators should also invest in promoting healing and restoration within their organization by creating safe spaces for staff, as well as offering opportunities for professional development, which can contribute positively to growth and job satisfaction.²³

¹⁹ DeFries Gallagher, A. "A Qualitative Analysis of the Recommended Implementation and Replication of the Cure Violence Model According to New York City and Chicago Program Staff Interviews." Diss. Johns Hopkins University (2021). [Source](#).

²⁰ Newark Community Street Team Narrative Evaluation at 86-88.

²¹ Newark Community Street Team Narrative Evaluation at 90-91.

²² Newark Community Street Team Narrative Evaluation at 143-145.

²³ Newark Community Street Team Narrative Evaluation at 72-76.

3. Data collection must be operationalized within the program.

A program's evaluability — and therefore continued ability to solicit funds, establish trust, and demonstrate effectiveness — is dependent on the availability of comprehensive program data. Incomplete or nonexistent data presents barriers to measuring, improving, and demonstrating program effectiveness. Data-driven performance and outcome metrics also provide transparency about how programs operate and serve to hold administrators and program staff accountable.

Programs that have successfully leveraged data are more capable of establishing clear, measurable program outcomes that can be directly attributed to program activity. In order to achieve this correlation, it's important to track program outputs — such as the number of calls responded to, community meetings held, and cases opened and closed — as well as outcomes. Outcomes could be reductions in violent incidents, stopped evictions, or other metrics of increased community stability.

Programs that are unable to invest so heavily in developing quantitative outcome measures are still encouraged to track qualitative measures, including from participant interviews, surveys, and community meetings. Specific best practices associated with healthy data collection habits include investing in data management software systems, establishing performance benchmarks that are regularly tracked (quarterly, bi-annually, annually), and reporting out the data for transparency and accountability.

4. Multi-stakeholder coalitions are crucial, but they present challenges.

Sustainable programs that continue to be effective in the long-run tend to bridge broad coalitions of multiple community stakeholders. The most

successful programs include directly impacted community members, community leaders, local businesses, and service providers, who were often the ones directly interfacing with community members in crisis. Washington D.C.'s Cure the Streets program, for example, mobilizes community members such as faith leaders, businesses, and community leaders to change the norms around violence.²⁴ These diverse stakeholders provide cohesion and wraparound support, positioning the program to catalyze a meaningful cultural shift within the communities it serves.

There are also challenges posed by diverse coalitions, particularly the tendency for various groups to claim, as opposed to share, credit. Boston's Operation Ceasefire halted operations in 2000 due to loss of key leadership and staff, as well as political challenges. The Bridgespan Group described this phenomena: "Many groups stood to gain by claiming responsibility for 'The Boston Miracle' even though it was really the sum of their efforts that made the difference."²⁵ Coalitions can manage these issues by ensuring partners are aligned on a shared vision to guide stakeholder activity at every stage of implementation, as well as developing key performance indicators of program success that are consistent with the goals of each top-line stakeholder.

²⁴ Cure the Streets: OAG's Violence Interruption Program. Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia at 3. Last accessed: Dec. 2, 2022. [Source.](#)

²⁵ "Case Study: Boston," The Bridgespan Group. [Source.](#)

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

1. Background

The Capstone Team conducted an environmental analysis of similar community violence interruption (CVI) programs to identify strengths and comparative advantages. An environmental scan is a process that tracks trends and monitors internal and external factors that may directly impact the long-term success and sustainability of an organization, including competing and complementary organizations in its ecosystem. This step analyzes the “big picture,” which helps to identify where the organization wants to go over the next few years.

2. Scope

There were challenges and limitations to conducting this limited environmental scan. As the Capstone Team conducted interviews with program staff and participants, we recognized the need for a broad scope which would capture community-based organizations operating in Trenton, NJ. As outlined above, this environmental scan aims to document the range of community-based organizations in Trenton that are operating and offering similar programming and services. This scan only provides a ‘snapshot’ of similar existing organizations operating in Trenton. TCST is a referral-based organization and works directly and indirectly with some of these organizations who are providers to TCST participants. Considering this, TCST is not competing with neighboring organizations, but rather creating partnerships to these other organizations' resources and services. With these limitations, the Capstone Team established the following questions to guide this work:

- What programs, services, supports, and other resources exist that serve residents impacted by or at-risk of violence?
- Who leads them?
- Where are the gaps in programming? Are there duplicative efforts that can be merged?

3. Analysis

The Capstone Team conducted an environmental scan for TCST and compared it to the following organizations: Violence Intervention for the Community Through Outreach Recovery (Victory), Anchor House, Reentry Coalition of New Jersey, Mercer Street Friends, and A Better Way.

Violence Intervention for the Community Through Outreach Recovery (Victory)

Victory is a non-profit organization based in Trenton, NJ. It is a hospital-based violence intervention program that provides comprehensive support and services to victims of violence and their families. The organization offers crisis intervention, case management, advocacy and trauma-focused counseling care. Victory has a strong community outreach program, which includes partnerships with other community-based organizations, schools, and faith-based organizations to provide education and awareness about violence prevention. Victory is one of six recipients to be awarded \$866,400 in federal American Rescue Plan funds allocated to support hospital-based violence intervention programs in New Jersey.

²⁶ "Governor Murphy and AG Platkin Announce Recipients of \$15M in Grant Funding for Violence Intervention and Prevention Work," *Office of Governor Phil Murphy, State of New Jersey*, (Apr. 4, 2023). [Source](#).

Anchor House

Anchor House is a non-profit organization that provides shelter, food, and counseling services to runaway, homeless, and abused youth in the Trenton area. The organization also offers education, job training and life skills programs to help youth transition to self-sufficient adulthood. Anchor House typically partners with local businesses, schools and government agencies.

The Reentry Coalition of New Jersey

The Reentry Coalition of New Jersey works to reduce recidivism and promotes a successful transition for formerly incarcerated individuals. The services provided include job training, education, housing assistance, and mental health counseling. The organization also works to create policy change and raise awareness about the socioeconomic barriers faced by formerly incarcerated individuals.

Mercer Street Friends

Mercer Street Friends is a non-profit organization that provides a variety of services to low-income individuals and families based in Trenton. The services provided include food assistance, early childhood education, youth mentoring and job training. Their work addresses issues of poverty and inequality in the community.

Trenton Restorative Street Team

The Trenton Restorative Street Team is a community-based non-profit organization that works with individuals, families, and communities

affected by violence and conflict, providing support and resources to help them heal and find alternatives to violence. The organization also offers training and workshops on restorative justice practices and conflict resolution, as well as organizing community events and initiatives to promote healing and community-building.

A Better Way

A Better Way is a non-profit organization that provides counseling, advocacy, and support services to victims of domestic violence and those who are at-risk. Its mission is to “to empower victims of domestic violence and advocate for social change through support, education, and community involvement.” The organization aims to provide a range of services to survivors of domestic violence, including crisis intervention, counseling, shelter, and legal advocacy. It also offers prevention and education programs to raise awareness about domestic violence and promote healthy relationships. Overall, A Better Way is committed to creating a safe and supportive community where individuals can live free from the fear of domestic violence.

Trenton Community Street Team

In comparison to the above organizations, Trenton Community Street Team is a community-based organization that works to prevent violence and promote community safety through outreach, education, and advocacy. The organization's focus is on building relationships with community members, especially youth, to provide mentoring, support, and guidance. TCST also works to connect community members with resources and services that can help them address issues related to violence, poverty, and inequality.



FIGURE 1.
TCST PROGRAM COMPARISON

	Related	Similar	Substitute
VICTORY capitalhealth	✓	✓	✗
ANCHOR HOUSE Anchor House	✓	✓	✓
REENTRY COALITION OF NJ REENTRY COALITION OF NEW JERSEY	✗	✓	✗
MERCER STREET FRIENDS MERCER STREET FRIENDS	✓	✗	✓
TRENTON RESTORATIVE STREET TEAM Salvation and Social Justice Liberating Public Policy Theologically	✓	✓	✓
A BETTER WAY A BETTER WAY NJ	✓	✓	✓

PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Trenton Community Street Team is a grant-funded program administered by a partnership between TPD and Isles, Inc., a community-based non-profit operating in Trenton for over a decade. Isles provides administrative and managerial support to TCST and covers up-front costs for utilities and other monthly expenditures for which Isles is reimbursed through program funds.

TCST provides a range of services and programs to support the needs of community members, which include street-level initiatives, individual case management, referrals to resources and services, and community engagement. TCST implements its programs and services in coordination with TPD. A full logic model illustrating TCST's theory of change can be found in the Appendix B.

STREET TEAM INITIATIVES

Safe Passage

This program aims to ensure the safety of students as they arrive and depart from school. Safe passage workers patrol the areas outside local schools, developing relationships with students, parents, and educational staff, and work to prevent, intervene, and mediate conflict as it arises. TCST began operating Safe Passage in September 2022 at the start of the academic year. Currently, TCST employs six safe passage workers.

High-Risk Intervention

High-risk interventionists are deployed to (1) respond to reports of violence or impending violence in the community (2) intervene, mediate, and de-escalate, and (3) aid survivors and the community in healing and recovery.

Resource Hubs

TCST operates two resource hubs, located in the Mayor Donnelly Homes public housing complex and the Trenton Public Library. The Hubs offer resources, referral-based services, and case management to community members. The Donnelly Hub began operating in summer 2022 and the Library Hub opened its doors in March 2023.

Community Engagement

TCST's community engagement strategy involves organizing community walks in local neighborhoods and leading Trenton Health Education & Safety Information Sessions (THESIS), a monthly roundtable for public discussion among key stakeholders on violence prevention strategies and responses, including community members and public officials.

Community Sentinels

TCST will train, deploy and supervise volunteers from the community to respond to low-level public safety and quality of life issues, freeing up police resources to attend to more serious concerns. The Community Sentinels Project is scheduled to begin in the second year of program implementation.

STAFFING ROSTER AS OF MARCH 2023

21 TOTAL EMPLOYEES

PARTIAL AND FULL-TIME POSITIONS

- (1) Project Director
- (1) Operations Manager
- (1) Clinical Operations
- (1) Deputy Operations Manager
- (6) Outreach Workers
- (3) High-Risk Interventionists
- (1) Street Team Ambassador
- (1) Outreach & Advocacy Coordinator
- (6) Safe Passage Workers

**See Appendix E for organizational chart and
Street Team job descriptions.**

QUICK TCST PROGRAM STATS AS OF MARCH 2023

49 people completed program intake

45 average days in programming

150 families received supplies,
donations and other resources

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Staffing

Findings

01 Staff are thoughtfully chosen, well-trained, and dedicated to the work.

The Trenton Community Street Team staff were thoughtfully and strategically chosen, are well-trained, and have a deep knowledge and commitment to the Trenton community. Most have lived in the community for years. They contribute significantly to the successful development of the program, not only as a consistent, supportive presence on the streets, but by connecting participants to services and resources, overseeing case management, maintaining data logs and reports, leading community walks, attending local meetings, and cultivating relationships and partnerships. Each staff member wears many hats and operates in a range of contexts, while maintaining professionalism and adhering to organizational protocols.

Many staff members have a history of both voluntary and paid work mentoring young people in Trenton and elsewhere, making them uniquely positioned to implement the program effectively. Their commitment to professionalizing their roles and the care and consistency that they bring

to these roles has already paid off in the early stages of the program rollout.

As a relationship-based program, TCST's success depends on the connections staff build and maintain with each other and the community. Our conversations with program stakeholders indicate that their efforts have already begun to pay off, as growing familiarity with their work translates to increased trust and utilization of TCST as a resource for addressing individual and community needs. Participants and partners have also expressed great appreciation for the ongoing work of TCST staff and the impact they are already having on community safety.

Anything I've ever needed
help with since August,
they've been there every
step of the way. — PARTICIPANT



02 Maintaining staffing levels may prove challenging.

TCST staff members are the organization's greatest assets not only because of the special nature of the work, but because Street Team's community-based violence intervention model depends on the strength and continuity of relationships between staff members and the community. The successful implementation of this program then depends in many ways on staff and staff retention, especially in the early phases of implementation while the program is first establishing legitimacy, trust, and awareness within the community.

Staff turnover in year one has been acceptable, with 21 of 29 total people hired still employed with the organization. However, it is important to recognize that there is a limited pool of candidates for this kind of work. Outreach and intervention roles, in general, tend to see higher rates of turnover due to burnout, re-traumatization, and, often, inadequate respect and compensation. Trenton is also a relatively small community where everyone knows each other.

Staff churn over the next few periods would potentially leave the organization with few candidates who are interested in and well-suited to this challenging work. TCST's managerial director expressed concern over the program's ability to both retain staff and maintain existing staffing levels.

I do worry about running out of people who are interested in doing this work, if we go through all the usual suspects. We could burn through that pretty quickly, and I'm not sure how we'd find people.

— ADMINISTRATOR

03 Compensation does not support the cost of living.

Key to staff retention is adequate compensation, which matches the rigors and requirements of the position. A recent study of street interventionists found that better wages help mitigate the effects of traumatic stress by contributing to employees overall well-being and increasing access to resources.²⁷

Street Team full-time non-managerial staff are paid between \$20-\$25.50 per hour. These salaries are competitive with and even exceed the estimated average wage for community outreach workers in New Jersey and nationwide.²⁸ As a baseline for comparison, the starting salary for a Trenton police officer is about \$44,000 or \$22 per hour.²⁹ Full-time managerial and executive staff are paid between \$26.04 - \$39.06. These wages are on average competitive with government wages for the City of Trenton, NJ over the past few years.

