

Shared Vision and Common Goals

In Section 4

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to Develop a Shared
Vision

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The Vision

The partners in the collaborative effort have articulated, agreed upon, and are working toward specific common goals and demonstrate a commitment to the values and beliefs that guide the collaboration. The partners view themselves as part of a worthwhile effort and believe that they can improve the community through their participation in the collaboration.

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The soul cannot think without a picture.
—Aristotle



Action Steps to Success

The various interests represented by the collaboration's partners necessitate creating and articulating a common vision. That vision statement will form the foundation from which all other strategic elements emanate.² The vision statement should express the philosophy (values and beliefs), as well as purpose, of the collaboration, to which all partners agree. Developing a vision can be a difficult, time-consuming task. However, the vision statement is critical—it will clarify and chart the collaboration's future direction.³

The collaboration's success will depend, to a large extent, on the clarity of the shared vision and whether it has incorporated all the reasons for the collaboration's existence.⁴ A shared vision brings focus to the team. A lack of focus allows for conflicting agendas. As the initiative progresses, collaboration partners should reassess and modify the vision statement if the community's needs change, a problem is solved, or if collaboration membership changes significantly. However, because the vision is the foundation for the community policing collaboration, modifying the vision statement should not be considered lightly.

Step 1

Plan the Vision/Common Goals Meeting.

Review Section 5, Expertise, to learn how to plan and conduct effective meetings; select a meeting location and time and develop an agenda. Taking the time to plan the visioning meeting and making sure that appropriate stakeholders are invited will be a great first step in ensuring the success of the collaboration.

Step 2

Invite Stakeholders to the Vision/Common Goals Meeting.

Once the stakeholders have been identified (see Section 2, Tool 2: Identifying Stakeholders), invite these stakeholders to a meeting to develop the vision and define common goals of the problem-solving effort or other community policing initiative. The number of individuals who attend the visioning meeting may not be

² Below, P.J., Morrissey, G.L., and Acomb, B.L. *The Executive Guide to Strategic Planning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1987.

³ Goodstein, L.D., Nolan, T.M., and Pfeiffer, J.W. *Applied Strategic Planning: A Comprehensive Guide*. San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer and Company, 1992.

⁴ Ayers, M.B. *Strategic Planning for Local Gang Prevention and Control*. Prepared for the Police Executive Research Forum by Circle Solutions, Inc., Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1994.

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as important as the individuals invited. Often, individuals and organizations, regardless of whether they can attend the visioning meeting, will feel more a part of the community policing initiative if they are invited to contribute their ideas during the project. This is one reason that brainstorming about stakeholders should be inclusive rather than exclusive.

Decide on ways to gather ideas from interested stakeholders who are unable to attend the meeting. One technique is to solicit, in advance, written ideas that capture their vision for the community policing initiative. Personal invitations (by phone, letter, or e-mail) present an opportunity to begin to establish trust among stakeholders, even for those unable to attend the visioning meeting.

Communicate the following points:

- The impetus for the meeting is the partnership among law enforcement and school, community group, etc., to address a specific community problem or issue.
- Basic information known about the problem or issue.
- The purpose of the meeting (i.e., to agree upon a vision and common goals for the initiative).
- Meeting logistics.
- Each invitee was identified as someone whose perspective and ideas are important.
- The meeting will start and end on time (usually no longer than 1½ hours to respect attendees' schedules and ensure that the discussion is focused and productive).

- Participation in the visioning session will *not* obligate the stakeholders in any way.
- Invitees may extend an invitation to others who may have a stake in the community policing effort.

A sample personalized letter of invitation to a meeting to develop a shared vision is provided in Tool 5. Also, Tool 6 provides a sample form to capture ideas from stakeholders that are unable to attend the meeting. This form may be mailed or e-mailed with the letter or used to record information provided during a telephone conversation with the stakeholder.

Step 3

Identify a Facilitator and Other Staff for the Meeting.

The facilitator may be one of the primary partners, a stakeholder, or a professional facilitator hired expressly for this meeting. Refer to Section 5, Expertise, to learn more about the role of a facilitator and for facilitation tips. Select a meeting recorder/notetaker (at future meetings, the recorder can be determined on an ad hoc basis).

Step 4

Conduct the Vision/ Common Goals Meeting.

When stakeholders arrive at the visioning meeting, the primary partners should greet each person individually. Also, providing basic refreshments is a nice compliment to a first meeting, but certainly refreshments are not required for a successful meeting. Throughout

the meeting, the collaboration's primary members should model their partnership and conduct the meeting together.

