

THE LOS ANGELES FRAMEWORK FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

*Developed by the
Los Angeles Interagency Coordination Group
in Collaboration with Community Stakeholders*

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I. THE CONTEXT FOR THE LOS ANGELES COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (CVE) FRAMEWORK

Scope: Violent extremism poses a threat that is neither constrained by international borders nor limited to a single ideology. Groups and individuals are inspired by a range of religious, political, and ideological beliefs to promote and engage in violence. The threat posed by violent extremists has also become increasingly complex due to the sophisticated use of the Internet, mainstream and social media, information technology, and targeting of youth populations.

The preservation of civil rights and civil liberties is a key pillar of the Los Angeles CVE Framework. Building on that strong foundation, the Framework is designed to mitigate the risk presented by violent extremist groups while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law. Under the Los Angeles CVE Framework, the community-engagement programs conducted by law enforcement and government agencies are aimed at establishing trust and strengthening community partnerships.

The concepts presented in the Los Angeles CVE Framework are designed to address a broad spectrum of extremist ideology that promotes violence and criminal activity. This document, however, highlights foundational partnerships with American-Muslim communities because these communities are leading efforts to develop some of the most innovative prevention and intervention programs in the region. The work being conducted in this Framework provides knowledge and experience on best practices that can inform both local and national strategies on combating violent extremism and hate. A core premise of the Los Angeles CVE Framework is that healthy and resilient communities are the foundation for a strong defense against all forms of violence.

Strategic Advantages: Initial collaborative CVE efforts in the greater Los Angeles area began in 2008. These early efforts evolved around building interagency trust and developing strategies that helped formalize a collaborative “whole of government” and “whole of community” approach to CVE. It was also through these efforts that in 2011, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) partnered with the City of Los Angeles to establish the first DHS Office for Strategic Engagement, which was largely due to a request by local government and nongovernment entities to DHS to bring subject matter expertise to the region to assist in expanding engagement initiatives.

Another advantage in Los Angeles has been the foundational work undertaken by academic institutions and local community-based organizations in building healthy and resilient communities. Government partners continue to foster community resiliency and encourage an environment in which precursor elements of violent extremism cannot take root. Consistent with a “whole of community” approach, Los Angeles has multiple and vibrant community-driven initiatives through which non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as academic institutions, are actively bridging community gaps and providing youth and leadership programming, advocacy and civil rights education, social services, community awareness, and education awareness workshops for law enforcement. The role of the City of Los Angeles Human Relations Commission

(City HRC) also provides a unique advantage in Los Angeles. As a neutral entity, City HRC provides a space to convene diverse communities and connect needed resources. During times of heightened tensions, City HRC plays a vital role in mitigating community conflicts and creating new platforms to engage diverse perspectives on challenging issues.

By late 2013, interagency efforts were formalized under an “Interagency Coordination Group” (ICG). Based on a foundation that partnerships must extend beyond intra-agency affiliations, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department partnered with the Los Angeles Police Department, City HRC, DHS, the United States Attorney’s Office, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Working collaboratively with NGO partners, the ICG increased coordination and community access to other government networks, including the California Department of Justice, United States Citizenship and Immigration Service, Orange County Sheriff’s Department, the Transportation Security Administration, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, and the City of Los Angeles’s Office of Homeland Security and Public Safety. The ICG will continue to expand its network with community stakeholders and government partners in Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside counties.

Collectively, Los Angeles has worked toward developing strong partnerships and community trust through robust engagement efforts. These include:

- Workshops and training seminars on protective measures for faith-based organizations, availability of grants, cultural and religious pluralism, hate crimes, domestic violence, civil rights, immigration issues, and consumer fraud;
- Community town hall meetings and conferences;
- Convening faith and community leaders to elicit input regularly, but especially in times of crisis;
- Community Awareness Briefings (CAB);
- Providing asylee and refugee communities with integration resources; and
- Engaging with youth and adults at diverse community events.

While much of the engagement work in Los Angeles takes place at the grassroots level, these efforts have strong support from local, state, and federal law enforcement and government agencies in the region. This support provides the political will necessary for successful interagency collaboration, the development of vibrant community-led initiatives, and the effective implementation of the Los Angeles Framework going forward.

II. BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Community-led initiatives represent a critical layer of programming necessary to establish resilient communities. While such programs are largely socially and civic-society oriented and not expressly labeled as “CVE,” the outcomes of such programs are naturally in line with promoting the resilient and healthy communities. Overall, community-driven local programs aim to address challenges around identity formation, integration, inter-group relations, political discourse, and social services. Productive examples of community-led initiatives include:

- ***Leadership Building and Civic Participation:*** Several academic efforts have taken root in Los Angeles that are tangibly working with young scholars and leaders to challenge foreign narratives and to take leadership roles in active civic participation. Other organic efforts include grassroots programs led by local community groups to provide workshops, training, and seminars to build youth participation and enhance skills for civic participation.
- ***Faith-based Partnerships and Collaboration:*** Over 35 interfaith groups currently exist in Los Angeles. Some are strictly dialogue-based, while others are oriented towards social justice advocacy. These groups focus on bringing young professionals of different faiths together to tackle differing perspectives while finding common ground to transform how persons from different religions relate to each other in the United States.
- ***Social Services Delivery:*** Organizations play an important role in delivering immediate social services both in the immigrant communities, as well as the broader local communities. These services are generally provided to the neediest segments of society. Programs include refugee services, mental health evaluations, family support groups, domestic violence awareness, and health clinics.
- ***CVE Awareness Initiatives:*** Local religious scholars and community advocacy groups continue to raise awareness and elevate public discourse around violent extremism and the dangers of recruitment efforts. Other examples include initiatives to provide a grassroots approach to prevention.

III. LOS ANGELES FRAMEWORK: A CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW

The Los Angeles Framework consists of three pillars: ***prevention, intervention, and interdiction***. Each of the three components aims to meet community needs while mitigating a variety of risk factors. Prevention addresses communal needs and focuses on expanding engagement as well as promoting healthy and resilient communities through community-driven programs and initiatives. Intervention, or “***Off Ramps***,” focuses on individual needs. The interdiction component addresses security and community safety risks. Both prevention and intervention are early mechanisms of risk mitigation, whereas interdiction is a mechanism for disrupting criminal threats.



Figure 1: Los Angeles CVE Framework Overview

IV. PREVENTION

Prevention, as intended for this Framework, is defined as collective efforts aimed at closing a range of gaps and social openings by which violent extremist ideologies can find legitimacy. Prevention strategies aim to build healthy, resilient communities where it is more difficult for violent ideologies to take root. Prevention efforts are driven by local communities and supported by government partnerships.



Figure 2: Prevention Components

Engagement is at the core of prevention efforts and involves a reciprocal relationship between community and government. A natural progression of engagement is to expand the reach of networks into public/private partnerships as a means of strengthening prevention initiatives. The Los Angeles framework is focused on advancing **community resiliency** through expanding engagement efforts while ensuring trust and transparency, building networks, and investing in community-driven preventative programs. Through consistent engagement and a comprehensive network of partners (*public, private, and community*), preventative programs are the bedrock of the Los Angeles Framework.

A. Expanding Government/Community Engagement

Government agencies (local, state, and federal) are at the forefront of engagement efforts in Los Angeles. Through community policing and engagement strategies, law enforcement agencies have made strides in strengthening trust and building community partnerships aimed at effectively addressing community needs and concerns.

On a broader local level, City HRC plays an active role in advocating for access and inclusion of diverse communities, as well as promoting civic participation, pluralism, and positive inter-group relations. Local community leaders extend a reciprocal approach that makes engagement a two-way dialogue. Through this ongoing dialogue, a tremendous amount of learning is exchanged and these exchanges provide a vital catalyst for the “whole of government/whole of community” prevention approach in Los Angeles.

Currently identified formats for government-driven engagement include:



Figure 3: Established Formats for Engagement

B. Building Networks

Effective prevention requires strengthening of networks to bolster public, private, and grassroots community-based collaboration. “Networks” refer to relationships with key partners that can build coalitions, provide vital resources to build capacity, and expand the reach of community based programs. Over the past several months, Los Angeles has begun to move in the direction of expanding these networks of partners. The following are overarching categories of potential partners:

- **Public Sector:** Department of Mental Health, Social and Human Services, and educational institutions. Each of these partners can offer direct social services as well as training opportunities for CBOs and faith leaders.

- **Private Sector:** Private partners, such as social media companies, film production and public media outlets. These networks can help amplify positive narratives to combat extremism via social media.
- **CBOs:** Connecting local CBO efforts to strengthen inter-organizational learning as well as maximize effectiveness of community-led programs.
- **Funding Sources:** Identifying and embracing foundations that can invest in CBO capacity building and program delivery methods.

At this time, Los Angeles is in the early stages of creating sustainable networking opportunities between CBOs, the private sector, and foundations. Next steps will include a more active effort to facilitate the establishment of community-driven and collaborative prevention programming.

C. Progression of Prevention Components

Overall, the progression of the prevention components moves from the basics of engagement, towards building networks, and then toward collaborative delivery of community-driven initiatives.

