SAFETY & JUSTICE: UNDERSTANDING THE LISC MODEL

LISC

Concept Intro: Collecting Data

Do you know what data you need to analyze problems in your community?

This can feel like an overwhelming question for a local coalition working to improve community safety. The data that you collect now will frame your priorities and the projects that you develop over the next few months (and years). Taking a few hours to flesh out a plan for data collection and analysis will help to improve the overall understanding of the conditions in the community and result in responses that are more effective.

What is Data?

Simply put, data are all the pieces of information that your team has collected, directly or from other groups or departments, which you can use to analyze your problem and develop potential responses to that problem.

To Get Started

Discussions about data should go beyond conversations about sharing digital files.

1 Identify What Data is to be Shared

Data collection efforts usually start with crime-related data from law enforcement agencies, such as calls for service and/or crime reports.
Consider what other data might give additional insight into the problems.

- Agencies such as schools, parks, health departments or emergency services may have useful data about conditions and challenges in the community that impact public safety.
- Also consider qualitative data from community and law enforcement sources such as focus groups, observational activities, and business and community surveys.

Be clear on what parameters are important for your work, like the geographic area(s) and time frames.

2 Develop a Data Collection Plan

To ensure accountability and timely collection of data, your team should outline the details of what is expected. Identify:

- Who will provide the data? Include specific name(s) and role(s).
- What files will be shared? How will they be delivered and in what file format?
- When will the files be delivered? What is the plan to regularly update data?

The LISC Approach

These powerful themes run through all LISC projects.

DATA-DRIVEN
LISC targets crime hot spots – often streets, properties or public spaces in communities that have struggled with crime for years. Researchers are engaged in the day-to-day work, helping partners examine problems, assess evidence-based solutions and monitor progress.

COMMUNITY-ORIENTED
LISC champions active roles for residents in identifying problems, selecting strategies and creating safe and healthy environments.

SPURS REVITALIZATION
LISC tackles problem properties, unsafe streets and parks, unemployment, transit barriers and service gaps related to crime.

BUILDS PARTNERSHIPS
LISC taps the resources of public, nonprofit and community leaders to bring more resources and different approaches to bear on longstanding crime challenges for lasting change.

Collecting Data, *continued*

▪ Who will be responsible for maintaining and organizing the group's data (name and role)?

The groups involved in your partnership may want to formalize the data collection effort through a data-sharing agreement. Some examples and resources can be found here: http://www.lisc.org/ our-initiatives/safe-neighborhoods/cbcr/resources/ tools-templates/memorandum-understanding/

3 Establish the Scope of Data Collection Efforts

Your team can now begin to refine the details of your efforts. As you learn more about these factors, consider how your team will address them.

▪ Will the data owners filter the data or will they provide a general "dump" of data that the receiver will need to sort through? For example, will you receive data for one community for a specific time period, as requested, or a file for the entire county for the past ten years?

▪ Is the data (for area and timeframe) in your plan available to establish historical trends in the community? Is the data for all years in the same format (e.g., have any changes been made in the collection process, the records management system, or reporting guidelines)?

Keep in Mind

As the general parameters of your data collection effort are established, you should also consider factors that can influence how useful your data is to your team.

While historical data is useful to identify overall trends in crime, services, and activities, recent data is actionable data.

▪ As you begin your project, it is imperative to collect historical data to document long- term trends in the community. These could include increases or decreases in crime or specific crimes or geographical movement over time.

▪ Once those general trends have been

established, you should narrow your focus to activity in your community over the last few months (or weeks), which can give you a sense of where your input will be most effective tomorrow.

▪ What is the most recent data that you can access? Can you get data from last month? Do you have a plan to regularly update your analyses with recent data?

Identify the fields of information available.

▪ Consider if, and how, you will learn more about the elements contributing to crime in your community.

　　o Offenders (number, gender, race, age, actions)

　　o Victims (number, gender, race, age, actions)

　　o Places (address, latitude/longitude or x/y, land use, type of property, condition of property)

　　o Timing (date, time of day)

　　o Other?

As your team discusses potential data sets, be prepared to ask key questions to identify obstacles in using available data.

▪ If information is coded, will you be given definitions for all of the codes?

▪ How dirty is the data? If needed, can you get help to clean it?

▪ What kind of quirks may be present in the data? Or what data might be missing due to factors such as underreporting or poor reporting?

Collecting data is a very important first step in the problem-solving process in order to: 1) accurately understand the underlying problems and 2) implement the most effective, targeted response.