

ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES OF GUN VIOLENCE: A COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGIC PLAN

ONE LEXINGTON

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Mayor Gorton: A Message



Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Linda Gorton
Mayor

Summer, 2025

Dear Friends,

We work hard to keep Lexington safe. I believe public safety is the foundation of any healthy community.

Our local government has taken a holistic approach in response to gun violence, and it is working. One of the key programs we have developed is One Lexington. Working together, our Police Department, One Lexington, and community partners have driven down the number of homicides and shootings. Since 2022, Lexington has seen a 50 percent decrease in homicides, and a 55 percent decrease in reported shooting victims, marking the lowest overall shootings in a decade.



One Lexington was established in 2017 with the goal of helping combat violence among juveniles. Understanding that we cannot solve the problem of violent crime alone, we worked with our faith community, schools, neighborhood leaders and government partners to develop a program that helps those involved with gun violence, and to addresses systemic disparities that can lead to the causes of violent crime.

Since its founding, One Lexington has developed a Crisis Response Team to enhance the quality of life and safety in neighborhoods experiencing violent crime; formed partnerships and funded grassroots organizations that work to prevent violence among young people; set up scholarship programs; developed summer programs for youth; and provided counseling services to victims of violence.

This new strategic plan is designed to examine current One Lexington programs, and to envision the next steps for the program. Thank you for your support of One Lexington as we continue toward our goal of a safe city.

Sincerely,



Linda Gorton
Mayor



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our sincere gratitude to the community members who contributed their time and insights to these significant challenges. Your feedback has been instrumental in shaping our understanding and our ability to improve life in Lexington. As a community committed to growth and vitality, we are united in our aim to continuously enhance our quality of life. This strategic plan reflects our collective and individual commitment to addressing youth and young adult gun violence.



ONE LEXINGTON: OVERVIEW

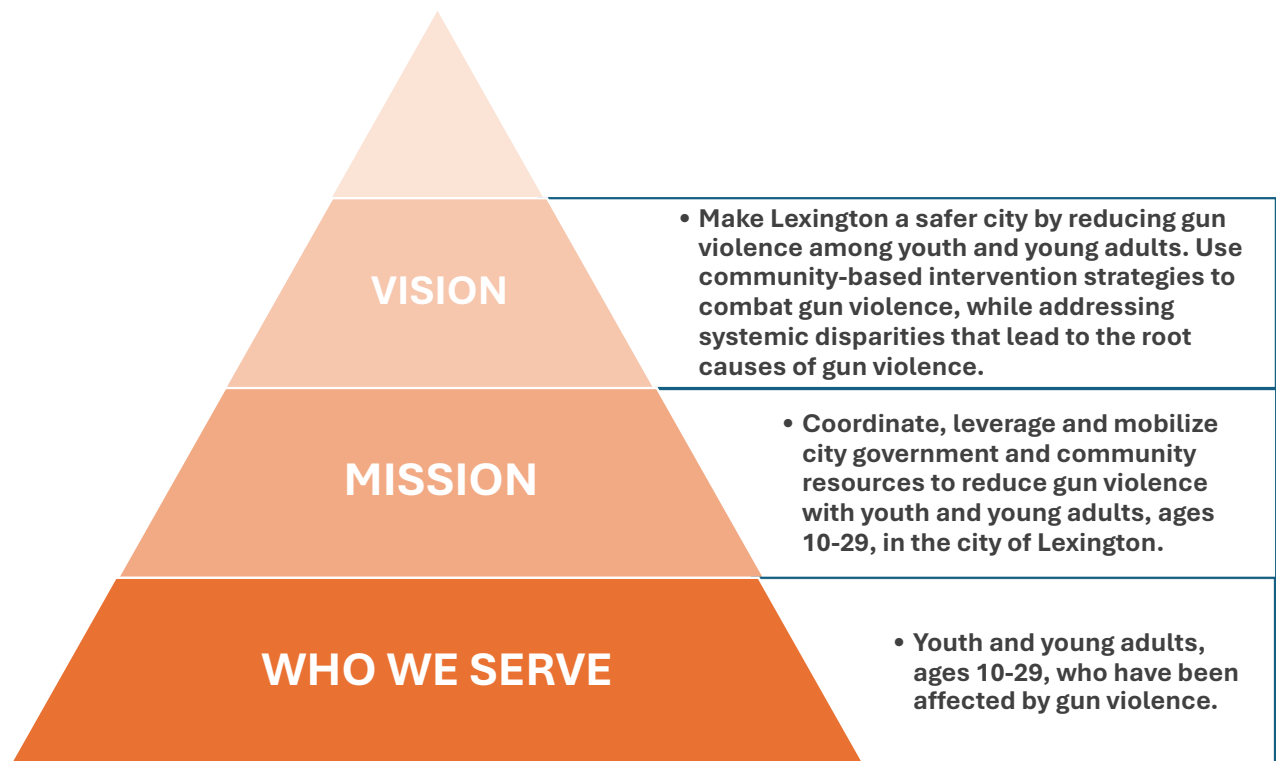
ONE Lexington aims to reduce gun violence among youth and young adults in Lexington by coordinating city and community resources through prevention, intervention, enforcement, and re-entry strategies. ONE Lexington works with community partners to treat the sickness of gun violence, not just the symptoms.