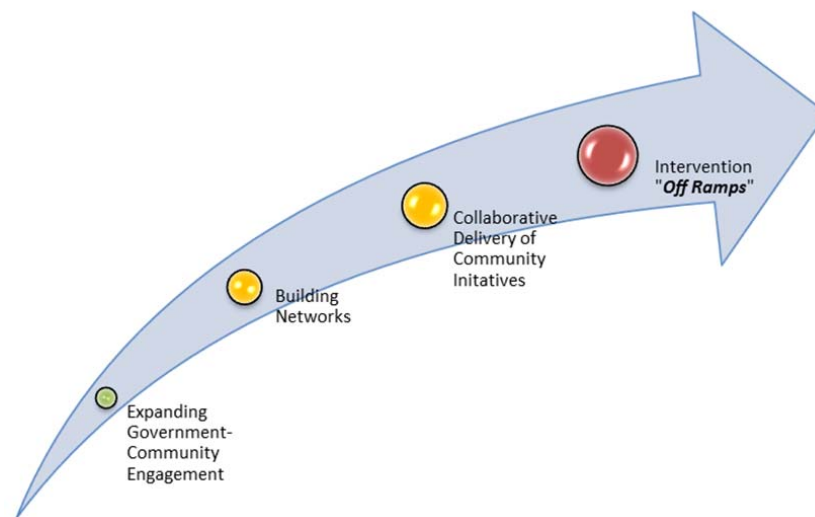


Figure 4: Overall Progression of Prevention Components

The most developed aspects of the prevention strategy for Los Angeles are formal and informal engagement initiatives between government and community stakeholders. Evidence of success includes:

- Delivery of joint activities between government agencies as well as community organizations;
- Better informed CVE training for law enforcement, emphasizing a community-based policing approach and cultural competency; and

- Progress towards community-led initiatives.

Los Angeles is turning to the next stage of building networks and increasing collaborative delivery of community initiatives. Evidence of success includes:

- Initial convening of network opportunities;
- Willingness from different partners (private and public) to join these efforts; and
- Initial CBO programming readiness to expand networks of partners and collaborate on program delivery.

The next component of the Los Angeles CVE Framework is an intervention model called “**Off Ramps**.” While still largely in a conceptual stage, a well-developed web of community-based networks will provide the core services needed for a successful community-based intervention program.

V. INTERVENTION: “**OFF-RAMPS**”

Stakeholders in Los Angeles, including law enforcement, mental health and social service organizations, civic and civil rights organizations, educators, and members of inter-faith clergy, are working together to build a comprehensive community-led intervention program to mitigate the threat of violent extremism in our communities.

The Los Angeles CVE Intervention concept, “**Off-Ramps**,” aims to develop a community-led model that leverages the full scope of resources in the greater Los Angeles region to help affected individuals.

Although a formal intervention program does not currently exist, interventions do occur by parents, educators, members of clergy, and others when individuals who need help are identified. Whereas prevention programs focus on fostering community resiliency to nefarious influencers and environments, the intervention program would seek to provide individuals, already deemed to be on a path towards violent extremism, with **off-ramps** to needed social services, mental health, faith-based and other services. The ultimate purpose of “**Off-Ramps**” will be to provide rehabilitative care to individuals who are moving down a path toward committing illegal activity.

Outstanding issues include developing:

- A reliable analysis and assessment of legal liabilities for interveners;
- A more robust inventory of available resources;
- Strategies to ensure that concerns about civil rights, civil liberties, and data privacy protection are adequately addressed;
- Credible research-based baselines for indicators of violent extremism; and

- A mechanism for providing collaborative input into the intervention process that avoids securitizing the process, while recognizing potential risks to the community and ensuring appropriate mitigation responses are utilized.

VI. INTERDICTION

Interdiction efforts (i.e., investigation, arrest, and potential prosecution) are also an important component of the Los Angeles CVE Framework for disrupting crimes involving extremist violence and threats to the safety of our communities. The interdiction component of the Los Angeles CVE Framework is critical to stopping individuals who are intent on committing violence, investigating crimes associated with extremist violence, creating an environment where the public feels safe to go about their daily lives, and serving as a deterrent to those who may aspire to commit acts of violence.

Equally important to the Los Angeles CVE Framework is developing approaches within law enforcement to ensure, whenever appropriate, that alternatives to interdiction are maximized and individuals are referred out of the interdiction process and into available and viable prevention and intervention components. In doing so, law enforcement can more effectively mitigate the risk of individuals becoming potential victims of violent extremist recruitment and radicalization and prioritize their resources to focus on individuals that are current threats to public safety.