Even so, pay was a particular concern for TCST employees at the lower end of the organization's pay scale. Nearly all the outreach workers we interviewed reported taking a pay cut of \$4 to \$5 per hour – some larger – in order to work for TCST. While conscious of constraints on program resources tied to its grant-based funding, some staff members remarked that their current pay did not grant them financial stability or security due

²⁷ Bocanegra et al. (Jan 2022) at 12.

²⁸ "Community Outreach Worker Salary in New Jersey," *ZipRecruiter.com* (accessed Apr 2023). [Source.](#)

²⁹ Estimated based on TPD officer starting salary for 2019, adjusted for inflation. "Trenton City, Mercer County," *The Pay Check*. [Source.](#)

to the high cost of living in Trenton; one significant financial event or change in circumstances might force them to seek employment elsewhere. This is unfortunately not unique to Trenton: more than half of Newark's Street Team staff reported they needed additional financial support.



If I didn't have a support system at home, I don't know that I could just do this job.

— STAFF MEMBER

To contextualize these concerns, we consulted the MIT living wage calculator, which leverages geographically specific expenditure data and other economic factors like payroll taxes to estimate how much a person must earn to meet their household's needs and maintain self-sufficiency.³⁰

The living wage calculator's estimations support the anecdotal concerns of TCST members. Wages for non-managerial full-time staff by and large exceed the living wage for individuals with no dependents, but fall below the living wage estimated for both single- and two-income households with any number of children or other dependents. From our interviews with staff, it is clear that many have children and dependents in their households.

³⁰ Glasmeier, Amy K. Living Wage Calculator. 2023. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. [Source](#).

Figure 2. Living Wage by Household Type: Trenton, NJ

Household Type	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children
Single Adult, Single-Income	\$18.07	\$41.43	\$57.18	\$77.09
Two Adult, Single-Income	\$28.12	\$35.16	\$39.91	\$44.51
Two Adult, Two-Income	\$13.52	\$22.71	\$30.35	\$38.48

Glasmeier, Amy K. Living Wage Calculator. 2023. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. <http://livingwage.mit.edu>.



Staffing

Recommendations

01 Cultivate a candidate pool.

We recommend TCST leverage the connections staff have and continue to build with community members to identify potential recruits for high-risk interventionist and outreach worker positions in anticipation of existing staff members moving on to new opportunities. Establishing a mentorship program would allow TCST to tap into former participants and interested community members to support long-term staffing needs while also more firmly situating TCST as a fixture in and part of the community.

Moreover, recruiting from individuals who are already embedded within the program and known to TCST staff will promote a sustainable cohesive team dynamic. Current staff members understand the culture of the organization and the challenges of the job better than anyone else, and are best-situated to mentor and identify candidates for organizational positions who are equally committed to the work, to professionalism, and who will most seamlessly integrate into the existing team dynamic. During interviews, staff members repeatedly referred to their team as a family, and cited their team dynamic as one of the best aspects of their experience working for TCST. Bringing in the right people is fundamental to maintaining this positive team dynamic and ensuring the program continues to effectively deliver on its mission over time.

02 Evaluate staff compensation.

We recommend that TCST reevaluate staff compensation within a cost of living framework across organizational roles to identify wage rates that promote financial stability and self-sufficiency among staff members, and which also fit within the constraints of the program's budget. Establishing a step system for wages may enable the program to tie wages more directly to staff members' experience and skillset and provide a vehicle for wage growth over time as experience and skills develop. Establishing a trajectory for wage growth may also help address staff member concerns that their pay does not satisfactorily reflect the importance and difficulty of their work.

03 Pursue additional funding opportunities to expand available staffing resources.

Based on a review of program documentation, it appears that the program's true staff demands exceed those projected in the initial grant application. Budget allocations initially intended for a single role have been divided across several positions, and the administrative and reporting requirements of the program will likely necessitate additional hiring. We recommend that TCST apply for federal grant opportunities that support violence prevention, community-policing, data and reporting, and other program operations, from which additional funds for staffing specific titles, raising wages, and supporting professional development can be allocated.

Org. Culture

Findings

01 Organizational culture is aligned with staff identity.

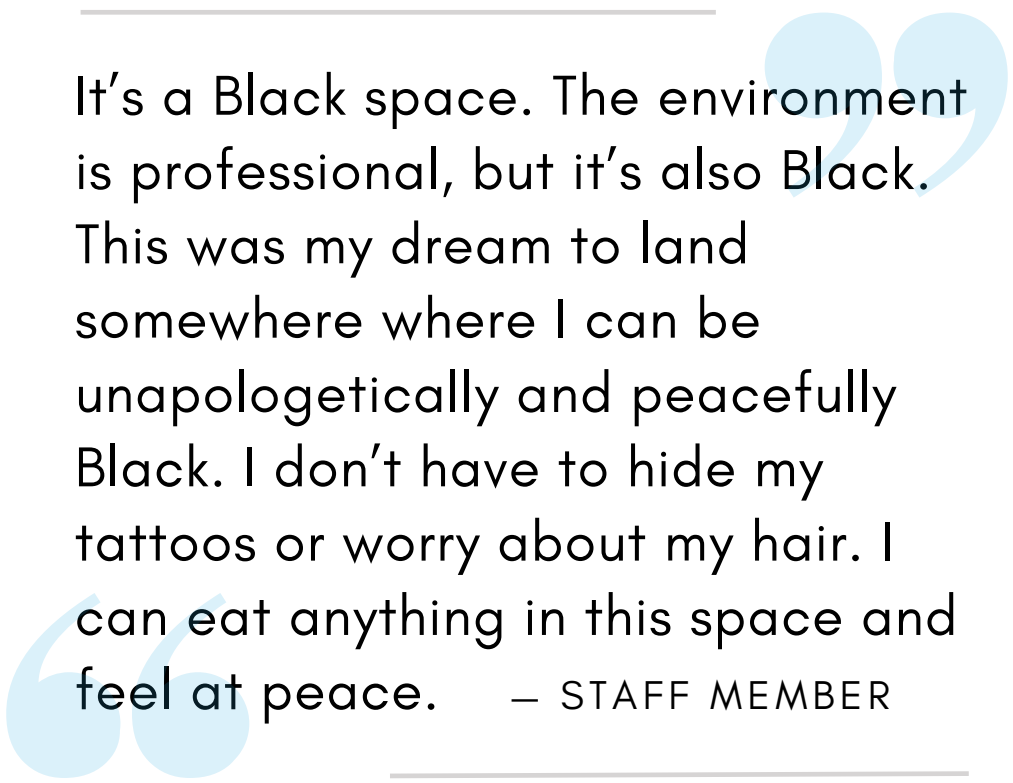
There are many definitions of organizational culture, but at a high level, we understand it as the shared values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that shape an organization's image and influence the way people within an organization and outside the organization interact with one another.³¹ The importance of organizational culture cannot be overstated, as it can have a significant impact on employee motivation, job satisfaction, productivity and organizational performance. The alignment of staff identity with the culture is a crucial factor in ensuring the success and sustainability of TCST.

Our findings revealed that TCST staff value familial closeness with coworkers, community bonding, collaboration, partnerships, and expressive individualism. Generally, when staff feel a sense of belonging and connection to the organizational culture, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that promote the success of the organization.³² In practice, this means working collaboratively with community members, taking initiative, and going above and beyond to get the work done; these are all behaviors we observed and heard about repeatedly from TCST staff.

³¹ Watkins, Michael D. "What is Organizational Culture? And Why Should We Care?" Harvard Business Review (May 15, 2013). [Source.](#)

³² Carr et al. "The Value of Belonging at Work," Harvard Business Review (Dec. 16, 2019). [Source.](#)

Our team also found that TCST staff have a strong sense of communal Black culture. Having a Black culture within TCST means that the values and beliefs of the Black community are recognized, respected, and integrated with the current culture. Given that TCST is a community-based organization focused on addressing issues facing the Trenton community, which is predominantly Black, it is necessary that Black culture within the workplace is present. This may involve the continued recruitment of Black employees, prioritizing their needs, and uplifting the perspectives of the Black community in TCST's work. We found that employees have already begun to foster a sense of community amongst themselves and program participants.

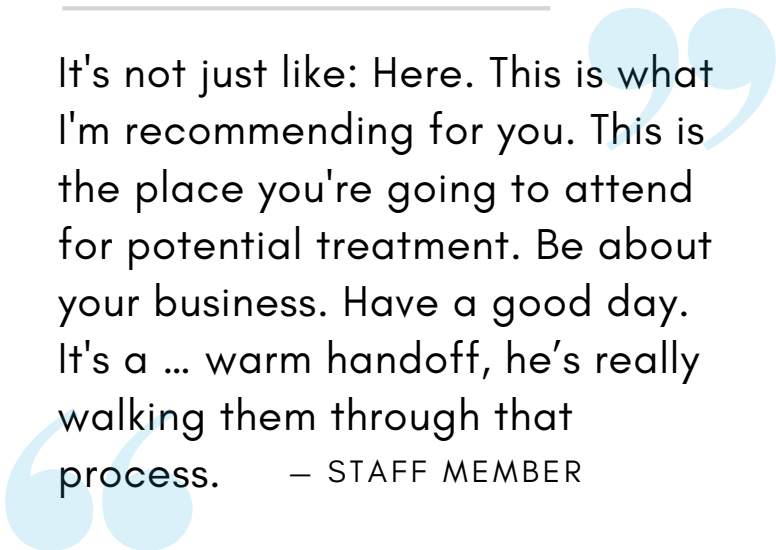


It's a Black space. The environment is professional, but it's also Black. This was my dream to land somewhere where I can be unapologetically and peacefully Black. I don't have to hide my tattoos or worry about my hair. I can eat anything in this space and feel at peace. — STAFF MEMBER

02 Personal relationships are foundational to TCST.

Personal relationships are foundational to TCST's work in several ways. First, outreach workers aim to build trusting relationships with individuals in the community who may be at high risk of involvement in violence. These relationships are built through ongoing engagement, active listening, and offering support and guidance to individuals in need. One high-risk interventionist described the care with which they help participants navigate the referral process, including going with participants to connect with service providers, and ensuring they understand and are comfortable with the services they are receiving.

The goal of building these relationships is to help individuals access resources and opportunities to achieve their goals and to reduce their involvement in violence. After speaking with a program participant, we found that the personal relationship with her case manager was essential to her overall growth. Not only was there continuous



It's not just like: Here. This is what I'm recommending for you. This is the place you're going to attend for potential treatment. Be about your business. Have a good day. It's a ... warm handoff, he's really walking them through that process. — STAFF MEMBER

communication but, there was an undeniable sense of trust.

Personal relationships are also important within the TCST organization itself. The organization values teamwork and collaboration among its staff; relationships built on mutual respect and trust are critical to achieving this.

The organization's outreach workers operate in teams, and effective teamwork requires strong communication and trust among team members. Moreover, personal relationships have been fundamental in building out the network of staff and partners that allow TCST to function. Staff members hold Project Director Perry Shaw in high regard. Director Shaw trusts and believes in the staff, many of whom he's known for a decade or more and personally recruited into the program. Staff report believing in Director Shaw's vision for Trenton, which motivates them and encourages them to stay.

In our interviews we gathered that building a sense of community and connection among staff and residents is necessary for the success of the program. TCST has hosted community events such as cookouts and community walks, all of which continue to engage individuals in the community. Moreover, these events help to strengthen the trust in the community and promote a sense of shared purpose and responsibility for building a safer and more vibrant community.



Our communities listen to us
before they listen to police, so we
can handle things and they can
build a better relationship with the
community because we're
handling some of those small
things that don't need them.



— STAFF MEMBER

Org. Culture

Recommendations

01 Expand the partnership network.

We recommend that TCST expand their partnership network. Partnerships are key to building and sustaining a coalition that can shift the cultural narrative and eliminate the cycle of violence in Trenton. As a predominantly Black community, bringing in external partners in the community and representatives of the community will increase buy-in and a sense of ownership in pushing forward the cultural change which ultimately is a means to eliminating the cycle of violence. Therefore, expanding partnership networks is an important strategy that must be considered to address the current challenges facing Trenton. Some potential ways that TCST could expand its partnership network include:

1. Identifying shared goals and priorities.

TCST should identify other organizations that share its goals and priorities in providing a safer community and eliminating violence. This brings a great opportunity to collaborate on initiatives. This could also involve increasing collaboration with local schools, community centers, public health facilities or other organizations to provide resources and support to individuals at risk of involvement in violence.

2. Leveraging existing relationships.

TCST should leverage existing relationships with community

members and organizations to identify potential partners. Attempt to reach out to community advocates, leaders, and influencers to identify other organizations that share a similar mission. Staff members are also valuable resources in building and maintaining community networks and establishing new partnerships.

3. Continuing to participate in community events.

TCST is already participating in community events and activities to increase its visibility. We recommend they begin to participate in events hosted by other neighborhoods and schools to build out these relationships. Attending local meetings and forums of other organizations could be a great starting point.

4. Fostering trust and transparency.

Focus on building trust and transparency with potential partners. This could be done by being open and honest about TCST's goals and objectives, sharing data and successful methods from its participants. It would also be effective if TCST provides clear communication about the benefits of the partnership.