MISSION

To coordinate, leverage and mobilize city government and community partnerships to address gun violence among youth and young adults ages 10 – 29 in the city of Lexington.

VISION

Making Lexington a safer city by reducing gun violence among youth and young adults. Using community-based intervention strategies to combat gun violence while simultaneously addressing systemic disparities that lead to the root causes of gun violence.



ONE LEXINGTON: OVERVIEW

ONE Lexington's Comprehensive Strategy

All Hearts on Deck

ONE Lexington's "All Hearts on Deck" approach provides a unique strategy to strengthen both traditional and even more unconventional partnerships to collectively address youth and young adult gun violence within our community. This holistic approach is informed by the following frameworks.

The Cure Violence Model

The Cure Violence Model, also known as Chicago Cease Fire, takes a public health approach to reducing gun violence. It looks at violence like a disease that can spread and works to stop it before it happens. The model focuses on spotting and interrupting conflicts early, helping people at the highest risk make safer choices, and changing the way communities think about and respond to violence.

P.I.E.R Framework

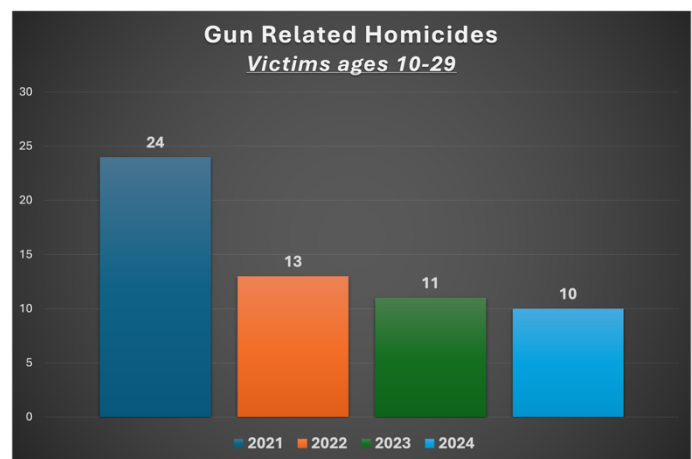
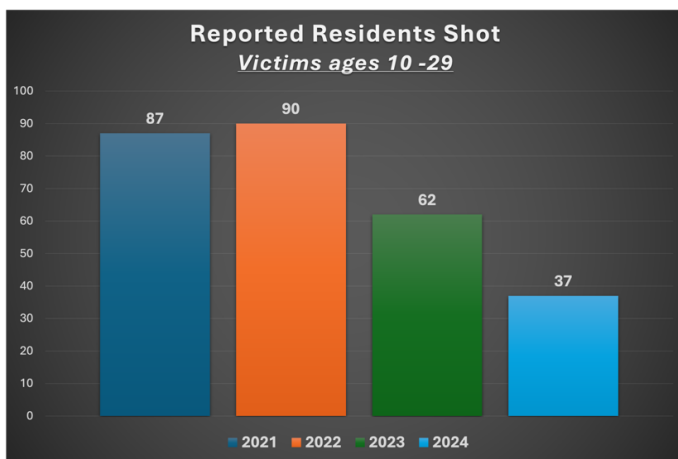
ONE Lexington works with community partners to help make life in our community better for everyone. To do this, they use the P.I.E.R. framework. P.I.E.R. stands for **P**revention, **I**ntervention, **E**nforcement, and **R**e-entry, these are four main approaches to stop gun violence. Over the next several years, ONE Lexington, and its partners, will use this plan to help make our city safer.