Outline for the visioning meeting:

1. Introduce the primary partners; describe objectives of the meeting and background on the issue/problem.
(5 minutes)
2. Introduce attendees and their interest or background in the problem/issue being addressed.
(10 minutes)
3. Brainstorm with the group on meeting ground rules or broader norms for the collaboration. (Misunderstanding and conflicts arise when norms are implied rather than explicitly articulated.)
(10 minutes)
4. Identify the community/target area and population. The problem/issue that has brought the team together may have been identified through a grant application. Defining the specific population and geographic boundary of the project is necessary before developing a shared vision. If available, present and discuss

preliminary information that may provide insight about a problem in a certain location.
(5 minutes)

5. Plan for the future. Ask each person to think ahead to a specific time (e.g., 6 months, the next school year, etc). Decide on a timeframe that makes the most sense for your particular situation. Ask the group to envision what the community/school situation will be like once the problem or issue is addressed. The facilitator asks questions such as:

- What is happening?
- What do you see and hear?
- What is different?

Participants answer these questions silently. Each person should jot down key phrases that describe their experience. Encourage participants to express their most idealistic, hopeful, and positive ideas. This is not the time to restrict and edit thinking. Remember that you are working toward articulating a shared vision.
(5 minutes)

Example 5 Identifying the Target Area or Population

If bullying among students at schools is the issue that brought you together, define the population to be addressed and the geographic area you are targeting.

- Does the problem pertain to an entire school?
- Are you addressing a specific grade within the school?
- Does the target group cover several grades (e.g., student athletes, band members)?
- Do you want to target incidents occurring on school grounds but outside the building?
- Do you want to include incidents that spill over before and after school to the three blocks surrounding the school, including businesses that have complained of incidents?
- Are you thinking of a vision for the building?

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6. Share ideas. Depending on the size of the group, this step can be conducted individually, in pairs, or in a small group of three or four participants. If there are less than eight participants, have each person share the one or two most important things that s/he has jotted down. A group of 8 to 12 can work in pairs. A larger group can be broken into small work groups. For larger groups, go from person to person, pair to pair, or group to group and ask a spokesperson to present one of the ideas recorded. Only one idea is presented at a time. Continue going from person to person (or group to group) until all major thoughts have been spoken and recorded. List other ideas obtained from persons not able to attend the meeting. (20 minutes)
7. Identify themes. Ask the group (still working individually, in pairs, or in small groups) to use the list generated in the previous step to identify recurring themes that capture the spirit and vision of the group. Write these themes as two- or three-word vision statements. (10 minutes)
8. Formulate one vision statement that captures the themes and issues. This will become the statement that you communicate as you recruit new partners and garner support. This is the statement that describes the shared vision—what the partnership is working toward. Depending on the time and the energy of the group, this step may have to be completed at a different time with a subset of the entire group. If the statement is not developed by the whole group, provide a way for those not involved to give final approval. (20 minutes)

Example 6 Identify Themes

A team is developing a crisis management strategy for Langdon High School. Confirm that the high school is the appropriate level at which to work. The target population is all students (grades 9–12) and people who work at the school. Some themes that might have emerged from the previous steps are:

- Teachers and students know what to do in a crisis.
- Current service contact information is accessible to all school personnel.
- Classrooms have crisis kits.
- Teachers can contact the office from the classroom.
- Parents have confidence in school safety.
- Immediate responders have accurate school layout and other information.

9. Recap the meeting objectives, summarize what the meeting accomplished, discuss next steps for the group, and determine if participants are interested in being ongoing partners in the endeavor. (5 minutes)
10. Thank participants for attending the meeting.

Step 5

Keep the Vision Statement Visible and Use It.

Once the vision statement is developed, post it on a flipchart in the meeting room. Include the vision statement at the top of future meeting announcements or agendas. If this is a school project, ask a student to write an article for the school newspaper about the group's vision. Be creative in the ways the target community is notified about collaboration efforts and activities.