02 Develop a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Strategy

To ensure that TCST continues to embrace diversity and amplify the voices of marginalized communities, we recommend developing a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategy. A DEI strategy can strengthen the work that TCST is doing in several ways, including recruitment and engaging other communities. Promoting a culture of inclusivity would create buy-in from individuals of different backgrounds. An effective DEI strategy will also help TCST remain flexible and adaptive as the community

continues to change, whether driven by migration or other forces.

A DEI strategy focused on providing culturally competent services can assist TCST in engaging with the Latinx community, which is the second largest population in Trenton. This can include the hiring of bilingual staff, providing language access services, and incorporating culturally specific practices into service delivery. The celebration and recognition of holidays and observances of other cultures would be a great start for embracing inclusivity. Some holidays and observances include but are not limited to Ramadan, Juneteenth, Kwanzaa, Dominican Republic Independence Day, Latino Heritage Month and Black History Month. Consider the way in which TCST is authentically rejoicing with other cultures. Building partnerships with Latinx community leaders and organizations should also be prioritized. TCST can begin to form partnerships by attending community events, hosting joint events, and collaborating on community-based initiatives. This will create visibility and credibility in the community and ultimately engage the Latinx community and other community members who need similar services.

A DEI strategy can only be sustainable when it addresses systemic bias and discrimination. This can involve providing ongoing training and open communication with community members and partners and providing staff with educational resources that help to build their awareness and understanding of the issues that are present within Trenton.



Routines & Structures

Findings

01 Routines and supportive resources are essential to supporting staff in a trauma-inducing workplace.

In nearly every interview with Trenton Community Street Team staff members, they brought up morning and afternoon daily meetings as a key part of their day. It is clear that these meetings serve a key purpose for information sharing within TCST, as well as ensuring staff members are up to date with the events in their community. Staff indicated that these meetings are important beyond the fact that they advance program operations and organizational coordination. They said that morning and afternoon daily meetings provide a routine that is helpful, particularly against the backdrop of a job that can be hectic and unpredictable. The routine nature of these meetings creates a sense of structure that can otherwise be missing from the work. Meetings serve as a checkpoint of each day, a time to refocus and take stock of tasks and responsibilities.

Additionally, regular meetings give staff members the opportunity to check in with their coworkers and create community. Over the course of a day, staff members may be interacting with the community in the field or stationed at various locations throughout Trenton. Staff meetings are an opportunity for employees to engage with one another personally, support one another, and build a familial staff dynamic. Sharing with each other allows coworkers to build connections with each other and to create the internal community necessary for the initiative to be successful.

Another routine that staff spoke highly of were their interactions with Dr. Joan York. Dr. York is a licensed psychologist that has worked with TCST staff for four months, providing guidance for staff members to learn how to support

[Team meetings are] not just work related. It's about life. We bring our whole, complete selves. We bring our struggles, we bring things that we are dealing with on a regular basis. — STAFF MEMBER

themselves and their clients. Staff spoke very highly of their sessions with her and indicated that their regular meetings with her were helpful. TCST staff expressed explicitly that they were appreciative of Dr. York's trauma-centered approach, and that they easily connect with her because she is from Trenton herself. Dr. York is aware of the trauma that staff and community members have experienced and assists staff in identifying ways to help themselves and the community heal. They also indicated that Dr. York's cultural competency and shared racial identity as a Black woman helped them feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences as Black members of the community.

[Dr. York] was one of the best partners we connected with because we could pass off a lot of our trauma with clients to her. She has been phenomenal with helping us. — STAFF MEMBER

Staff members described their relationship with the program as mutually beneficial: they leverage personal projects and relationships to advance the organization's goals, and TCST offers them a platform for professional development, networking,

and in some cases extra pay. Staff received 40 hours of training in preparation for their roles, providing them with tools and skills that are fundamental to TCST's success and promote professional development and expand future career opportunities. Staff members expressed a desire

for additional training and team-building activities would allow them to connect with one another, learn additional skills, and provide better services to their clients. Some staff members have taken it upon themselves to create this kind of programming. For example, two staff members started a weekly mindfulness/self-care group in which other staff can participate.

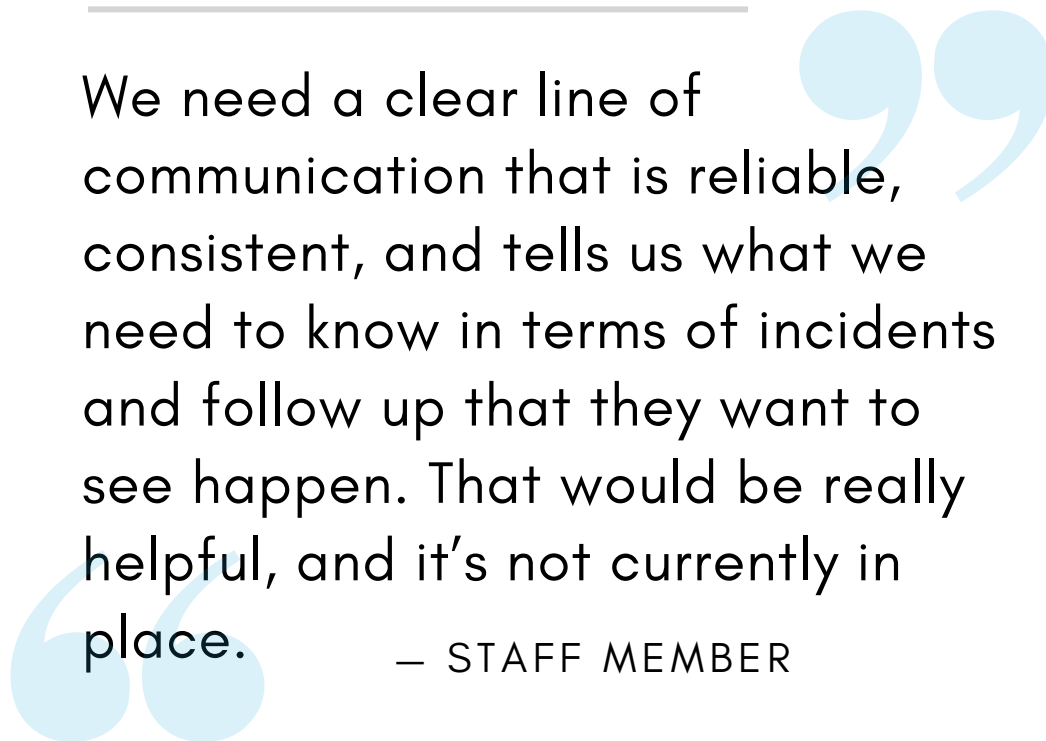
02 Reporting structures are ambiguous.

Interviews with staff members and review of documentation led us to conclude that there is some confusion about the overall structure and internal organization of TCST. One example of this is the organizational chart. Initially, our team was provided with a general organization chart that did not include specific individuals, but rather job titles. This organizational chart was submitted with grant proposals to outline how the program was to be structured, but did not include significant detail. In February 2023, our team was provided with a more robust organization chart. However, this chart only included the names of some staff members, indicating that it was out of date or incomplete.

During interviews, staff were generally able to describe their day-to-day schedule. Staff also relayed the procedures they follow when they get a call from the community or TPD. In reviewing files provided by TCST, however, our team did not find clear process documentation for staff to refer to. Though TCST has a document that provides guidelines, rules, and safety precautions for interacting with members of the community in various situations, there are no defined procedures for common occurrences or client intake.

The disconnect also presents challenges in terms of when and how TCST

receives information from TPD. An interviewee shared that information received from TPD is often not sufficient for TCST staff to effectively and consistently do their jobs.



We need a clear line of communication that is reliable, consistent, and tells us what we need to know in terms of incidents and follow up that they want to see happen. That would be really helpful, and it's not currently in place.

— STAFF MEMBER

03 Commitment to rigorous data collection faces implementation challenges.

High risk interventionists (HRIs) and outreach workers are responsible for data collection and reporting in addition to their responsibilities as front-line workers, interfacing directly with community members and program participants. During interviews, staff described this as “a blessing and a curse” because they are able to see the impact of the work they are doing

but struggle to balance these competing responsibilities.

While staff members expressed a clear understanding that data collection is a critical function of the Street Team initiative, current human resources limit their ability to stay at pace with the program's data entry and reporting requirements, resulting in a growing data backlog. HRIs and outreach workers indicated that additional administrative assistance — particularly from someone whose sole role is to manage the program's data and reporting — would be helpful and allow them to spend more time assisting clients.

Staff shared that they are still in the process of building out the electronic data management system that will better assist them in tracking day-to-day activities. Currently, physical case files are utilized, as well as Microsoft Word documents and Google Drive. Staff expressed a desire to transition to the electronic system, but again indicated that the demands of their outreach work and the backlog of administrative data work left little time to implement an effective transition to the centralized case management software funded through the program.

Routines & Structures

Recommendations

01 Continue to build on routines and invest in staff support and development.

We recommend that TCST continues and builds on their current routines. Staff enjoy regular meetings, and TCST should continue to hold daily check-ins to share information and build camaraderie. TCST should continue to bring in Dr. York for regular sessions, and should consider formalizing a partnership with her and/or increasing the frequency of her visits. Additionally, TCST should encourage staff-created routines, like the mindfulness group. These group activities give staff members the opportunity to come together on their own terms with self-directed activities that are beneficial to them. TCST is successfully meeting the best practice of providing mental health support and promoting wellness and restoration, and should continue to build upon this foundation.

As TCST passes its initial implementation phases and becomes more firmly embedded in the public safety and human service ecosystem within Trenton, we also recommend expanding opportunities for professional growth within and outside of the organization. Organizational leadership should encourage staff to take on new roles that match their experience and position in the community and engage them in team-building and program improvement brainstorming sessions where they may cultivate community, gain new skills, and directly contribute to the strategic planning and overall success of the program. Other professional development opportunities might include ongoing cross-collaboration,

training, certifications, and access to mentorship opportunities, as well as activities like resume writing or personal branding workshops. One recent study found that opportunity for growth – both professionally and personally – was a key factor in increasing employee motivation and retention. Creating and providing these opportunities on a regular basis is an effective way to introduce additional structure into an otherwise unpredictable workplace environment, and has the added benefit of increasing employee engagement and professional satisfaction.

In reviewing past programs, our team found that staff members viewed their job and role in the community as important to their personal identities. This was re-enforced during interviews, when staff indicated that although they were hired to assist others in the community, they themselves are still growing and learning how to navigate the world. Thus, in addition to professional development activities, TCST should consider bringing in speakers and facilitating events that promote personal growth. These events could center around health and wellbeing, money management, or other skills or tools that are helpful in daily personal life. Events led by culturally competent facilitators are likely to make staff feel supported by TCST and empowered to make positive changes in their personal lives, which will ultimately allow them to deliver services more effectively.

02 Maintain an up-to-date organizational chart and create process maps.

Our team recommends creating and maintaining an updated and comprehensive organizational chart. This will be helpful not only to staff, but also to new hires, partner organizations, and future grantors. The

organizational chart should be maintained and updated regularly as staff transition in and out of roles. A clear organizational chart will help clarify reporting structure and information sharing standards. In addition, a comprehensive organizational chart provides workers with a clear sense of their duties and responsibilities; it can help staff members assume ownership over specific tasks and build their professional identity. This will support TCST as it grows and moves beyond the “start-up” phase they are currently in.

Similarly, we recommend that TCST create and maintain process maps for common actions. Unlike an organizational chart, which lists all members in an organization, a process map outlines an entire procedure from start to finish. A process map typically states how a process begins, who is responsible for each step in the process, how long each step takes, how a process concludes, and the different routes a process can follow given various circumstances. Because TCST performs highly unpredictable work, a process map cannot include all potential ways a process can play out. However, a process map is a useful tool for staff to refer to when interacting with routine or familiar scenarios. Process maps are also helpful when onboarding new staff or working with referral partners.

Additionally, there needs to be more clarity in terms of what information TPD shares with TCST, who shares it, and how quickly after a violent incident. Stopping cycles of violence requires clear and immediate information, and developing strong habits and routines requires predictable, systematized processes. It’s not enough for TPD to share information with TCST, if it is done in unpredictable and haphazard ways. Having a clear matrix or map for what, when, and how information is shared allows this process to be transparent, predictable, and operationalized.