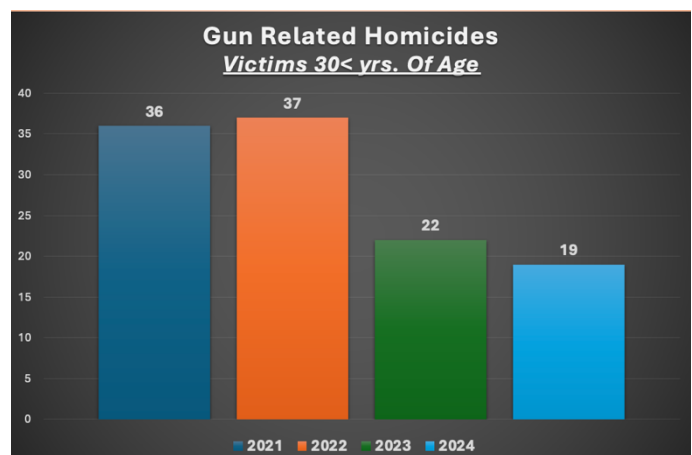
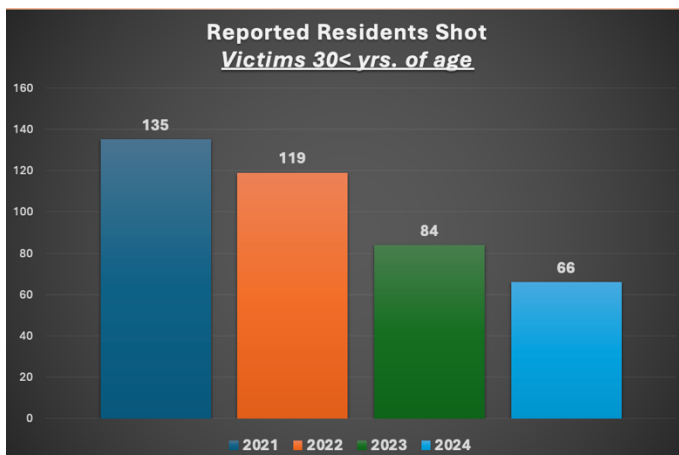
CURRENT TRENDS

Our **All Hearts on Deck** approach fosters deep community ties while enhancing the capabilities of our partners to confront youth and young adult gun violence head-on. This collaborative effort has contributed to a consistent decrease in both gunshot victims and gun-related homicides across Lexington. Below are gun related trends over the past three years.

Youth & Young Adult Related Gun Violence – Ages 10 - 29



Adult Related Gun Violence 30 < yrs. of age



COMMUNITY S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

In spring 2025, ONE Lexington partnered with the Community Innovation Lab at the University of Kentucky to hold several community listening sessions, both in-person and online. These sessions were designed to better understand the key **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats**—also known as a **S.W.O.T. analysis**—related to reducing youth gun violence in Lexington. This effort was guided by the P.I.E.R. framework, which stands for **P**revention, **I**ntervention, **E**nforcement, and **R**e-entry.