The primary purpose of the vision statement is to provide focus to the endeavor and keep partners energized. Some creative, specific, and additional uses for the vision statement include:

- **To give direction for resource expenditures.** Make a poster of the vision statement. Display the statement at meetings as a reminder of the collaboration goals. Allocate resources in ways that will bring the team closer to the shared vision.
- **To direct discussion.** The vision statement can help direct discussions about alternative responses or courses of action.
- **To provide a common ground and defuse disagreements.** Returning to the shared vision reminds partners of agreed-upon direction when there are disagreements.
- **To serve as a basis for future planning.** The shared vision can be the basis for direction—developing the objectives and strategies in the action plan (see Section 10, Action Plan).
- **To serve as a public relations tool.** Publicize the shared vision. Use the shared vision to identify and distinguish your collaborative initiative. Incorporate the vision statement in a symbol for the project. Have a poster contest to choose a project logo. This is a creative way to involve youth. Brainstorm ways to advertise the vision throughout the community and attract new partners to support the initiative.
- **As part of daily school announcements (for school-based projects).** It would not take long to end the morning announcements with, “Remember our commitment to make

Example 7 Vision Statement

A sample statement might be:

Our vision is to create a safe high school where students, school personnel, social service providers, and emergency responders are not only prepared and equipped to deal with a school crisis, but also are always working towards preventing any such crisis.

Central High School a bully-free environment.” This is also an opportunity to incorporate some of the themes that were identified in the meeting as points of special emphasis. For example, one week’s announcements might suggest specific ways that the school community can demonstrate respect for diversity.

- **To keep it alive.** A shared vision statement can be a source of inspiration and a great recruiting tool. It must be kept in the minds of the collaboration members.
- **As a benchmark for project evaluation.** Collaboration partners will want to know whether the time, resources, and talents they have committed to the vision have been successful. The vision statement can be the foundation on which an outcome evaluation is designed.



Avoiding the Pitfalls

When developing and strengthening a shared vision in a community policing collaboration, beware of the following pitfalls and consider implementing some of the suggested strategies if you have already encountered these challenges. Also, to help diagnose a struggling partnership, please refer to Section 1, Tool 1: Unsticking Stuck Groups/Reassessing the Collaboration; in particular, items 9–12 can help partners to assess the shared vision.

Pitfall:

The community is apathetic about the cause; therefore, the effort loses steam or does not get off the ground. If potential stakeholders and those with resources do not rally to the cause, the project may not get off the ground or may be slowed or stopped due to a lack of personnel, political, or financial support.

Solutions:

Often, potential stakeholders may not fully understand how the issue impacts them specifically; this promotes apathy. Gathering preliminary information that demonstrates who is impacted and describes specific short- and long-term impacts to those individuals or organizations will make the issue real and help generate support. Do not proceed with vision development until the problem or issue is sufficiently understood by all stakeholders.

While the collaboration’s founding partners have an initial intent for coming together, they must be open to allowing the vision and objectives to accommodate individual stakeholders’ agendas that are reasonable and within the goals of the community policing effort. Be sure to involve all potential partners in the vision development meeting so that individual expectations can be heard and considered. Revisit and revise the vision statement if it does not accommodate those needs.

Pitfall:

Meetings are long and unproductive. If meetings are not directed by or do not support the outcomes outlined by the vision statement, collaboration partners will likely

find themselves digressing from the main objective of the meeting, arguing over decisions, or expending resources on activities that do not support the vision. This will lead to frustration and chaos.

Solution:

Make the vision statement visible; continually refer to it as a gauge of whether the team is on track. Post the vision statement at each meeting, and make sure that it is prominently displayed on meeting agendas and on all correspondence sent to collaboration partners. Never schedule a meeting until determining that the meeting agenda supports the collaboration vision.

Pitfall:

Partners focus on current obstacles rather than on future possibilities. When the partners become so entrenched in the details of planning and implementing tasks that they fail to deal with these activities within the context of the overall vision, they may become discouraged by challenges and want to give up.

Solutions:

Begin each planning meeting by briefly reviewing the vision statement. Post the statement in the meeting rooms. Before assigning a task, always reiterate the importance of the task and show how the task supports the collaboration's overall vision.

As a team, assess whether sufficient resources have been allocated to complete a particular task. If they have not, use Section 2, Tool 2: Identifying Stakeholders under "possible contributions" to reallocate personnel resources based on available

skills. Also refer to Section 9, Tool 16: Identifying Funding Resources and Options for help on how to organize the search for additional funds or in-kind resources.

Pitfall:

Partners become discouraged and lose energy for the project. If the team's vision is unrealistic or the project is unrealistic given the amount of time or number of persons (or organizations) available to accomplish the project, partners will see themselves as failing before they begin and won't be enthusiastic about the project.

Solution:

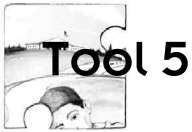
Be sure to develop a vision that is attainable within the realm of available resources. If all partners agree to a somewhat lofty vision, consider setting short-term objectives that can be achieved and celebrated while striving for the overall, more ambitious (but perhaps attainable) outcome.