03 Ensure data collection is operationalized into the organizational culture.

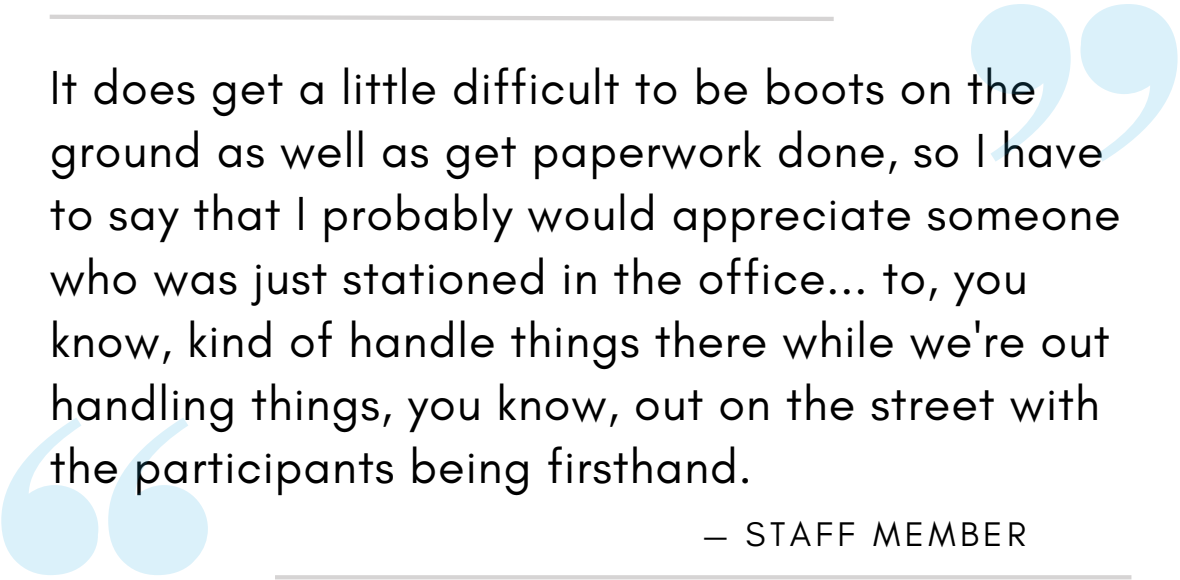
Our team recommends that TCST continues to encourage regular and comprehensive data collection. Data is essential to programs like TCST to track clients, evaluate success, and prove impact to future funders and partners. The electronic data management system will help staff and leadership identify successes and challenges, leading to program improvement. A comprehensive view of all data will assist in the long-term sustainability of the program, as future funders and partners will likely require data on TCST's impact.

TCST should encourage staff to transition to the electronic data management system as soon as possible; part of this transition will include inputting data that is kept in physical files. The longer the transition takes, the greater the data entry backlog and the more challenging it will be to catch up. This transition will likely not be simple, but is an important step in ensuring that all data is housed in a centralized environment and is tracked closely. Moreover, the sooner staff members are trained on the new system, the sooner they will begin to use it and incorporate data entry into their daily tasks.

Waiting to fully transition to the case management software also presents an ongoing security risk; case files likely include personally identifiable information, and physical case files or electronic documents are almost certainly not secure enough to protect sensitive data. Google Drive has additional security concerns, as it is easy to access data from multiple devices outside of the office; many government agencies prohibit the use of Google Drive for this reason.

The case management system is only part of the solution. TCST should

consider hiring an administrative data manager. Outreach workers and high risk interventionists have indicated that administrative data management can detract from their work assisting individuals in the community. A new administrative staff member focused solely on data management would lift the administrative load off outreach workers and allow them to focus their efforts on the community. A data manager could also be in charge of helping with year end reports, data dashboards, and other tools that show the impact of TCST's operations. Hiring someone whose sole focus is on data would also send the message to staff and partners that data collection is a core competency, not an afterthought.



It does get a little difficult to be boots on the ground as well as get paperwork done, so I have to say that I probably would appreciate someone who was just stationed in the office... to, you know, kind of handle things there while we're out handling things, you know, out on the street with the participants being firsthand.

— STAFF MEMBER

Data competency was a key finding from our literature review. As mentioned, comprehensive data collection and maintenance can help TCST show its impact to future funders and partners. Data collection is also an important method for transparency to the public. Furthermore, it allows administrators to identify the parts of the program working best, and iterate to continue to improve and adapt to a changing landscape. TCST should continue to refine its data collection practices not only to track its impact internally, but also to share successes with the public and policymakers.

Leadership & Decision-Making

Findings

01 Decision-making is centralized in the TPD, but the program is operated like a community-based, grassroots organization.

Our findings illuminated a disconnect in the fundamental nature of how programmatic decisions – including budgeting, staffing, and prioritization – are made, compared with how the program is executed. Trenton Community Street Team is funded based on grants TPD applies for. The grant application specifies how staff in each role will be hired, the amount they will be paid, the number of hours of specific trainings employees will receive, and the components of different auxiliary programs and activities, such as community walks and public safety roundtables. There is a high degree of specificity in these proposals, which allows for transparency, accountability, and a proactive, fundable vision of the program.

This model also presents challenges. From a programmatic perspective, TCST operates like a grassroots organization; staff on the ground are the closest to the community and to the work. At the same time, there are no clear mechanisms for staff to provide feedback to program administrators, particularly those at TPD who are not based out of Street Team's home at Isles. In many ways, this decentralized structure is necessary. Real and perceived separation between TPD and TCST is crucial for community trust-building, staff safety, and program effectiveness. In our interviews, staff and leadership all emphasized how critical it is that information-sharing be unidirectional from TPD to TCST; if program staff were perceived as sharing information with TPD, they would lose the legitimacy

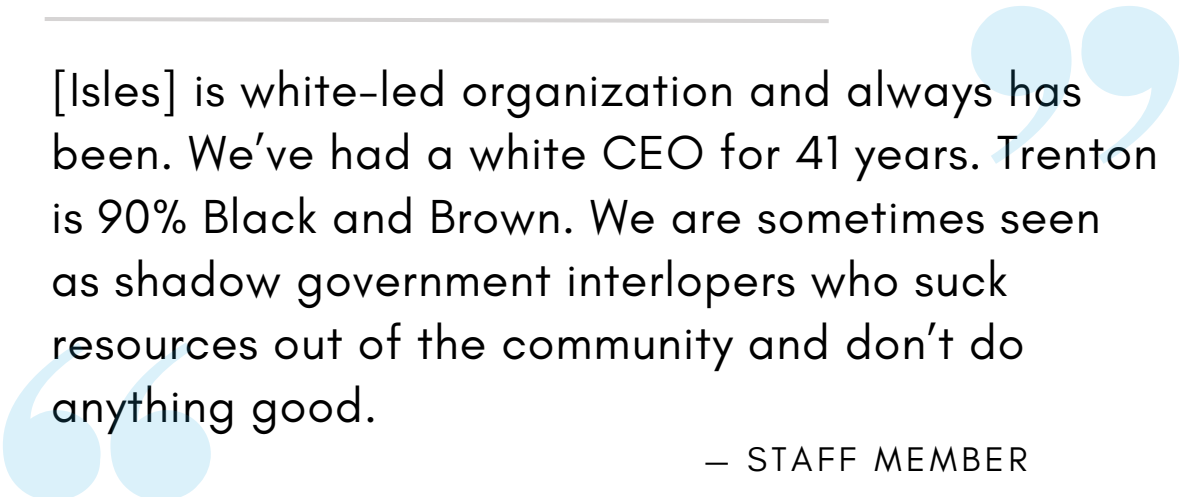
and credibility with the community that allows the program to function. But this structure also means there are no built-in feedback loops for communicating between the people who do the work and the people designing the program, requesting budgets, and making decisions that are at times difficult to change.

In order to revise the plan laid out in a grant application, TPD has to file a grant application notice (GAN). A program administrator told us, “it takes 10 hours of work to ask for an adjustment, so unless we really need the money, it’s better to ask them to recapture it.” These constraints on decision-making and resource allocation are hard to reconcile in a highly dynamic work environment that requires nimble and flexible responses to evolving community needs and realities. It makes it challenging to give staff raises or bonuses, or adapt program priorities to better meet changing realities related to community violence, for example.

02 Uncertainty over partnership overlays a history of racial tension and mistrust.

For the 42 years it has been in operation, Isles has been a white-led organization in a predominantly Black and Latinx city. As the institution managing and housing TCST, this dynamic presents inherent barriers to building trust with the community and strengthening bonds with other Black-led organizations, such as Trenton Restorative Street Team (TRST). The relationship between TPD and the Trenton community has also been characterized by mistrust and tension over the years.³³ This historical lack of trust is acknowledged by Isles leadership, as well as TPD, but has thus far not been addressed in a proactive and strategic manner.

33 Bigart, H. (1970, October 30). Race violence brings Trenton curfew. *The New York Times*. [Source](#).



[Isles] is white-led organization and always has been. We've had a white CEO for 41 years. Trenton is 90% Black and Brown. We are sometimes seen as shadow government interlopers who suck resources out of the community and don't do anything good.

— STAFF MEMBER

In small but meaningful ways, TPD is investing in the community by building informal partnerships that leverage staff members' personal projects and affiliations. TCST's logo and website, for example, were created by an outreach worker's company. That employee reported feeling "supported and empowered" by the trust and investment TCST placed in him with that project.

There is a great opportunity, however, to improve trust and credibility by formalizing and uplifting these relationships. TPD's reluctance to formalize these relationships plays into existing tensions within TCST related to whose work is recognized and respected, and whose is taken for granted. For example, in one conversation, we were told that Project Director Perry Shaw's organization, A Better Way, is a third partner of TCST, along with Isles and TPD. The TCST website also reflects this. But in one conversation with program administrators, we were told that A Better Way is not a formal partner and is perhaps no longer functioning as an independent organization. Given the important role of Director Shaw as the main connector with TCST staff and partners, this disconnect is both confusing and could potentially exacerbate existing tensions.

In order for TCST staff to fully step into the role of public safety officers in the city of Trenton – and to begin healing the mistrust and tension that

exists within the community – TPD must recognize and respect TCST staff. Some staff feel there is still room for improvement on this front. At the same time, an outreach worker expressed that he does feel supported, particularly from the top: “90 percent of Trenton PD are respectful to us. They honor us. Especially the police director himself. He tells us all the time how we’re doing a great job. That makes us feel good.”

We want the police officers to know who we are and what we do...we want them to see all of us. – STAFF MEMBER



Leadership & Decision-Making

Recommendations

01 Create opportunities for bi-directional feedback.

The disconnect between how key programmatic decisions are made, compared with where the work happens on the ground, presents challenges that will likely compound as the program grows. As decades of violence reduction programs have shown, community violence is an intractable problem – the dynamics on the ground are certain to shift. TCST staff will always have the best sense for where opportunities and challenges are emerging in the community, and how the program can evolve to meet those needs.

TCST administrators cannot rely solely on personal relationships and shared history for informal transmission of knowledge and feedback. The program must operationalize opportunities for staff to provide meaningful feedback on programmatic decisions before the budget and grant applications are finalized. Feedback should be clearly solicited, considered, and responded to. While TPD may not be able to implement all, or even most, staff suggestions, it is imperative that TPD takes these suggestions seriously and closes the loop on ideas it receives. Implementation of ideas incentivizes staff to continue to provide constructive feedback and engage more deeply with the work.

TPD is also better able to design and fund an effective program when it has access to insight from staff, who are embedded in the community day-

to-day. The fiscal managers of the program can avoid relying on the GAN process to reallocate funds, and ultimately, the program will be more effective if resources are distributed in line with organizational needs. The benefits also extend to staff, who will see themselves as owners in the work and see the program continue to reflect their ideas, relationships, and leadership.

There is a tension, of course, with the need to maintain a firm line between TCST and TPD, particularly when information flows from TCST program staff to TPD. Clear boundaries must remain to protect TCST staff from sharing sensitive information about individuals and specific situations with TPD. Even the appearance of sharing information puts the program and its staff at risk and must be handled with extreme care.

That said, it is unsustainable for TPD to continue to hold the majority of programmatic decision-making power. In order to mitigate that risk, Isles or a third party could potentially serve as an intermediary to capture and distill staff feedback. Online forms and surveys, or even quarterly meetings with clear ground rules and guardrails, could all be effective forms of soliciting feedback.

02 Embrace partnerships to strengthen credibility and ease tensions.

As we have highlighted repeatedly throughout this report, TCST is, at its core, a referral-based program; it succeeds not as an independent entity, but based on the health and sustainability of the broad network of organizations and partners. The interwoven layers of different organizations is not always going to be straightforward, but neither is violence reduction.

Furthermore, healing historic racial mistrust in Trenton is not tangential to the work; it is the work. TCST will struggle to remain effective, credible, and trusted in the community if TPD and Isles are not actively taking steps to invest in and uplift the partners in its ecosystem — particularly those which are Black and Latinx-led.

As a well-funded, well-resourced initiative, administered by organizations with connections to powerful institutions and stakeholders, TCST can play an important role investing in community leaders and organizations within Trenton. We urge TCST's administrators to embrace this role and formalize partnerships where possible, including with TCST staff, who are part of the community the program aims to lift up. By investing in TCST staff member's businesses and personal projects, the entire community is stronger.

TPD also must ensure that it is extending legitimacy to TCST within its own walls. Consider bringing TCST staff in for roll call to ensure TPD understands and respects the important work TCST is doing in the community. By continuing to communicate that TCST staff are public safety professionals and full partners of TPD, organizational leadership sets the program up for long-term success, sustainability, and mutual respect between the two institutions.

CONCLUSION

The Capstone Team worked with Trenton Police Department and Trenton Community Street Team staff from September of 2022 to May of 2023. The project timeline coincided with the early stages of the program's rollout. The Capstone Team relied on interviews, document reviews, a survey, and a literature review to become grounded in the TCST's operations, infrastructure, policies and practices, as well as the work of community-based violence intervention programs more broadly. The investigation provided insight into the program's strengths and areas for continued improvement.

Nine months after the program's launch, there is tremendous reason to be excited and proud about the early successes of TCST and its staff. Many of the biggest challenges — including hiring and training competent staff, implementing meaningful mental health supports, and building a supportive and cohesive culture — have been addressed effectively. Our findings suggest that TCST has already begun to strengthen the health, safety, and well-being of the Trenton community.

TCST now must learn from the mistakes of previous programs to continue to sustain its enthusiasm and success: focus on retaining and developing staff, deepen and strengthen the partner network, build and maintain robust routines and structures, and share credit with the coalition that has contributed to success.