Along with feedback gathered during these sessions, insights from the annual *ONE Lexington Symposium on Youth & Young Adult Gun Violence* and the *2024 Lexington Violence Intervention Status Report* were included to capture a broad range of community voices. This process helped provide a clearer picture of where we stand today and how we can improve moving forward.

Community Input Sessions & Resources

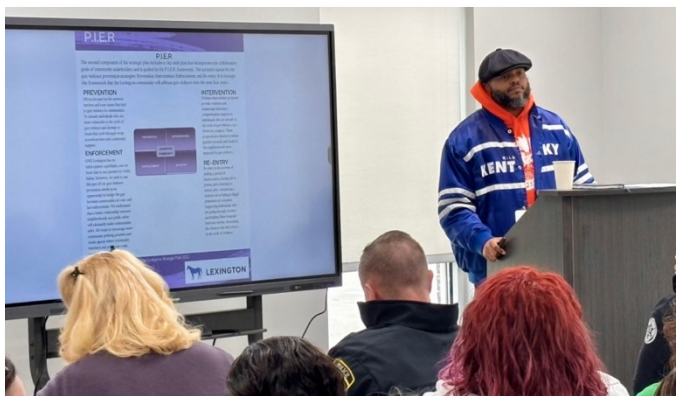
Four community listening sessions: held throughout the Lexington community
City-wide survey for community members who could not attend listening sessions

Multiple youth focus groups, focusing on root causes of gun violence, across Fayette County Public Schools

City-wide gun violence survivor forum

City-wide gun violence survivor survey

2024 Lexington Violence Prevention Status Study



COMMUNITY S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

As a result of multi-engagement strategies, community participants provided detailed insight regarding strengths and weaknesses associated with addressing youth and young adult gun violence within Lexington. Below is a summary of what the community shared about what's working, what's not, and where we can grow in the effort to reduce gun violence among our youth.

Strengths

Organizations:

Community & civic based organizations addressing gun violence.

Mentoring:

Youth mentoring, One Lexington entering the school engagement, school-based mentoring.

Engaged Community:

Family connections, community space organizations (churches), community leader engagement, united community members.

Communication:

Generational communication between youth and adults, willingness to talk before issues occur, proactivity on communication with schools, community organizational dialogue with students about difficult issues.

Public Spaces:

Access to parks, and public facilities

Weaknesses

Systemic Issues:

Limited gun control laws, lack of education on gun violence, failures within the justice system, and lack of government participation.

Mentorship:

Lack of adult male role models & positive adult representation, minimal transition into adulthood programs.

Glorified Gun Culture:

Glorified violence and the fear of retaliation.

Programming:

Limited programs in the area, limited access to community centers, limited youth programs and activities.

Diminished Social/Emotional Intelligence:

Sense of belonging, street code, and a lack of cohesiveness.

Lack of Communication:

Fear of communication, lack of parental involvement, no communication about the dangers of gun violence.

Trauma Care:

Education on prolonged grief, need support for older victims, long-term care.

Discrimination:

Certain neighborhoods underserved, community stigmatization, racist landmark names.



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COMMUNITY S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

In addition, community participants provided thorough feedback regarding opportunities and threats associated with addressing youth and young adult gun violence within Lexington.

Opportunities

Communication:

Restorative practices, listen to the kids, visit schools, engage directly with community members, limit government jargon, facilitate more community discussions.

Partnering:

Increase parent education & financial partners, identify leaders, assist with organizational funding, partner with neighborhood associations.

Victim Support:

Enhance direct victim support, develop a new website as a center of resources, outsource contacting families to other organizations.

Mentorship:

Have more guidance for young citizens, classes for community involvement, and networking youth.

Programming:

Provide youth programming during the school year, after school programs.