Protecting Civil Rights and Civil Liberties: A guiding principle of the Los Angeles CVE Framework is ensuring that the civil rights and civil liberties of all members of our communities are respected. The Attorney General of the United States has created guidelines to ensure that investigations are accomplished in a consistent manner across the nation and concurrently comply with state and federal laws, as well as the United States Constitution. Members of state and local law enforcement agencies are guided by similar principles. The Department of Justice and law enforcement agencies play a critical role in ensuring that the civil rights and civil liberties of all members of our communities are protected and balanced when protecting national security and the safety of our communities.

To ensure the fullest compliance with these principles and the effective use of prevention and intervention alternatives, law enforcement agencies work within the Los Angeles CVE Framework to promote and reinforce community-oriented policing and partnerships, to enhance cultural competency, and to emphasize a “whole of government” approach to ensuring community safety and security. Within this framework, law enforcement agencies work to better inform the community about law enforcement policies in order to promote greater transparency and to dispel misunderstandings about law enforcement methods used in interdictions, while also educating the public about potential threats to their communities.

VII. A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

We all share a unique moment in American history that can yield significant advancement on the issues most precious to us and relevant to the protection of our communities, cities, and country. Taking advantage of this potential requires a respectful and transparent engagement that is built upon and continually reinforces trust.

Issues of Concern: Some community stakeholders have expressed that they feel a significant siege upon their rights, place, and brand in the American public square. While communities are also keen on countering any justification, religious or otherwise, for the actions of terrorists and radicalizing discourse, the atmosphere of fear and challenge has caused some to question the legitimacy of the entire premise of CVE initiatives. As such, antipathy and opposition toward CVE as a concept has been voiced by some civil rights and advocacy groups in Los Angeles and around the country.

As a part of the development of the Los Angeles CVE Framework, every effort was made to include a diverse group of voices and to offer opportunities for community comment on development of the framework. That process has allowed us to learn a great deal about communal perceptions concerning governmental and regional law enforcement efforts surrounding CVE. The reluctance among some to engage with law enforcement partners rests on negative perceptions of law enforcement and a view that law enforcement methods securitize relationships, stigmatize communities, violate privacy rights and civil liberties, and constitute a form of spying.

Community stakeholders believe that it is only through close collaboration with community and advocacy groups that these serious civil rights and legal liability questions that arise in trying to create comprehensive approaches to phenomena like violent extremism can be adequately addressed. The creation of a robust CVE framework serves as an important arena for debate, discussion, and dialogue.

Resources: Community stakeholders have repeatedly articulated the need for community-based capacity building in many areas of life. Identifying and increasing access to additional resources, grants, and other funding sources to facilitate capacity building and support community driven initiatives is one of the priorities of the Los Angeles CVE Framework. Community based groups have expressed the need to bolster and expand networks to better link faith-based and community organizations with local education, mental health, domestic violence prevention, emergency management, and health and social services organizations. Increased resources will embolden community-led efforts to clarify, discuss, and change research methods, as

well as independent oversight procedures, while promoting the development of communal goals in the fight against marginalization and exclusion.

VIII. CHALLENGES GOING FORWARD

Members of the Interagency Coordination Group and nongovernmental partners who have co-constructed the Los Angeles CVE Framework recognize the complexity of this undertaking and have identified specific challenges going forward:

1. Identifying and increasing access to additional resources, grants, and other funding sources to facilitate and support capacity-building and community-driven initiatives.
2. Expanding prevention efforts networks within and across neighboring counties to ensure continuity and to facilitate a “regional” and “whole of nation” approach.
3. Expanding and enhancing engagement efforts with women and youth so that stronger partnerships and leadership can be developed within those groups.
4. Expanding networks to better link with local education, mental health, emergency management, and health and social services organizations.
5. Addressing the complex legal and liability issues that arise in the context of developing intervention models.
6. Developing capacity for enhanced outreach and social media influence, both at a government and community-based level.
7. Developing better methodologies for effectively measuring the impact of CVE outreach, engagement methods, and initiatives.
8. Addressing community reluctance to engage with government partners, including a pervasive grassroots antipathy to the concept of “CVE,” entrenched negative perception of law enforcement, and a view that law enforcement methods securitize relationships, stigmatize communities, violate privacy rights and civil liberties, and constitute a form of spying.
9. Engaging with the community to clarify and discuss the methods, independent oversight procedures, and goals of law enforcement in its fight against violent extremism.
10. Given limited resources, engaging in continuous efforts to counter the narrative of extremists, while balancing the need to address day-to-day crime.
11. Enhancing civic engagement that reaches more grassroots community members and not just community leaders.