Community violence is an intractable problem. It will change and evolve as community dynamics shift. By implementing these recommendations and building in processes to proactively address early challenges, the program can position itself to adapt to these changes and continue to build a healthier, more resilient Trenton.

APPENDIX

A. LITERATURE REVIEW

B. LOGIC MODEL

C. SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

D. SURVEY TEMPLATE

**E. ORG. CHART AND TITLE
DESCRIPTIONS**

A. LITERATURE REVIEW

Violence Interruption and Behavioral Health Programs: A Literature Review

December 2022

By Hanna Johnson
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Michelle Smoler

INTRODUCTION

This literature review was prepared in support of the Trenton Police Department (TPD) to support the launch and documentation of its Trenton Community Streets Team (TCST) program. The New York University Capstone team examined existing research on programs related to violence interruption, restorative justice, and trauma-informed approaches. This review aims to place TCST in context with past violence reduction efforts and identify evidence-based best practices, as well as any gaps in the literature. By examining and consolidating the learnings of past programs, the Capstone team will make recommendations to TCST as to critical priorities and potential areas for improvement.

Our literature review includes reference to the following programs: [Operation Ceasefire in Boston](#),¹ [Cahoots](#)² in Eugene, Oregon, [Crisis Response Unit \(CRU\) and Familiar Faces](#)³ out of Olympia, Washington, [the CURE Violence Model](#) in Chicago (known there as CeaseFire) and New York City,⁴ the [Arches Transformative Mentoring Program](#) also based in New York City,⁵ [Roca's "Young Men" programs in Baltimore and Massachusetts](#)⁶ as well as its [Massachusetts Juvenile Justice Pay for Success \(PFS\) Initiative](#),⁷ the [Newark Community Street Team](#) in Newark, New Jersey,⁸ [the TRUCE project](#) in Phoenix, Arizona,⁹ [Cure the Streets in Washington DC](#),¹⁰ and [Operation Safe Community in Memphis](#), Tennessee.¹¹

The programs examined for this literature review are diverse and span decades, but key themes repeatedly emerged that characterize successful programs:

- Use trusted messengers, from the community the program serves, for outreach work
- Meet people where they are through process-driven interventions that allow for flexibility and failure

¹ "Case Study: Boston," *The Bridgespan Group*.

<https://www.bridgespan.org/bridgespan/Images/articles/needle-moving-community-collaboratives/profiles/community-collaboratives-case-study-boston.pdf>.

² Beck, Jackson et al. "Case Study: CAHOOTS," *The Vera Institute for Justice*, Nov. 2020.

<https://www.vera.org/behavioral-health-crisis-alternatives/cahoots>.

³ Beck, Jackson et al. "Case Study: CRU and Familiar Faces," *The Vera Institute for Justice*, Nov. 2020.

<https://www.vera.org/behavioral-health-crisis-alternatives/cru-and-familiar-faces>.

⁴ DeFries Gallagher, Ashleigh. *A Qualitative Analysis of the Recommended Implementation and Replication of the Cure Violence Model According to New York City and Chicago Program Staff Interviews*. Diss. Johns Hopkins University, 2021. <https://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/66850>.

⁵ Lynch, Mathew, et al. "Arches transformative mentoring program: an Implementation and Impact Evaluation" *Urban Institute* (2018). https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/96601/arches_transformative_mentoring_program_0.pdf.

⁶ "Massachusetts Young Men," *Roca*. Last accessed: Dec. 2, 2022.

<https://rocainc.org/how-we-do-it/outcomes/massachusetts-young-men/> and "Baltimore Young Men," *Roca*. Last accessed: Dec. 2, 2022. <https://rocainc.org/how-we-do-it/outcomes/baltimore-young-men/>.

⁷ Elkins, Lili and Yotam Zeira. "A Pay-for-Success Opportunity to Prove Outcomes with the Highest-Risk Young People," *ROCA, INC*. April 2017.

<https://rocainc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/a-pay-for-success-opportunity-to-prove-outcomes-with-the-highest-risk-young-people.pdf>

⁸ Leap, Jorja et al. "NEWARK COMMUNITY STREET TEAM NARRATIVE EVALUATION," *UCLA Social Justice Research Partnership*. Dec. 2020.

https://www.newarkcommunitystreetteam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/NCST-Evaluation_FINAL.pdf.

⁹ Fox, Andrew et al. "Phoenix TRUCE Project Final Evaluation," *Arizona State University Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety*. Nov. 2012. <https://cvpcs.asu.edu/sites/default/files/content/products/TRUCE-Report.pdf>.

¹⁰ Cure the Streets: OAG's Violence Interruption Program. *Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia*. Last accessed: Dec. 2, 2022. <https://oag.dc.gov/public-safety/cure-streets-oags-violence-interruption-program>.

¹¹ "A Prospering Memphis Because of Public/Private Partnerships to Reduce Crime and Youth Violence," *Youth.Gov*. Last accessed: Dec. 2, 2022.

<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/preventing-youth-violence/forum-communities/memphis/prospering-memphis-because-public-private-partnerships-reduce-crime-and-youth-violence>.

- Invite collaboration between a diverse group of stakeholders, with roles and responsibilities specific to stakeholder function
- Use data to identify the highest risk communities, rigorously evaluate results, and iterate accordingly
- Ensure long-term, stable funding so program staff do not have to worry whether they will be paid — or if they will be thrust back into a cycle of instability and poverty
- Empower staff with a purpose and provide mental health support for a healthier, more effective team

This literature review addresses following questions:

1. **Background:** What is the evidence for and history of violence interruption programs? What have the outcomes and impacts been for other, similar programs?
2. **Best practices:** How have trauma-informed and/or restorative programs been implemented?
3. **Best practices:** Who are the ideal program stakeholders, and what is their role / level of involvement?
4. **Best Practices: Sustainability:** How have violence interruption programs been sustained in terms of funding structures?
5. **Best Practices: Sustainability:** How have violence interruption programs been sustained in terms of supporting and retaining staff? How have programs managed to avoid the pitfalls of retraumatizing staff, particularly those with a lived experience of violence, substance use, and poverty?
6. **Best practices:** What data do these programs typically collect? What do successful results look like? How have programs built in iterative learning into their process?
7. **Moving forward:** What gaps are there in the literature? What would be most helpful for TCST to contribute?

I. **BACKGROUND**

What is the evidence for and history of violence interruption programs? What have the outcomes and impacts been for other, similar programs?

Violence reduction and intervention programs are not new, but the theories underlying these strategies have evolved over time, with today's violence interruption programs building off the successes and failures of past programs.

A Brief History of Violence Reduction Strategies

Efforts to address violence and related social concerns have historically focused on large fiscal investments in police, with law enforcement taking on roles and responsibilities for which they are ill-suited, due to their training and function. More recently, violence intervention strategies have shifted focus away from law enforcement functions to address issues of community trauma through trauma-informed, community-led approaches that address not only the violence experienced within the community but also the harms of system-involvement.

The Ceasefire model

The Ceasefire model has shaped violence intervention strategies around the country since it was first developed in the mid-1990s by criminologist David Kennedy to respond to sky-rocketing rates of gun-related homicides involving young people at or under the age of 24. Ceasefire is grounded in a theory of behavioral change that focuses primarily on education and deterrence. Staff raise awareness around the risks, costs, and consequences of gun-related activity by engaging directly with young people considered to be at greatest risk for involvement in gun violence, as well as the broader community. The goal is to create personal and collective accountability toward promoting nonviolence and an end to shooting. Those who violate the norms and standards set out for them face the harshest possible legal consequences.

Early successes from Boston Gun Project's Operation Ceasefire propelled the Ceasefire model into the national spotlight, and cities across the country rushed to replicate the program in their jurisdiction.¹² Despite its popularity, implementation challenges and an emphasis on law enforcement produced inconsistent outcomes across jurisdictions, and the short-term reductions in gun violence achieved by Ceasefire programs were not proven sustainable over time. Perhaps more importantly, Ceasefire and other hot-spot violence reduction efforts have been criticized for responding to the trauma of community violence with criminalization, incarceration and further system-involvement.¹³

Community Violence Intervention and the Public Health Lens

Over time, the need to merge public safety and public health approaches has produced a new generation of programs aimed at interrupting violence by addressing trauma and promoting healing at the individual and community level. Through more robust and inclusive partnerships these programs give local communities a greater role in program design and implementation and allow for more comprehensive, appropriate, and sustainable delivery of services. These programs also employ a wide range of community violence intervention (CVI) strategies to better meet the needs of the people and communities they serve.¹⁴ These strategies include:

- Hospital-Based Violence Interventions (HVIs), which reach survivors in the hospital, after they have survived a violent incident. Healthcare providers and case managers attempt to support survivors and steer them away from retaliation.
- Group Violence Intervention Programs, which typically involve collaboration between law agencies and communities to identify and provide support and services to those at high risk for violence involvement. Community-led examples of group violence intervention create space for holding law enforcement accountable and providing transparency to the public.
- Community centered violence interruption approaches employ credible messengers and violence interventionists who are best suited to help individuals navigate their journey of change. They build relationships with community members and partnerships with schools to answer questions of trauma and violence. In most cases, these programs offer other opportunities for economic

¹² A 2001 evaluation of Boston's Operation Ceasefire associated program operations with a 63 percent decrease in monthly youth homicides and other significant reductions in gun violence. Kennedy, David M., Anthony A. Braga, and Anne M. Piehl. See *Reducing Gun Violence*, NCJ (2001). "Reducing Gun Violence: The Boston Gun Project's Operation Ceasefire Series." NCJ. (2001), at 58. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/188741.pdf>.

¹³ Rivlen-Nadler, Max. "How a Group Policing Model Is Criminalizing Whole Communities," *The Nation*, Jan. 12, 2018. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/how-a-group-policing-model-is-criminalizing-whole-communities/>.

¹⁴ "Community Violence Intervention Programs, Explained," *Vera Institute for Justice*, September 2021. <https://www.vera.org/inline-downloads/community-violence-intervention-programs-explained-report.pdf>.

empowerment, housing, and education services, taking the holistic approach of providing services to an individual.

Exploring Violence and the Social Determinants of Crime in Trenton

The pandemic and a related surge in gun violence and other violent crime have forced cities across the U.S. to reckon with ongoing violence, poverty, and racism in their communities.¹⁵ Trenton is no exception. In 2020, the city reported one of the highest homicides rates in the country, and crime rates nearly three times the national average.¹⁶

Today's cycle of violence in Trenton, as in the rest of the country, is informed by a history of state violence in the form of systemic racism, exclusion, and segregation that continues to this day. [A 2017 study](#) by UCLA's Civil Rights Project found that New Jersey schools are some of the most segregated in the nation, and Trenton has one of the most segregated school districts within the state.¹⁷ Systemic racism has produced vast disparities in the level and quality of services, resources, and opportunities available to already marginalized community members and these patterns of social disadvantage are apparent in Trenton. Trenton is almost 50 percent Black, just over 37 percent Latinx, and 13.5 percent white. [Twenty-seven percent of the city's population](#)¹⁸ is considered to be in poverty, as well as [nearly 40 percent](#) of people living in the wider Trenton metro area.¹⁹ Trenton's public school district averages in the [bottom 50 percent](#) of public schools in New Jersey,²⁰ with students scoring lower than the statewide average in average math and reading proficiency. Importantly, experiences of poverty and inequality along with other socioeconomic factors such as unemployment, poor access to education and resources, and social exclusion increase a person's risk for crime and system involvement and serve as barriers against social mobility and economic empowerment.²¹ We can see how Trenton's history of state violence played a formative role in experiences of community violence and trauma today.

Violence Intervention in Trenton

The modern history of violence intervention in Trenton appears to begin in 2013 when Attorney General John J. Hoffman launched three violence interruption initiatives to address a recent period of unchecked

¹⁵ The Major Cities Chiefs Association 2022 Mid-Year Violent Crime Survey reported 10,000 more incidents of violent crime in the first half of 2022 compared to the same period in 2021 – a 4.4 percent increase – with 70 cities across the U.S. reporting. The Major Cities Chief Association.(2022). *VIOLENT CRIME SURVEY – NATIONAL TOTALS Midyear Comparison*. <https://majorcitieschiefs.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/MCCA-Violent-Crime-Report-2022-and-2021-Midyear.pdf>

¹⁶ Center Square, 2021

¹⁷ "Though [New Jersey] has considerably lower shares of African Americans and Latinos than many other states, it ranks sixth among the states in terms of the highest segregation of black students and seventh in segregation of Latinos." See Orfield, Gary, Jongyeong Ee, and Ryan Coughlin. "New Jersey's segregated schools: Trends and paths forward." (2017) at 17. <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/new-jerseys-segregated-schools-trends-and-paths-forward/New-Jersey-report-final-110917.pdf>

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. "Quick Facts: Trenton City, New Jersey - 2021." Last accessed Dec. 2, 2022. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/trentoncitynewjersey/PST045221>.

¹⁹ "Trenton's concentrated poverty rate highest in New Jersey," *The Center Square*, Jan. 27, 2021. https://www.thecentersquare.com/new-jersey/trenton-s-concentrated-poverty-rate-highest-in-new-jersey/article_c69b612c-5091-11eb-b596-2f78884c9c25.html.

²⁰ "Trenton Public School District," *Public School Review*. Last accessed Dec. 2, 2022. <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/new-jersey/trenton-public-school-district/3416290-school-district>.