Things To Do:

Enhance youth social events, increase listening sessions, strengthen access to community centers, establish events with law enforcement.

Threats

Politics & Systems:

Poverty cycles, street code, ICE, lack of funding, politicians neglecting communities, political landscape, lack of support for gun control.

Culture:

Social networks, normalization of guns, access to firearms, peer issues, lack of parental communication.

Authority & Mistrust:

Fear of gangs, scared of retaliation, forced to crime, constant fighting, in-fighting with youth.

Mental Health:

Addiction, bullying, substance use, low trust with youth, hopelessness, apathetic.

Resources:

Short term home rentals, limited resources and limited access to resources.



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COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN: SUMMARY

Without our collective efforts, we will face adversity in reaching our communal goals. If we are to effectively reduce youth and young adult gun violence within our community, we must come together and create city-wide goals and objectives. To establish our collective goals, ONE Lexington and the Community Innovation Lab at the University of Kentucky facilitated a strategic planning session with a cross-section of diverse community leaders.

After evaluating the S.W.O.T. analysis and community listening sessions and examining information from the strategic planning session, three primary categories emerged.

SOCIAL CULTIVATION • COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & ADVOCACY • ROOT CAUSES

Each category had supporting sub-categories and objectives providing future direction toward addressing youth and young adult gun violence:

Social Cultivation	Community Development & Advocacy	Root Causes
• Parent & Family Development • Youth Development • Mentor Development	• Community Resources • Community Engagement • Community Education & Communication • Research & University Partnerships	• Economic Disparities • Food Insecurity • Educational Support • Untreated Trauma

SOCIAL CULTIVATION

Social Cultivation refers to the intentional and ongoing work of community members and organizations to foster a positive and thriving community, enhance the well-being of its members, and address social issues such as youth and young adult gun violence.

1.0: STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: Cultivate a positive and thriving Lexington community by strengthening social connections to address youth and young adult gun violence.

1.1: PARENT & FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

- 1.1a:** Strengthen Lexington's community infrastructure to effectively deliver comprehensive parent/guardian education on P.I.E.R. resources, bereavement programs, and familial conflict resolution by December 2028.
- 1.1b:** Build Lexington's capacity to provide specialized and easily navigable mental health education and services for families navigating the trauma of gun violence by December 2028.

1.2: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- 1.2a:** Significantly expand and enhance the quality and variety of after-school programming available to Lexington youth in STEM education, the arts, and athletics by the end of the 2027-2028 school year.
- 1.2b:** Build clear and effective pathways that enable Lexington youth to gain practical professional and vocational skills through direct engagement with the local business sector by December 2028.
- 1.2c:** Empower Lexington teens to become agents of positive change by establishing and supporting leadership programs and taskforces centered on mediation skills, bereavement support, and anti-violence advocacy by the end of 2028.
- 1.2d:** Cultivate a more vibrant social scene for Lexington youth by strategically expanding the number and variety of accessible music and social events by the close of 2028.

1.3: MENTOR DEVELOPMENT

- 1.3a:** Build Lexington's capacity for youth mentorship by developing a localized and self-sustaining recruitment system with targeted outreach and partnership development in faith-based organizations, universities, and the corporate community by the end of 2028.
- 1.3b:** Empower Lexington youth by establishing a community-wide structure (framework or council) that actively solicits their input and fosters a culture of peer support through mentoring and accountability initiatives by the end of 2028.
- 1.3c:** Strategically grow the pool of bilingual youth mentors in Lexington by the close of 2028.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & ADVOCACY

Community Development is a *process* where community members, organizations, and local institutions take *collective action* to generate solutions to address youth and young adult gun violence in our community.

Community Advocacy refers to the organized and collective efforts of Lexington residents, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders to actively promote and support policies, programs, and initiatives that aim to prevent gun violence, address its root causes, enhance community well-being, and foster positive youth development.