Pitfall:

The collaboration fails to produce results commensurate with the time and effort expended. If the partners lose focus on the vision, they may mistake certain activities as productivity. Therefore, partners may realize at some point that while they are quite busy, they are no closer to the goal.

Solution:

Do not commit the collaboration to implementing a task without clarifying how that activity will bring the collaboration closer to the shared vision. If that link is not obvious, do not proceed.



Tools to Plan and Chart Your Progress

Tool 5 is a sample letter that may be modified and used to invite stakeholders to a meeting to develop the collaboration's vision and project goals. Tool 6 is a sample form that may be used

to collect information from stakeholders who are unable to attend the Vision/Common Goals meeting, but who would like to provide input into the effort.

Tool 5

Sample Invitation to a Meeting to Develop a Shared Vision

Date

Dear (Name of Stakeholder),

The (law enforcement agency name) and the (name of primary partner/partner organization) are joining together to address the problem of (name identified problem/issue) in (name specific school, neighborhood, or community). One of our first steps in working together was to identify groups and individuals that may have an interest in addressing this problem. You have been identified as someone whose ideas and perspectives would contribute to addressing this important issue.

On (date) at (time) we will be meeting with stakeholders at (place) to begin to discuss these issues and develop a shared and agreed-upon vision of what we plan to achieve by addressing this issue. This meeting will last no more than 1½ hours. This meeting will be facilitated by (name or affiliation of the person who will facilitate), which will allow us to keep the process on track and end the meeting on time.

We are very excited about this collaborative project, and we hope that you will decide to be an ongoing member of our team. It is important, however, to note that attendance at this meeting will not obligate you in any way.

It is our intent to involve as many different groups and individuals as are interested in this dialogue. Please feel free to bring other interested people to the meeting. Everyone is welcome.

If you are interested in this project but are unable to attend the meeting, please contact (name of contact) at (give e-mail address, phone number, and a mailing address) and share your ideas so that they may be included as we develop the vision that will guide our work. Also, please contact (name given above) if you have any questions.

We need you and your ideas to address (problem/issue) in our community. Please join us on (repeat logistical information). We look forward to seeing you at this meeting as we take the first important step in addressing (issue).

(Signed by the primary partners)

Tool 6

**Sample Form for Soliciting
Feedback from Stakeholders
Unable to Participate in the
Visioning Meeting**

Thank you for taking a few minutes to provide your ideas and perspective in addressing (problem or issue) in (target location). We appreciate your feedback and welcome your ongoing participation in our collaborative community policing effort. Please also provide your contact information (if we do not already have that information), so that we may contact you regarding questions, provide you with information from our visioning meeting, and notify you about follow-up meetings and activities.

Name: _____

Affiliation (if appropriate): _____

Phone #: _____ Fax #: _____

E-mail: _____

Street Address: _____

1. In your opinion, does (problem/issue statement) appropriately define the issue/problem?

Example 8

- In your opinion, does bullying on the Wilson Elementary School playground during lunch and recess appropriately identify the issue?
- In your opinion, does theft of vehicles from Northwest Madison neighborhoods and local parking lots appropriately identify the problem?
- In your opinion, does developing a coordinated, multidisciplinary strategy for addressing crises such as a bomb threat, school shooting, natural disasters, fire, chemical spill, or explosion, etc., at Langdon High School appropriately identify the issue?



2. Please provide your perspective on whether addressing (problem/issue) in/at/on (the proposed geographic area) is the appropriate target location or whether and why a broader or narrower target area should be addressed.

Example 9

- Please provide your perspective on whether addressing bullying on the Wilson Elementary School playground is the appropriate target location or whether and why a broader or narrower target area should be addressed.
- Please provide your perspective on whether auto theft from the Northwest Madison neighborhoods and parking lots is the appropriate target location or whether and why a broader or narrower target area should be addressed.
- Please provide your perspective on whether developing a crisis management strategy for Langdon High School is the appropriate location or whether we should develop the plan at a broader (e.g., districtwide or countywide) level?

3. Visualize 1 year from now. What do you think the (community/school issue/problem) will look like once the problem is addressed? Specifically:

- What is happening? _____
- What do you see and hear? _____
- What is different? _____

4. How would you like to be involved in the partnership to address (problem/issue)?

5. When is the best time for you to meet? _____

6. What is the best method and time to contact you? _____

7. What are your expectations from the collaborative effort? _____

Is there anyone else you would like us to invite to participate in this effort? If so, please provide names, affiliations (if appropriate), and contact information.