²¹ Buonanno, Paolo. "The socioeconomic determinants of crime. A review of the literature." (2003). <http://repec.dems.unimib.it/repec/pdf/mibwpaper63.pdf>

gun violence.²² The first two – the Targeted Integrated Deployment Effort (TIDE) and the Targeted Anti-Gun pulled every law enforcement lever at Hoffman’s disposal. TIDE engaged state and federal law enforcement agencies to work alongside local authorities and make record numbers of arrests, while TAG established harsh and unforgiving sentences for individuals convicted for gang activities, drug sales, and weapons possession. For the third initiative, Hoffman’s office awarded the Trenton Police Department and the College of New Jersey a \$1.1 million grant to launch the Trenton Violence Reduction Strategy (TVRS), which brought together select components of different Ceasefire models toward reducing community gun violence. Together, these efforts curbed shootings and homicides in the short-term. However, Trenton’s ongoing struggle with gun violence and other violent crime, which predates the pandemic, illustrates the need for a more robust, long-term solution. The recent introduction of Trenton Community Street Teams in Trenton presents a shift in strategy, following broader trends in violence intervention, away from Ceasefire and hot-spot policing toward community-centered models that emphasize relationship-building, personal development, advocacy, and a decentering of policing.

II. **BEST PRACTICES FOR VIOLENCE AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INTERVENTIONS**

How have trauma-informed and/or restorative programs been implemented?

Violence and behavioral health intervention programs are most successful when they invest in a holistic process of change that prioritizes the healing of people and communities over short-term gains in crime reduction. Critical components of this process include:

1. Building meaningful connections with the communities and people they serve while grounding interventions and service delivery in trust and mutual understanding
2. “Meeting people where they are” at every stage of the process and creating safe and supportive spaces where growth can occur
3. Implementing a trauma-informed approach that promotes healing and restoration and minimizes re-traumatization

Relationships and trust: community first and peer outreach

Community First

Communication and mutual understanding translate to buy-in, cooperation, and sustainable engagement, all of which are necessary to produce the kind of transformative outcomes violence and behavioral health interventions seek to achieve. Programs that invest in establishing relationships directly with the people they aim to serve before attempting to connect them with significant services build stronger linkages to the community and its members, are more successful in matching individuals with the services that best meet their needs, and create environments that encourage people to accept and engage with services.²³ As illustrated by Olympia’s CRU and Familiar Faces teams: “Once consumers saw [we] were showing up regardless of weather and without judgment there was more engagement.”²⁴

Peer Outreach

²² Blumgart, Jake. “In Trenton’s Deadliest Year, an Effort to Reach out to Violent Offenders,” *Next City*, Oct. 4, 2013. <https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/in-trentons-deadliest-year-an-effort-to-reach-out-to-violent-offenders>.

²³ “Community First: The Right Approach to Mental Health Crises and Homelessness,” *Center for Court Innovation*. May 2021. <https://www.courtinnovation.org/publications/community-first-right-approach-mental-health-crises-and-homelessness>.

²⁴ Case Study: CRU and Familiar Faces

Over the past decade, programs have increasingly relied on peer outreach: deploying community members with lived experience with incarceration, violence, substance use, or other traumas to establish connections with hard-to-reach, high-risk individuals, and encourage their personal growth and ongoing engagement with program services.²⁵

The use of trusted peers or “credible messengers,” in violence intervention has improved program implementation by facilitating trusting relationships between participants and staff and improving participant engagement and retention. These programs have also proven effective in disrupting cycles of violence. New York’s [Arches Transformative Mentoring Program](#), which connects participants with credible messenger mentors who lead them in group sessions and provide one-one-one support at all times, was successful in reducing one-year felony reconviction rates among participants by 75 percent. Participants interviewed emphasized the importance of having mentors “who they could see themselves in and who were available 24/7.”²⁶ Peer navigators have also helped to increase access and utilization of services among individuals with unmet behavioral health needs, and reduce inequities in behavioral health service delivery for marginalized communities that may distrust institutional messengers.²⁷

Programs that employ peer outreach workers often involve multi-stakeholder partnerships that include police and other criminal legal institutions. Although these partnerships are important for program implementation, the *perception* of police involvement can undermine trust between credible messengers and community members. This has proven equally true for both community violence and behavioral health interventions. Outreach staff from the [CURE Violence](#) programs in Chicago and New York and practitioners with [Olympia’s Crisis Response Unit](#) underscored the importance of not being affiliated with the police, and not acting as “snitches,” in working to gain credibility with intended program participants.²⁸

“Meeting people where they are:” flexibility and accounting for failure

Flexibility

Flexibility in administering services or interventions is essential for promoting the kind of ongoing participant engagement necessary to create meaningful and long-term change. The [Arches Transformative Mentoring Program](#) found “fluid structure and schedule” were critical to the program’s success, because participants could progress on their own timeline and never feel behind.²⁹ Olympia Police Department’s [CRU and Familiar Faces](#) Outreach Services Coordinator also stressed the importance of flexibility in successful service delivery: “If you define crisis to the minute, people won’t use you.”³⁰

Accounting for failure

²⁵ “Culturally sensitive mentors with similar backgrounds and experiences as youth have been shown to develop closer relationships and achieve positive youth development outcomes.” Arches Evaluation, Urban Institute at 27.

²⁶ Arches Evaluation at 48.

²⁷ In a case study of Olympia, WA’s Familiar Faces program, which provides peer outreach to people who have frequent interactions with law enforcement, program staff remarked that once community members “saw they were showing up regardless of weather and without judgment, there was more engagement.”

²⁸ Analysis of the Cure Violence Model at 106; Case Study: CRU and Familiar Faces.

²⁹ Arches Evaluation at 49.

³⁰ Case Study: CRU and Familiar Faces.

Effective programs and interventions also allow people to struggle and fail without the fear of losing access to support and services. [ROCA, Inc.](#), which operates a range of behavioral health programs for system-involved young men and women in Massachusetts and Baltimore, has developed an intervention framework that centers failure as a critical component of the participants journey and learning process. ROCA's process-driven intervention model has translated to high retention rates and achieved significant reductions in future recidivism and system-involvement among participants.³¹

Trauma Informed Care: Community healing, empowerment and justice

Trauma-informed care (TIC) is an approach in the human service field that assumes those receiving services likely have a history of — or are currently experiencing — trauma. Any organization that aims to reduce violence in communities that experience high rates of trauma — including those with large Black and Brown populations, low-income populations, and highly segregated communities, such as Trenton — must take responsibility for implementing a trauma-informed approach.

By adopting a trauma-informed approach, organizations have the opportunity to improve the livelihood and well-being of their clients and staff. Trauma-informed care is essential to the cultural change of an organization. It provides support services that are accessible and centers the voices of those who have been directly impacted by trauma. The point is not to directly assist with sexual or physical violence but to account for and center the needs of those that experience it. Organizations and programs that have successfully impacted the lives of persons harmed by trauma consistently uphold the [five guiding principles](#) of trauma-informed practice: safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and empowerment.³² These practices help create an environment where people can heal and restore while protecting against re-traumatization.

Trauma-Informed Approaches in Practice

Community organizations have embraced varied and novel approaches to healing and restorative justice guided by the principles of trauma-informed care. Atlanta-based [Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective](#) coined the term “Healing Justice” in 2006 to describe a framework for identifying ways in which communities can address collective harm and trauma.³³ Healing Justice works to directly support communities that have been impacted by state violence, employing practices of “self-care” and promoting healing through methods most relevant to the communities in which they are deployed such as counseling, reiki, Black liberation literature, and [smudging](#).

[Dignity and Power Now \(DPN\)](#) out of Los Angeles focuses on empowering incarcerated people and their families. DPN approaches healing and transformative justice through social and political action working to directly combat trauma and violence in communities by teaching people how to confront their traumatizing experience and uplift and empower their neighbors, family and loved ones.³⁴ Similarly, New Jersey's [Prison Watch Program](#), aims to empower individuals directly impacted by the legal system by

³¹ “How we do it,” Roca, Inc. <https://rocainc.org/how-we-do-it/our-intervention-model/> and <https://rocainc.org/how-we-do-it/outcomes/>.

³² “What is Trauma-Informed Care,” University of Buffalo Center for Research. Last accessed: Dec. 2, 2022. <https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/social-research/institutes-centers/institute-on-trauma-and-trauma-informed-care/what-is-trauma-informed-care.html>.

³³ Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective. <https://kindredsouthernhjusticecollective.org/>.

³⁴ “About us,” Dignity and Power Now. Last accessed: Dec. 2, 2022. <https://dignityandpowernow.org/about-us/>.

offering healing opportunities and uplifting the dignity of individuals who are involved in the system, including its staff.³⁵

III. BEST PRACTICES FOR STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Who are the ideal program stakeholders for violence interruption and behavioral health programs, and what is their role / level of involvement?

The Multi-Stakeholder Approach

A key theme among the programs most effective at reducing violence and harm within communities is the inclusion of a diverse group of stakeholders — including elected officials, law enforcement, community leaders, service providers, directly impacted members of the community, faith leaders, academics, and local businesses — in designing and implementing these programs. The alignment of key stakeholder goals and the assignment of roles and responsibilities that match stakeholder functions are both critical to a program's long-term sustainability.

System Leaders

The inclusion of system stakeholders like government officials and law enforcement enables successful program implementation by ensuring buy-in and support from the larger community.³⁶ Even as violence and behavioral health interventions shift from a police-first to a community-first framework, law enforcement remain key partners in many interventions due to their traditional role as first responders and frequent interactions with community members at the center of violence and/or dealing with mental health illness or substance use. In this context, law enforcement may leverage its influence and resources toward providing off-ramps from further system-involvement to services and programming. The [CAHOOTS](#) program in Eugene, Oregon, serves as a prime example: CAHOOTS effectively partners behavioral health service providers and law enforcement to divert most 911 calls away from police response. By removing police officers from non-violent situations like mental health emergencies, they also remove uniforms, handcuffs, and sirens, which can further exacerbate a mental health crisis. This approach is working: in 2019, CAHOOTS responded to an estimated 24,000 calls. A mere 311 of those required police involvement.³⁷

Community Stakeholders

While system leaders are valued partners, buy-in and participation from trusted community stakeholders is critical to establishing a positive relationship with the community, allowing organizations to address violence in a sustainable way. The most successful programs we looked at included directly impacted community members, community leaders, and service providers, who were more often than not the ones directly interfacing with community members in crisis. D.C.'s [Cure the Streets](#) program, for example, mobilizes community members such as faith leaders, businesses, and community leaders to change the

³⁵ "Prison Watch Resources," American Friends Service Committee. Last accessed: Dec. 2, 2022.

<https://www.afsc.org/content/prison-watch-resources>.

³⁶ "We are only as strong as the relationships and the partnerships we build. And it's having the strong relationship with probation and police officers, DA's, judges, that allows us to do this wrap-around service, because alone we can't do this work." See "Who we work with," Roca, Inc. <https://rocainc.org/who-we-work-with/system-partners/>.

³⁷ Case Study: Cahoots, Vera Institute for Justice

norms around violence.³⁸ These diverse stakeholders provide cohesion and wraparound support, positioning the program to catalyze a meaningful cultural shift within the communities it serves.

Sustaining Strategic Partnerships

Among the programs we reviewed, several lessons emerged for sustaining healthy and effective partnerships.

Open communication between communities served, staff, and administrators bolsters program legitimacy, creates community buy-in, and helps practitioners adapt to on-the-ground environments to more effectively deliver services. CAHOOTS Operations Coordinator Tim Black emphasized the importance of having diverse voices weigh in on program design and implementation, as well as holding space for meaningful input: “You want to make sure you have everyone who could possibly have an opinion about this topic at the table.”³⁹

Private sector partners were found to offset the financial risk and upfront costs faced by governments investing in social programs. [Operation: Safe Community in Memphis](#) actively engages local business leaders to prioritize crime reduction as a key economic initiative, creating buy-in and support that outlasts various political cycles. Many of these business leaders now sit on a 50-person board that directs the program.⁴⁰

One pitfall of the coalition approach is the tendency for various groups to claim, as opposed to share, credit. Boston’s Operation Ceasefire halted operations in 2000 due to loss of key leadership and staff, as well as political challenges. The Bridgespan Group described this phenomena: “Many groups stood to gain by claiming responsibility for ‘The Boston Miracle’ even though it was really the sum of their efforts that made the difference.”⁴¹ Coalitions can manage these issues by ensuring partners are aligned on a shared vision, which guides stakeholder activity at every stage of implementation, and that key performance indicators of program success are consistent with the goals of each top-line stakeholder.

V. BEST PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABILITY: FUNDING

How have violence interruption and behavioral health programs been sustained in terms of funding structures?

Funding sources

Research shows the source and method of funding for violence interruption and alternative policing programs can affect a program’s viability and overall impact. The most common sources of funding include direct government funding, grant funding, and private or private-public funding.

Federal, state, and local governments can allocate budget towards staff, service providers, and social programs, either through legislation or executive order. Governors in New Jersey and New York State, for example, recently allocated \$10 million in funds toward nonprofits and community-led gun violence

³⁸ Cure the Streets: OAG’s Violence Interruption Program

³⁹ Case Study: Cahoots, Vera Institute for Justice

⁴⁰ A Prospering Memphis, Youth.Gov

⁴¹ Case Study: Boston, Bridgespan Group at 3.

interventions.⁴² Governments may also reallocate funds from existing budget lines, such as CAHOOTS, which receives about \$40K of its \$2M budget from Springfield and Eugene PD budgets.