2.0: Strategic Objective: Foster robust and enduring community development and advocacy processes enabling collective action among residents, organizations, and institutions to significantly reduce youth and young adult gun violence within Lexington, Kentucky by December 2028.

2.1: COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- 2.1a:** Empower Lexington's gun violence intervention efforts, including ONE Lexington and community partners, through a significant augmentation of dedicated financial and personnel resources by the end of FY28.
- 2.1b:** Redefine and repurpose Lexington's community centers as key hubs for delivering targeted community programming and services that directly address the root causes of gun violence by the end of FY26.
- 2.1c:** Foster a more inclusive workforce in Lexington by strategically mobilizing corporate social responsibility efforts to achieve a measurable growth in the number of companies committed to second chance hiring practices by the end of 2028.
- 2.1d:** Develop and operationalize at least three (3) new collaborative initiatives between diverse sectors in Lexington that demonstrably enhance the availability and accessibility of affordable housing by the end of the FY28.
- 2.1e:** Establish and implement at least two (2) innovative, cross-sector collaborations in Lexington that demonstrably improve transportation options and accessibility for youth within the city by December 2028.
- 2.1f:** Enhance the efficiency and impact of resource allocation within Lexington's gun violence sector by completing a thorough assessment of organizational duplication and formulating a plan for streamlining by the end of 2028.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & ADVOCACY

2.2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 2.2a:** Improve mental health and trauma support in Lexington by establishing a mobile service capacity that reaches individuals and communities with limited access to traditional services by the end of 2028.
- 2.2b:** Establish a sustainable and impactful series of educational forums in Lexington that demonstrably strengthen community knowledge and skills in conflict resolution, family mediation, and gun violence prevention by December 2028.
- 2.2c:** Enhance community access to vital information by creating a centralized and user-friendly digital hub in Lexington by the end of 2025, featuring up-to-date news, opportunities, and resources prior to the end of FY28.
- 2.2d:** Solidify Lexington's role in fostering collaboration against gun violence by sustaining and expanding regular cross-sector networking opportunities for relevant stakeholders through 2028.
- 2.2e:** Significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of referrals between Lexington Police Department and community partners by establishing clear protocols and pathways by the end of 2028.
- 2.2f:** Build greater trust and mutual understanding within the Lexington community by strategically strengthening opportunities for interaction and collaboration between law enforcement, community members, and city prosecutors by the end of 2028.



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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & ADVOCACY

2.3: COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

2.3a: Create a sustainable community advocacy framework by the end of 2026, where residents, community-based organizations, and stakeholders are equipped to promote and support policies, programs, and initiatives that prevent gun violence, address its root causes, enhance community well-being, and foster positive youth development.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION & COMMUNICATION

2.3b: Develop and implement a comprehensive educational program focused on the effects of gun violence, gun access, and gun safety, ensuring its effectiveness and widespread reach by the end of 2028.

2.3c: Develop and implement targeted vocational education programs to enhance the employability and reduce recidivism rates among previously incarcerated individuals by the end of FY28.

2.3d: Establish a comprehensive mentorship program to provide guidance, support and resources for successful reintegration of previously incarcerated individuals into the community by December 2028.

2.3e: Develop and execute a sustainable communication strategy to proactively disseminate impactful success stories and evidence-based practices by March 2027.

RESEARCH & UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

2.3f: Cultivate strategic partnerships with local universities to conduct rigorous research and evaluation on the impact of gun violence within our community by March 2027.

2.3g: Establish strategic partnerships with universities to offer comprehensive grant writing workshops and facilitate access to grant programming opportunities by May 2026.

2.3h: Cultivate strategic university partnerships to significantly expand the pool of available community mentors among students, staff, and faculty by July 2026.

ROOT CAUSES

The "**root causes of gun violence**" refer to the fundamental, underlying factors and societal conditions that increase the likelihood of gun-related violence. These are complex and interconnected, extending beyond individual actions to encompass broader social, economic, and systemic issues.

3.0: Strategic Objective: Significantly reduce youth and young adult gun violence in Lexington, Kentucky, through a multi-faceted approach that addresses its root causes, focusing on enhancing socioeconomic opportunities, strengthening community support systems, and promoting a culture of non-violence by 2028.

3.1a: Establish and leverage a robust connector pipeline between community members and community partners to reduce the median household income disparity by 15% in Lexington's five most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods by 2028, thereby mitigating economic stressors and lack of opportunity contributing to youth and young adult gun violence.

3.1b: Collaborate with community leaders to reduce gun violence by making it more difficult for those at high risk to access firearms. This includes stronger enforcement of our existing gun laws, more opportunities for safe gun storage, and community efforts to encourage gun safety by 2028.

3.1c: By 2028, Expand comprehensive, evidence-based intervention and support programs in Lexington-Fayette County that identify individuals with a history of violence or early onset of aggressive behavior, providing tailored services (including mental health support, anger management, and social skills development) to reduce the likelihood of future violent acts by 20%.



LEXINGTON

STRATEGIC PLAN MATRIX

Below is the strategic plan matrix with *examples* of how community organizations can align with the city-wide strategic plan to address youth and young adult gun violence.

	Organization X	Organization X	Organization X	Organization X	Organization X	Organization X	Organization X	Organization X	Organization X
Strategic Emphasis Area									
1.0 Social Cultivation									
1.1 Parent & Family Development									
1.1a									
1.1b									
1.2 Youth Development									
1.2a	X								
1.2b	X								
1.2c	X								
1.2d									
1.3 Mentor Development									
1.3a		X							
1.3b	X								
1.3c									
2.0 Community Development									
2.1 Community Resources									
2.1a		X							
2.1b									
2.1c		X							
2.1d									
2.1e									
2.1f		X							
2.2 Community Engagement									
2.2a									
2.2b		X							
2.2c	X								
2.2d		X							
2.2e									
2.2f									

	Organization X	Organization X	Organization X	Organization X	Organization X	Organization X	Organization X	Organization X	Organization X
2.3a Community Advocacy									
2.3b Community Ed & Communication									
2.3c		X							
2.3d									
2.3e		X							
2.3f									
2.3f Research & University Partnerships									
2.3g		X							
2.3h		X							
3.0 Root Causes		X							
3.1a									
3.1b									
3.1c									

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

To evaluate our collaborative community efforts, ONE Lexington, in partnership with the Community Innovation Lab at the University of Kentucky, utilizes the collective impact model. Collective impact initiatives focus on population-level or city-wide change. The collective impact model is intended to engage a range of programs and align their activities in service to a common agenda that is anchored in shared measures or frameworks i.e., the P.I.E.R framework. Collective impact initiatives frequently include diverse community leaders at the table. These leaders are seen as key for achieving the goal of “mutually reinforcing activities” (The Forum for Youth Investment, 2022). Through multiple data collection points and evaluation methods, ONE Lexington will use the following collective reinforcement model to guide its evaluation.



IMPROVE PROGRAM AWARENESS

Stakeholders become aware and interact with others who focus on shared goals and target populations.

MOU's to establish referrals between stakeholders with complementary client bases.



ESTABLISH A FOUNDATION FOR COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

MOU's between stakeholders to implement blended services for targeted groups.

Individual MOU's with ONE Lexington who coordinates outreach and services for comprehensive community violence intervention efforts.



PROGRAM INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

Stakeholders agree to operate as a system or network that promotes common standards, assessments, data collection & service agreements.

Stakeholders agree to be held accountable for the achievement of shared goals/objectives.



CROSS SECTOR LEADERSHIP

Stakeholder commitment to participate in the governance of broader collective impact effort that engages other systems & sectors in the pursuit of common population-level goals.

*Collective Impact model adapted from (The Forum for Youth Investment, 2022)

**MOU = Memorandum of understanding