Grants are a similarly common source of funding for social programs that address public health and safety. Programs typically apply for grants from governmental or philanthropic sources. Olympia's [Familiar Faces](#), for example, receives a majority of its funding from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC).

A third funding option is the "Public-Private Partnership." These funding structures typically involve both governmental and philanthropic sources working in tandem to provide support for various programs. One example is the "Pay-for-Success" model, which shifts the financial risks of funding new social programs from non-profits or governments to private investors. These investors cover the initial costs of piloting a program, and if an evaluation finds the program achieved agreed-upon outcomes, the government will repay at minimum the initial investment.

Challenges with short-term funding: Chicago's Cure Violence

Program funding through governmental budget allocation has high instability as budgets are renegotiated on a yearly basis and social services are often first to see cuts. Short-term grant funding can also lead to similar instability and insecurity operations. The impact of unreliable funding affects both program staff and participants: failure to pay employees and the threat of financial insecurity run the risk of retraumatizing staff by forcing them back into cycles of poverty and instability; the sudden reduction in services or severing of trusted relationships undermines trust between program stakeholders and the community.

Chicago's [Cure Violence](#) program is a case study in the harms and challenges of unstable funding sources. The program received money from the Illinois legislature on an annual basis, which meant program administrators had to consistently lobby the legislature to include the program in that year's budget. Such efforts diverted time and resources away from administering program activities. In years that the Illinois legislature could not agree on a budget, the Cure Violence offices were closed and staff members were forced to work on a volunteer basis until a budget was approved. Sometimes sites were shut down until more funding was secured.⁴³ Program staff – including outreach workers and violence interrupters – said that short-term funding issues affected their work and felt that a multi-year funding structure would better serve staff and program participants.⁴⁴ They believed that multi-year funding would be beneficial for both staff and program participants.

Challenges in aligning funding sources with program goals and activities

Nearly all types of funding come with conditions that affect where and for whom programs are created or where and how money can be spent. Conditions on funding can be helpful in ensuring resources are directed to program activities most beneficial to participants. However, funding criteria and restrictions

⁴² "Governor Hochul Announces More Than \$6.3 Million to Support Victim Services in Communities Hardest Hit by Gun Violence," *New York State Governor's Office*, April 27, 2022. <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-more-63-million-support-victim-services-communities-hardest-hit-gun>.

⁴³ Analysis of the Cure Violence Model at 24-25.

⁴⁴ *Id.* at 145-146.

may place additional burdens on program operations. Funding conditions may also affect how programs adapt to the needs of their communities. Olympia's [CRU and Familiar Faces](#) programs found that by not accepting funding from Medicaid, they had greater flexibility in the manner and extent to which they engaged with clients.⁴⁵

Grantors may also have specific reporting requirements or require evidence of progress that may be out of reach or difficult to achieve for novel or experimental programs. For example, the Pay for Success funding scheme, while promising, may only be feasible for programs that have deliverable and measurable social impact directly translatable into financial benefits or government savings.⁴⁶

Overall, the best practices for violence interruption and similar programs involve stable, long-term funding from government or philanthropic sources that have a strong understanding and commitment to community-led violence and harm reduction.

VI. **BEST PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABILITY: HUMAN RESOURCES**

How have violence interruption and behavioral health programs been sustained in terms of supporting and retaining staff? How have programs managed to avoid the pitfalls of retraumatizing staff?

Violence intervention and alternative policing programs depend on well-trained staff to facilitate activities. All employees, from administrators to staff, play an important role in ensuring program activities are implemented with fidelity and that target beneficiaries are receiving support. Given the nature of the work, it is essential that staff feel supported and empowered so they can continue to serve the community.

Understanding occupational stresses for outreach workers

Unfortunately, many community-led programs face challenges of staff burnout and retraumatization that contribute to high turnover rates, particularly among outreach workers. A [recent study](#) found occupational stressors experienced by violence interruption outreach workers ranged from physical exposure to violence, harassment, misconduct, and false arrest by law enforcement, disrespect from other program stakeholders, and the indignity of low pay/low value for high-risk, intensive work.⁴⁷

The study's findings bear out for individual programs. Chicago and New York CURE Violence staff members communicated that they had difficulty taking days off and disconnecting from their work because they were always "on-call."⁴⁸ Newark Community Street Teams staff felt like they were personally responsible for the future of the youth in their community. Nearly all staff members interviewed described multiple traumatic experiences.⁴⁹ New York's Cure Violence Outreach Workers

⁴⁵ Case Study: CRU and Familiar Faces, Vera Institute.

⁴⁶ Rangan, V. and Lisa Chase, "The Pay-off of Pay for Success," *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Fall 2015. https://ssir.org/up_for_debate/article/the_payoff_of_pay_for_success.

⁴⁷ Bocanegra, Kathryn et al. "BETWEEN A BULLET AND ITS TARGET: STREET INTERVENTION, TRAUMA EXPOSURE, AND PROFESSIONAL IMPLICATIONS," *University of Illinois Chicago*, January 2022. <https://www.streetssupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/BBT-Executive-Summary-10.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Analysis of the Cure Violence Model at 142-143.

⁴⁹ Newark Community Street Teams Narrative Evaluation at 86-88.

believed that staff members who left the program were most likely burnt out, searching for higher pay, and/or retraumatized due to the nature of their work.⁵⁰

Program staff repeatedly identified job instability resulting from inconsistent program funding, contract-based employment (versus full-time status), and weak organizational support structures repeatedly as a recurring occupational stressor. In Newark, more than half of all staff members indicated they needed financial stability and upward mobility at work.⁵¹

Best practices for trauma-informed and sustainable employment

Programs should invest in tools and resources that uplift and support staff members as they engage in the difficult work of community outreach and violence intervention. Given the risk for retraumatization, staff members should be given access to mental health services and organizations should prioritize hiring counselors with training and experience in treating clients with historic traumas, particularly related to violence and substance use.⁵² The risks, challenges, and significance of the work being done should be apparent in organizational approaches to hiring and compensation.⁵³ Program administrators should also invest in promoting healing and restoration within their organization by creating safe spaces for staff to restore and offering opportunities for individual development, which can contribute positively to staff members' personal and professional identities and bolster their sense of job satisfaction.⁵⁴

VII. BEST PRACTICES FOR DATA COLLECTION AND USE

What data do violence interruption and behavioral health programs typically collect? What do "successful results" look like? How have programs built in iterative learning into their process?

A program's evaluability is dependent on the availability of data. Poor data weakens the validity of the evaluation and presents barriers to proving program effectiveness. Data also provides transparency about how programs operate and serves to hold administrators and stakeholders accountable.

Mapping out and tracking key performance indicators

Programs that have successfully leveraged data, establish clear, measurable program outcomes in the short and medium-term, and were able to *attribute outcomes to program activity*. Outcome data may come from a variety of sources, including program providers, government/agency records, census data, attributing outcomes to program activity requires robust case management and data collection throughout the program's lifetime. The most successful programs establish performance benchmarks suited to the intervention and track them on a regular basis (quarterly, bi-annually, annually). Performance benchmarks should depend on intervention type, and data collection should be tied to relevant benchmarks.

⁵⁰ Analysis of the Cure Violence Model at 141-142.

⁵¹ *Id.* at 90-91.

⁵² *Id.* at 143-145.

⁵³ "...Violence Interrupters should be paid the same amount as the police force, because they do the same work, except their work is even more dangerous because they are not armed and they are physically right in the middle of preventing conflicts." Analysis of the Cure Violence Model at 141-142.

⁵⁴ Newark Community Street Teams Narrative Evaluation at 72-76.

ROCA's [Massachusetts Juvenile Justice Pay for Success](#) program, for example, is contractually obligated to conduct rigorous data collection, evidence-driven analysis and repeat evaluation of its programs.⁵⁵ To do so, they utilize custom software for data management that tracks eligibility and enrollment data, individual needs, service plans, training, employment, wages, and outcomes for participants. Collecting this data enabled the program to track changes in key performance indicators over time including street involvement, substance use, employment and educational engagement, and prosocial activity. Roca was ultimately able to show their program interventions produced reductions in participant recidivism of up to 60 percent.⁵⁶

Stakeholder engagement as data collection

Not all programs are equipped to collect and monitor data at the level exhibited by ROCA, nor are all program activities or outcomes easily measured through quantitative metrics. In these cases, programs should emphasize more qualitative approaches for documenting progress, impact, achievements, and reception. Regular communication exchanges between program stakeholders through interviews, forums, surveys, community meetings etc. can, over time, serve as evidence to the program's value and provide leverage to allow stakeholders to push for changes in operations or approaches when necessary.

Data collection for accountability and transparency

Transparency about a program's operations builds trust and establishes credibility and value within communities served, while also holding stakeholders accountable. Programs can achieve transparency by publicly sharing metrics related to program activities and outcomes of interest, as well as regularly messaging on program operations and implementation. D.C.'s Cure the Streets program, for example, has a [public dashboard on its website](#), which tracks crime metrics related to gun violence and program activities per year.⁵⁷ While not comprehensive or tied to long-term impacts, data transparency provides a meaningful level of accountability and transparency to the community and can help a program track results and effectiveness over time.

VII. MOVING FORWARD

What gaps are there in the literature? What would be most helpful for TCST to contribute?

Much has been learned from the past decades of violence interruption programs. Here we discuss how Trenton Community Street Teams (TCST) can improve our knowledge of best practices for violence and behavioral health intervention strategies by leveraging the lessons of past program successes and failures.

One of the greatest areas for improvement and learning is in sustainability. Most programs still struggle with how best to support staff members, particularly outreach workers with histories of trauma. Their lived experience is valued by program participants and makes them uniquely effective at responding to violence in their communities, but this same experience makes them vulnerable to retraumatization through proximity to violence and personal triggers. Our research has identified clear recommendations for reducing staff turnover and mitigating re-traumatization, which include offering mental health

⁵⁵ "The Pay-off of Pay for Success"

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ "Cure the Streets Dashboard," *Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia*. Last accessed: Dec. 2, 2022 <https://oag.dc.gov/cure-streets-data-dashboard>.

services, providing a supportive organizational culture, and offering adequate financial compensation and security. TCST can advance our understanding of best practices in employment sustainability by implementing these recommendations and identifying the long-term funding necessary to sustain them.

Another issue of sustainability that continues to come up relates to the challenges of maintaining a healthy partnership with a diverse coalition of stakeholders. While many of these organizations are running full speed and under-resourced, the absence of cohesive mission and vision statements featured highly in dysfunctional partnerships. Establishing a shared mission and vision on which key stakeholders are aligned may serve as a north star in navigating conflict and compromise as unique goals and incentives push them in different directions.

Lastly, the importance of data collection came up again and again as a key competency: without an effective data and reporting strategy, programs struggle to establish value and secure funding, both critical features for ensuring program sustainability. Data should be used, not only as proof of efficacy, but also as a means for transparency and accountability to the community in question. Though almost all of the programs we examined collected and used data, they provided little evidence for a systematic approach to strategizing and implementing an effective data collection plan or best practices for how to leverage data to improve program implementation. If TCST hopes to serve as a model for other jurisdictions, program administrators will need to consider what data it collects, what key performance metrics it uses to establish success and monitor implementation, and develop a strategy for implementation and quality assurance.

B. TCST LOGIC MODEL

Abbreviations

- HRI: High-Risk Interventionist
 - OW: Outreach Worker
- TPD: Trenton Police Dept.
 - QOL: Quality of life

PROGRAM	RESOURCES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES (6-12 mos)	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES (12-24 mos)	IMPACTS
Community Safe Passage	• Trained staff • Coordination/Communication with schools • Funding • Transportation • Knowledge of community	• OWs and HRIs patrol near schools • OWs/HRIs intervene and mediate in conflict • Ensuring safety in arriving/leaving school • Incidents logged in monthly incident report	• Student recognition/trust of TCST • Successful mediation and de-escalation of acute conflict between students and around the school	• Fewer instances of youth violence • Feeling of safety and security in and around school • Students learn how to resolve problems peacefully • Student engagement with mentoring (see row above)	• Lower rates of detention, incarceration • Increased school attendance/continuity of education • Higher education performance (better grades) • Resolution of chronic disputes (gang violence, drug disputes, etc)	• Increased graduation rates • Increased college attendance rates • Increased employment • Decreased poverty
High Risk Intervention	• Trained Staff • Coordination/communication with TPD • Funding	• Receive and respond to email notifications of disputes or violence from TPD • Respond w/i 24 hrs once deemed safe • Negotiate personal conflicts and diffuse tensions • Resolve drug disputes, relocate domestic violence victims, etc.	• Safety and security for victims of domestic and intimate partner violence • Diffusion of acute tension and disrupting the cycle of violence without violence or TPD presence • Support for people involved in violent incidents • Referral to services, OWs	• Increased community trust in TCST • Fewer instances of acute violence • Increased access to support services	• Lower incarceration rates • Resolution of chronic disputes (gang violence, drug disputes, etc) • Increased trust within the community • Fewer interactions with law enforcement • Increased utilization of support services	• Increased family stability/keeping families together through less incarceration • Norm-building: culture change to non-violent conflict resolution within community • Less youth involvement in gangs/crime
Case Management	• Trained Staff • Coordination/Communication with social service agencies • Availability of extra-curricular activities, counseling, etc.Funding	• OW engages clients in daily life • OW creates safe space for growth and change • OW helps client with interviews, social service appts, extra-curricular activities • OW develops and maintains strong ties to community members • OW referrals for legal advice, resume writing, interview prep, wellness and medical services	• 6-month plan for client • Client trust in OW/TCST • Youth active in community • Client access to social services, jobs, education, housing • Client hope/optimism in self and future	• Client educational success • Client develops leadership and social skills • Increased utilization of support services • Client placement in safe and secure housing	• Less youth gang involvement • Client path to higher education, higher paying jobs • More youth community leaders	• Increased graduation rates • Increased college attendance • Increased employment, decreased poverty • Lower rates of youth crime • Norm-building of community engagement, education • Less disruption in access to safe housing • More positive health outcomes

Abbreviations

- HRI: High-Risk Interventionist
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- QOL: Quality of life

PROGRAM	RESOURCES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES (6-12 mos)	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES (12-24 mos)	IMPACTS
Victim Support and Advocacy (Assertive Community Outreach)	• Trained MSW • Communication and coordination with TPD • Knowledge of services • Funding • Ability to respond quickly	• Short-term/crisis counseling • Connect crime victims to social services, OWs	• De-escalation of acute crisis • Support during traumatic, uncertain time • Bridge between community and police during investigations • Support re-engaging in daily life	• Positive client engagement in community • Better client mental health • Trust in TCST • Referral to OWs, mentoring, etc.	• Increased trust between community and TPD (during investigations) • Outcomes from mentoring • Client healing from trauma	• “Lower temperature” between community and TPD • Mentoring impacts • Better mental health among community
Community Walks and Bi-Weekly Meetings	• Setting for meetings • Availability/interest of stakeholders • Advertising, public awareness • Trained staff, event organizers	• Walks with members of PD, government, etc. • Host regular meetings with key stakeholders (law enforcement, non-profits, advocacy groups)	• Forum for communication between community and various stakeholders • Physical presence, show of safety in areas marked by violence	• Community feels voice heard, stakeholders understand concerns • Community awareness of rates of violence • Public participation in community walks	• Increased coordination, trust, and collaboration between stakeholders • Real-time feedback on TCST's impact and perception • Decrease in violence in community walk areas	• Coalition among stakeholders and community • Decreased rates of violence
Community Sentinel Project	• 20 trained volunteers • Communication and coordination with TPD, stakeholders • Knowledge of community	• Volunteers monitor hotspots • TPD invests in other areas • Volunteers engage in low-level crimes/QOL issues • Volunteers connect clients with OWs, resources	• Low-level crimes, QOL issues resolved without TPD involvement • Client access to support services • Volunteer recognition, trust among community • Less police presence in hotspot	• Less administrative TPD work • Clients utilize, succeed with services and mentorship • Decrease in crime (low-level and more serious offenses) within hotspot area	• Quicker TPD response to high-level crimes • Decrease in QOL issues, blight within hotspot area • Increased community activity, trust in hotspot area • Trust in volunteers	• Lower incarceration rates (esp. for low-level crimes) • Decreased tension between TPD and community • Increased economic activity in hotspot area • Fewer TPD resources used/efficiently
Hubs	• Trained Staff • Designated space with furniture and other resources (Library + Donnelly Homes) • Community connections and resources	• Participants request assistance from Hub staff • Hub staff connects participant with relevant partner or agency • Safe space for community members to be (when open)	• Referrals to services, partners, and OWs • Sense of safety and access to information • New mentoring participants	• Community members receive needed resources and services • Community members feel taken care of by hub and partners • Outcomes from Mentoring	• Resolution to acute community issues • increased community knowledge and utilization of and available resources • Outcomes from mentoring	• Increased health and economic outcomes (from resolution of issues) • Impacts from mentoring

C. SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

GENERAL

- Tell us about yourself. How long have you been affiliated with TCST? How did you come to the program?
 - What would you say the program's top goals are?
 - How will you know when it has achieved success?
 - What challenges do you anticipate with supporting staff in particular?
 - In your own words, what is the mission and vision for TCST?
 - How are you thinking about measurement and showing impact? What metrics are you tracking or would you like to track?
 - What are the challenges associated with measurement development and tracking?
 - How are stakeholders communicating with one another? How are they sharing data?
 - We understand it's early in the rollout, but is there a story you can think of that demonstrates the program's impact (or potential impact)?
-

- What challenges have you faced in implementing various parts of the program? What do you anticipate the program's key challenges to be? How might you address them?
- What is the most important thing you want us to know about the program?

FOR PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

- Supporting staff — particularly high risk interventionists and outreach workers — will be crucial for long-term sustainability of the program. How are you planning to do that?
- Tell us about your funding structure. How are you ensuring the program continues to be reliably funded? Do you have any concerns about the long-term funding of the program?
- What do you see as the TPD's role in this? Why is it important for the police department to play a role in the program?
- What, if any, concerns does the police department's involvement bring up? How are you mitigating those concerns?

FOR PARTICIPANTS

- How did you hear about TCST?
 - If comfortable, can you tell us what brings you to TCST?
-

- What challenges have you faced in implementing various parts of the program? What do you anticipate the program's key challenges to be? How might you address them?
 - What is the most important thing you want us to know about the program?
 - What are some of the challenges that community members in Trenton face?
 - Have you ever received services from any other programs in Trenton? If so, which ones?
 - When was your first session? How often do you meet with your caseworker? How long do those sessions last?
 - Can you tell us more about the intake process?
 - What type of resources has TCST provided you with?
 - What are the current goals you have with your case manager?
 - What skills did you learn so far in this program that you can use in your everyday life?
 - Would you recommend this program to someone you know?
 - Do you have any suggestions to improve this program? What specific assistance would be helpful to you in terms of improving the program?
-

D. SURVEY TEMPLATE

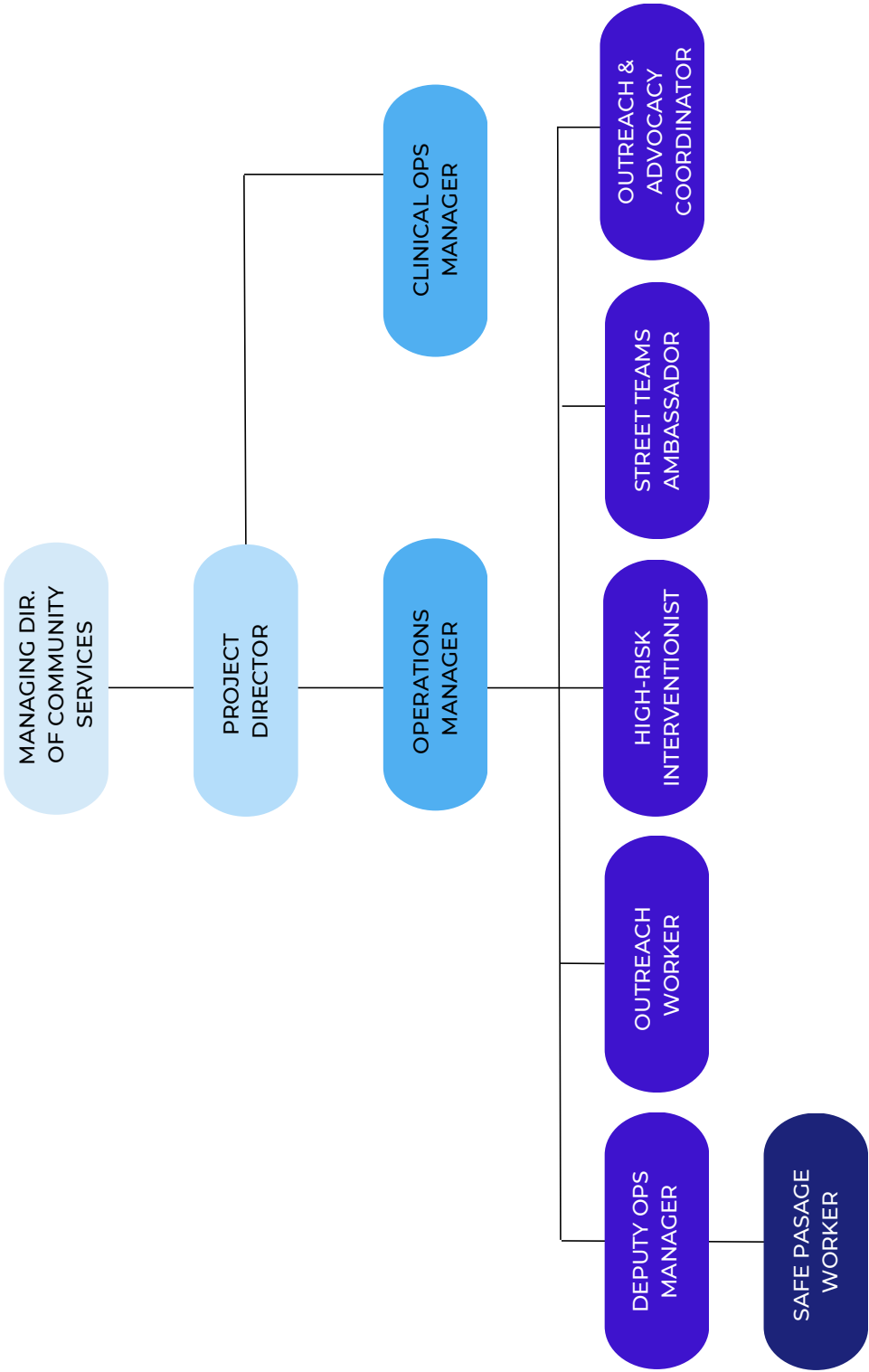
1. How many employees are currently employed in each job title?
 2. What is the current salary of employees for each position?
 3. What are the specific working hours/schedule?
 - a. Are employees expected to work outside these hours and under what circumstances?
 - b. Do employees make overtime outside of regular working hours?
 4. Are there formal job descriptions for each role? If so, please share.
 5. What have been the retention and/or turnover rates for employees?
 6. Where exactly in the TCST rollout are we?
 - a. What arms of the program have been staffed and are operational and when did they become operational? (Please provide dates where possible)
 - b. What arms of the program have yet to be staffed and/or become operational?
 - c. What's the cadence for the programs (community walks, etc.)?
 7. What is the timeline for future TCST programs / initiatives?
-

- 8.** Are you hiring for additional roles? What are they? (If job descriptions available, please share)
 - 9.** Does TCST have an employee handbook? If there is a digital version, please share.
 - 10.** Does TCST have a board of directors?
 - 11.** How many people have received services through the TCST programs to-date? (if data available)
 - 12.** How long does someone typically stay in contact with the program (what is their average lifecycle with the program)? (if data available)
-

E. ORG. CHART AND TITLE DESCRIPTIONS

TCST ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

AS OF MARCH 2023



TITLE DESCRIPTIONS

Title	Number of Employees	Hourly Wage Rate	Hours / Day	Job Responsibilities
Project Director	1	\$39.06	8.5	Oversee and manage the Street Team project, including implementation, staff management, quality assurance, and growth and development. Represent the project, and work to ensure effective partnerships. Reports to Isles Managing Director of Community Services.
Operations Manager	1	\$32.81	8	Oversee and support the day-to-day operations, including staffing, scheduling, training, record keeping, and reporting. Provide essential administration and coordination support for the project. Directly support and supervise staff. Reports to Project Director.
Clinical Operations Manager	1	\$32.55	8	Provide social work services. Develop plans to support participant success and monitor them during and after their participation with TCST programs. Reports to Project Director.
Deputy Operations Manager	1	\$26.04	8	Support activities and overall TCST operations. Support administrative and managerial program requirements, including organizing community walks, addressing staff, recruitment and hiring needs, and maintaining daily logs and reports. Represent TCST at community meetings. Oversee Safe Passage, including staffing assignments, training new safe passage staff, and effective service implementation. Reports to Operations Manager.
High Risk Interventionist	3	\$25.50	7	Respond to incidents of violence or impending violence. Prevent violence and repair relationships between people involved in violence without relying on arrest and incarceration. Engage with outreach staff working in the field. Connect with victims of violence in hospitals and trauma centers. Connect victims and families with support services. Reports to the Operations Manager.

Title	Number of Employees	Hourly Wage Rate	Hours / Day	Job Responsibilities
Outreach & Advocacy Coordinator	1	\$23.54	7	Gather initial information and follow-up with victims and survivors of violent incidents. Represent TCST to community members who may not trust outside service providers. Maintain up-to-date information on available services, activities and events happening in the community, and the general victim advocacy and support network available to program participants and residents overall. Work closely with staff and coordinate information-sharing. Work with other TCST staff to plan and implement post-incident activities, including vigils and rallies. Reports to the Operations Manager.
Street Team Ambassador	1	\$20.00	4	Represent and promote TCST and its services in the community, in public meetings, and in general communication. Cultivate relationships between TCST and the community. Remain current with TCST services, opportunities, events, and priorities. Remain current with TCST training, protocols, and procedures. Step into other staff roles where necessary. Reports to the Operations Manager.
Outreach Workers	6	\$20.00	7	Represent Street Team across its various programs and initiatives. Cultivate relationships between TCST and the community. Coordinate with Safe Passage workers and high-risk interventionists. Reports to the Operations Manager.
Safe Passage Workers	6	\$17.50	5	Provide daily support to administrators, students, and staff in ensuring safe arrival to and dismissal from school. Cultivate relationships with students, parents, and other key stakeholders. Connect students and families to services and resources. Reports to the Deputy Operations Manager.
